

September 2022

Welcome to our September Branch Newsletter

This newsletter is to keep you up to date with a number of things that your Branch Committee has been involved with this year.

Bargaining

Your Branch bargaining team called a stop work meeting on Wednesday 21st September to discuss the progress so far. The very well attended meeting was held in Undercroft 101 and via Zoom. Members from Etū and PSA were also in attendance to hear main advocate Gaby Moore outline the university's position. Our claim of 8% really only maintains parity with where we were in 2019 and as Branch President Rob Stowell said, none of us will be rushing out to purchase holiday homes, as this just keeps us up with inflation.



Photo: Thomas Li

The University offer is for a three year term and 2.75%, 2.5% and 2.5% per year along with a \$2000.00 'step increase' for general staff, who had no progression last year due to the removal of steps within the band. Academic staff kept their progression over the last year. The UC Advocates were keen for members to see their new offer and Gaby spoke to this with the help of Shelley Toms-Elder who has been scrutinising the data. Lower paid staff may appear to be better off but it appears that cleaners will end up worse off as the University has moved to end discussion of keeping parity with the living wage for low paid workers.

Your bargaining team recommended that the meeting endorse a strike ballot if things do not progress in a satisfactory direction. This received 100% support and if necessary a ballot on action will be called for. Just what action would be taken will be discussed and Gaby outlined what sorts of action could be taken. This could include some form of work to rule or down tools.

In another peculiar turn of events, the UC advocate is trying to have a clause inserted into the CEAs which would say that the employer could dismiss in the event of misconduct. Needless to say, the Bargaining team have declined to agree to that.

Speculation at the meeting as to why the University has come up with new pay scales suggested that the University has a problem attracting staff at the current existing rates of pay and that this is an effort to plug the gap without recognising the effect of inflation.

GSSR and General Staff Merit Point

The Bargaining team has reached agreement that steps will be replaced in the bands for General Staff and that there will be no “merit point” obstacle half way up with an unsurmountable criteria for advancement. Advancement to the top of the band will be by regular performance and although the final steps have not yet been decided it is understood that steps of \$2,000.00 will be close to the mark.

Academic Support Staff

The Bargaining team also reported that agreement has been reached to include academic support staff in the Academic CEA. This is another issue that has been a long-time source of contention as many of these members are highly qualified staff working on the lowest rung in the academic world. There will also be recognition that work done will be paid for and a mechanism put in place for managers to support their staff.

Report for members

This year's branch AGM was held on Wednesday September 14th and the Branch hosted TEU National President Tina Smith. In the absence of Garrick Cooper (on sabbatical), Branch co-President Rob Stowell reported as follows:

Kia ora e whānau o Te Hautū Kahurangi - Thank you.

This is a report, so let's give 2022 a grade. I'm thinking a C+. It's scraping by. Could do better. There's still time for it to improve, but it's going to need to pull its socks up, stop raining, and bargaining will need to go really, really, well.

At the national level, the year for our union has been busy with issues around Te Pukenga and with lining up all 8 universities for bargaining - and a lot more.

Here at Canterbury, how is the branch doing?

We're in pretty good spirits.

Our numbers are up. At UC we now have over a 1000 members. That's powerful. And you all are always our best recruiters. Thank you. And keep it up! Badger people. Gently remind them we exist! Put up posters and stickers and keep having tea-room conversations!

And maybe you could remind those persistent hold-outs - any year we get a pay rise of over 3.2%, the 3 month stand-down period for non-members means they will actually lose money by not joining.

Bargaining. It's finally underway. Dates were confirmed - then postponed - like a COVID graduation. We're asking for an 8% pay increase this year. Since Jan 2021 CPI is already at 8.7%. In that time, we've had a 1% pay increase. With mortgages and rents going up even faster, and two quarters of CPI still to come, 8% isn't going to buy us private jets or holiday homes. It's going to mean what we can buy with our pay only goes backwards a little - not a lot.

This is a wealthy university - according to various statistics, the wealthiest in Aotearoa. We have the most assets per student. We have a cash reserve of over \$250m. The 8% claim might seem grand or greedy. After government increases to funding, it would cost the university another \$10-12m - in a budget of well over \$400m. It is affordable.

We're a people-based operation. It's generally accepted that healthy universities put 60-65% of their income into staff. In 2005, this university put 63% of its income into staff costs; that declined to about 50% in 2013, and last year was at 54%. Where has it gone?

It's not a simple calculation, but what stands out, is the change in what we claim in depreciation of assets. In 2005, that was about 9% of income; last year depreciation was 17% - a whopping \$61m. Now we're planning to spend over a \$100m on a new initiative, the digital screen campus at Dovedale.

What does this tell us? I think it tells us we've built up our buildings and run down our people. At 2005's ratio of 63% of income on staff, we'd be allocating \$35-40m more towards staff - enough for a decent pay rise, and we'd probably be able to solve most of our workload issues. It is affordable.

A couple of bright points in bargaining.

For general staff, last year's agreement abolished the 'merit point' (everyone agreed it was unfair, opaque, and kind of dishonest) - but failed to replace it with anything. A 'joint working group' was set up, and many of you took part. Thank you. Your contribution was vital. When we finally had some meetings with the employers

side, we were pretty clear what we wanted. We pushed back against various more - and less - ingenious and ingenuous attempts to inject some flavour of performance pay into the GSSR process. And finally, there seems to be an acceptance of automatic annual steps within bands - right to the top of the band. We plan to keep moving. UC needs to develop fair and transparent career progression mechanisms for general staff. Anyone interested, we'll be aiming to re-convene our group - and HR seem to be at least halfway on-side.

Academic support staff have joined our collective - they'll be in this year's document. Thanks to a similar working group, the issues for these workers – who have sometimes been shamefully treated - have had a good airing. Sick leave, roll over of contracts, some provision for training, and recognition of experience and qualifications should be written into the collective. The rates of pay are still under negotiation, and not where we'd like them - when you consider these workers are using relevant tertiary qualifications to conduct the university's core business. But now they are in the collective - and that is something we can organise and campaign on.

So bargaining is underway, and it will - it MUST - deliver a decent outcome.

What else can we say about the last year? The university likes to portray itself as a good employer, and most of us have found a good place to work.

However, this isn't everyone's experience. For some, the university has been intractable and punitive - and it's ended in the employment court. Last year that court found in favour of sociology lecturer Anne Scott, who was awarded \$200,000 for unjustified dismissal. Have we learnt from this? Sadly, some employment issues this year have looked like heading in the same direction. This means distress and disruption to member's lives - and reputational damage to the university. We'll always try to resolve employment issues quickly and at the lowest level possible. It's very disappointing to see things taken to the employment court.

We celebrate - and share - the university's embrace of some key values - tiakitanga, manaakitanga, and whanaungatanga. But an institution is judged on its behaviour, not its talk. Pono - honesty; tika - what's right; utu - balance; and aroha, love: these values struggle to come through in an institution that can be hierarchical, rigid, bound by rule-and-policy. As unionists, we can embrace these values - and lead the way.

On a sad note, long time member Colleen Mills recently passed away. Colleen's academic expertise covered management and change and she was often a trenchant (and sometimes hilarious) critic of the university's own management of change. She will be missed.

Things to celebrate: Sue Lloyd, Janet Bray and Angela Berry all received twenty year service pins. And we're sure there are others who we've missed, so anyone with 20 years membership, please let us know.

Covid stopped us from celebrating general staff day together, but we sent chocolate fish swimming and wriggling out, along with an extra hour for lunch, to general staff.

As a branch we've supported members to go to hui a motu and rainbow gatherings. There are many ways to get involved. Dust off your activist conscience, and waltz over to TEU house.

Warwick Anderson, past president of this branch - a man with a big heart and a lovely shy smile - was awarded a life membership at this year's annual conference.

At the National level, as well as branch stalwart Grant Bush continuing on TEU's National Council, branch member Thomas Li has joined the TEU industrial and professional committee.

Let's all thank our committee: Benita, Kaspar, Thomas, Stephen, Chris, Ryan, Ngaroma, Christoph - and especially tireless Tim, who has received a second TEU meritorious service award. Big thanks co-president Garrick Cooper, currently in Indonesia, for his warmth and wisdom. And to our organisers Gaby and Thaddaeus, what a pair of gems! We so rely on you.

Consider joining the committee! It is fun! The whanaungatanga is strong! Getting together with like-minded people and plotting to make things better – it's good for the wairua.

And thank you all. We ALL are this union.

Nga mi hinui, kia pai tō rā. Poho kereru Te Hautu Kahurangi.

NZ Fire Service.

Our University neighbours on the corner of Creyke Road and Montana Avenue, the New Zealand Fire Service, are currently campaigning to improve conditions and staffing in the service. These signs in the windows of the station include a message of support from the TEU branch Committee



General staff Day

TEU requested the Vice-Chancellor acknowledge the mahi we've all done with an extra hour for lunch on General Staff day on the 28th of July. Some of you will have been able to take the extra hour in the subsequent week.

The Branch appreciates the acknowledgement. Thanks Cheryl.

Also, posted out to all general staff in the week prior to General Staff Day was a small gift from the Branch Committee to General Staff members - a chocolate fish.

Suffrage Day

This year the Branch received a healthy number of nominations for a Camelia to mark Women's' Suffrage day and the work that members do to keep UC going. Winners of this year's awards should have received their camelia by now. Congratulations to all.

Rainbow Te Kahukura News

Four Rainbow members from UC, including branch Rainbow Te Kahukura rep Kaspar Middendorf, attended the national Rainbow Te Kahukura hui in Wellington in September. This (normally biennial) hui brings together Rainbow members from across the motu, to discuss issues facing LGBTQIA+ staff in the sector. Thanks to COVID, it's been more than four years since our last hui, so there was a lot to discuss. Top of the agenda were examining the Rules Review through a Rainbow lens, and beginning work on a toolkit to better support Rainbow members at both a branch and a national level. We also made time for a bit of fun, including a craft session to create our own fabulous name badges, and taking part in an evening of Drag Bingo in one of Wellington's rooftop bars.



Our rainbow masks have proved popular with staff and students, and have even been spotted around town, including on these library staff at Tūranga. We estimate we've handed out about 2000 of them over the past couple of years. We'll miss seeing them around now that masks aren't required in as many places!



As well as supporting Rainbow staff at UC, our branch is proud to lend a hand to help out our Rainbow students, whether through QCanterbury, or smaller groups organising within their departments, like this group of Biology postgrads who visited TEU house recently for advice (and snacks!).

TEU websites of interest

TEU National webpage: <https://teu.ac.nz/>

TEU Canterbury Branch Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StandUpForUC>

Academic Freedom Aotearoa: <https://www.facebook.com/academicfreedomnz/>

Our Collective Employment Agreements are available online

<https://teu.ac.nz/branches/universities/canterbury/> or

<https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/about/hr/employment-agreements/>

Your 2021-2022 Branch Committee

Co-President	Garrick Cooper , Maori and Indigenous Studies garrick.cooper@canterbury.ac.nz ext. 92088 (on sabbatical)
Co-president	Rob Stowell , Future Learning and Development rob.stowell@canterbury.ac.nz ext: 94044
Vice-President	Grant Bush , Information Technology Services grant.bush@canterbury.ac.nz ext. 94321
Secretary/Treasurer	Tim O'Sullivan , UC Central Library, tim.osullivan@canterbury.ac.nz , ext. 93885
Te Uepū Academic Staff Representative	

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Rainbow Te Kahukura Representative

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Youth representative

Thomas Li, Jack Erskine 720, thomas.li@canterbury.ac.nz ext: 93052.

Active Members

Benita Rarere-Briggs, Education, Health and Human Development
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Rebecca Fisher, UC Central Library, rebecca.fisher@canterbury.ac.nz ext 94032.

Chris Atkinson, UC Facilities Management.

Life members of TEU Canterbury Branch

Janinka Greenwood, Neville Blampied, Bill Rosenberg, Warwick Anderson, Bob Gordon.