



Dr Peter Coolbear, Ako Aotearoa director, with Ralph Springgett, president of Massey University's Extramural Students' Society.

Responding to the learner voice

At the end of last year, Ako Aotearoa signed an agreement with Ralph Springgett, president of Massey University's Extramural Students' Society (EXMSS), to fund a student-led project aimed at finding out what tertiary learners at Massey University think of the quality of their tertiary education experience.

Titled "Review It", the tool builds on EXMSS's current "Rate It" tertiary paper rating system and will provide an online information forum for students to research future paper choices. The evaluation tool is carefully moderated and seeks to recognise teaching excellence as well as supporting continuous quality improvement. The initiative is part of what Peter Coolbear describes as Ako Aotearoa's "next critical steps to develop the debate with tertiary learners directly about their key issues concerning the quality of their education."

The EXMSS team expects "Review It" will deliver improved decision-making capability for students around paper choice and improved satisfaction in the choices they make.

Ako Aotearoa is excited about the project's potential to provide a model of an appropriately managed, learner-led evaluation tool that may, in time, be available to the whole tertiary sector. We see the value of this in providing robust learner-perspective information that can be triangulated against provider-driven evidence supporting quality improvement.

Review It!
Students helping students.

We look forward to updating you as this "Review It" project progresses.

Welcome

Welcome to Ako Aotearoa's first newsletter for 2010. I trust the year is beginning well for you and your learners.

This year is already shaping up to be a full and ground-breaking one for Ako Aotearoa. A key event will be the national hui for Māori tertiary educators and leaders, Tuia te Ako, which we are planning for August. Ngahiwi Apanui outlines our plans for this on page 2.

By the time you receive this newsletter, Associate Minister of Education, Hon Dr Pita Sharples will have launched our publication *Hei Tauri*, by Janinka Greenwood and Lynne-Harata Te Aika from the University of Canterbury's College of Education. Developed as a summary of their Ministry of Education-funded Teaching Matters Forum Project that surveyed exemplars of tertiary teaching practice for Māori, this publication provides a guide to the key factors to be considered in fostering success for Māori. We look forward to hosting Lynne and Janinka in a series of workshops around the country later in the year.

Other exciting developments include our continuing work with the Australian Council for Educational Research on the use of the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement in New Zealand. An outline of our project to pilot the use of this survey in the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics sector is featured on the last page of this newsletter. We also look forward to supporting a collaborative project that will build on current use of the survey instrument in the university sector.

Meanwhile, we have commissioned TNS Conversa to undertake a major formative evaluation of Ako Aotearoa. As part of the evaluation, an online survey is being sent out to our contacts on Tuesday 16 March. If you do not receive it and would like to be involved, please email: Catherine.Frethey-Bentham@tns-global.com for a copy. The deadline for responses is Thursday 8 April. We appreciate hearing your views.

Dr Peter Coolbear
Director, Ako Aotearoa

Tuia te ākongā, tuia te ako, tui, tui, tuituia!

Ngahiwi Apanui, kaihautū Māori, outlines our first national hui for Māori tertiary educators and learners set for August this year.

August 2010 is shaping up to be an exciting month for Ako Aotearoa and Māori tertiary educators as plans for the national Māori tertiary educators' hui get underway. Titled Tuia te Ako (sewing together the teaching and learning), this inaugural Ako Aotearoa-sponsored event, will bring together up to 300 people working in Māori tertiary education: Māori tertiary leaders and teachers, iwi leaders, hapū and iwi groups running tertiary training programmes, graduates (local and overseas) and learners. The event is scheduled for 12–13 August at Wellington's Pipitea Marae.

Tuia te Ako is an initiative of Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus. Last year, the caucus came to the agreement there was a great advantage to be gained by holding one national Māori educators' hui, with the possibility of establishing it as an annual event on the Māori tertiary calendar.

Tuia te Ako is also part of Ako Aotearoa's brief to support tertiary teaching and learning, and, in particular, its commitment to support Māori educators and learners in Māori and mainstream tertiary education contexts. The hui will also be particularly valuable in assisting Ako Aotearoa to set its Māori strategy for 2010 onwards.

An organisational whakapapa (structure) has been established to plan and manage the hui. The whakapapa comprises a planning committee of tertiary educators from across the sector and an events team under the maru (umbrella) of Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus. This industrious bunch has already set the main themes of the hui, and approaches are being made to key Māori educators to make keynote presentations on those themes.

The themes are: Leadership in the Tertiary Sector; Māori/Iwi Advancement; Discussion of Māori Tertiary Issues; and Whakawhanaungatanga – building community among the Māori tertiary whānau.

The Māori Caucus and planning committee are keen to progress the discussion and debate about the alignment of Māori/iwi advancement



Tuia te Ako 2010

Tuia te ākongā, tuia te ako, tui, tui, tuituia

aspirations with Māori tertiary education. A main outcome of the hui will be to provide iwi leaders and Māori tertiary educators with the opportunity to discuss how this alignment may be better achieved.

A major factor in choosing Pipitea Marae as the venue was Ako Aotearoa's desire to build on the existing relationship with tangata whenua, Te Atiawa. An exciting recent development has been the establishment by Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus of its own kaupapa Māori framework called Te Tauākī Ako. One of the principles within the framework is "mana" – recognition of the authority of iwi within their rohe (region). Pipitea Marae has recently come under the joint ownership of Te Atiawa's Wellington Tenth's Trust and Ngāti Pōneke. Given its size, it became the logical venue for Tuia te Ako 2010.

As if that wasn't enough, powerful principles such as manaakitanga (hospitality, generosity), whanaungatanga (kinship, relationships), te reo and whakamana (empowerment) are also compelling reasons to hold the inaugural hui on the marae.

Confirmation of the keynote presenters for Tuia te Ako 2010 should be completed by the end of February. Intending delegates should look out for updates in future Ako Aotearoa newsletters and check our website www.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz for further information from the beginning of March.

Hei kōrero whakamutunga mā tātau katoa, nau mai haere mai e te whānau. Mā tō rourou, mā taku rourou e ora ai te iwi.

Funding update – Doctoral Scholarships

As part of the inaugural round of our 2008 National Project Fund, three Doctoral Scholarships were awarded to build research capability and capacity in the area of tertiary teaching and learning. The scholarships are \$25,000 per annum plus course fees. Each project is now under way and we are delighted to report on their progress to date.



Angela Feekery

Integrating Information Literacy and Developing Academic Voice in the New Zealand Tertiary Context

**Angela Feekery, supervised by Associate Professor Lisa Emerson
Massey University**

Angela's research examines how students develop information literacy skills and find their "voice" in academic writing. Using participatory action research, Angela will explore how information literacy instruction can be embedded into the disciplines to enhance students' information literacy and writing skills over the full undergraduate programme. Research suggests that poor information literacy is strongly related to unintentional plagiarism; therefore Angela's thesis findings will inform organisational policy that focuses on the prevention of plagiarism. Angela has already completed a literature review on information literacy, which was presented at the Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand (TERNZ) conference last November. The next stages include writing a literature review on action research as a methodology, and conducting preliminary interviews.



Kelby Smith-Han

An Investigation of Undergraduate Medical Students' Discourses of General Practice and Surgery

**Kelby Smith-Han, supervised by Dr Chrystal Jaye
University of Otago**

Kelby's research addresses the current workforce crisis in the area of general practice by examining the vocational choices of medical students. In particular, Kelby's research examines the discourses of learners within medical schools and teaching hospitals relating to general practice and surgery. This research will highlight the reasons graduate medical students enter general practice at very low rates compared with surgery, thus informing responses aimed at increasing the New Zealand general practice workforce. Kelby has conducted his in-depth interviews with first- and sixth-year learners and data analysis is under way.



Matiu Ratima

Māori Learning Māori: What Works for Māori Adults Learning Māori as a Second Language?

**Matiu Ratima, supervised by Professor Stephen May
University of Waikato**

Matiu's thesis examines the characteristics of successful adult te reo Māori learners. By quantitatively assessing Māori learners' te reo competence and triangulating this with qualitative data on the learning experience, the thesis will contribute to our current understanding of how to effectively teach te reo Māori as a second language to Māori adults. A literature review on second language acquisition has been completed, and the language proficiency test is currently being developed. Matiu also presented his work at the joint Ako Aotearoa/Teaching and Learning Research Initiative Colloquium last September.

BY RUTH PETERSON

News from the Northern Hub

Welcome back to the Northern Hub section of the newsletter. We hope you enjoy catching up on our activities and projects in the northern region.



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Nobel laureate comes to Auckland universities

Last December, Ako Aotearoa sponsored Professor Carl Wieman's visit to New Zealand and the Northern Hub was pleased to host the Nobel laureate during his Auckland stay, with two seminars held at AUT University and The University of Auckland.

Recipient of the 2001 Nobel Prize in physics for his production of the first true Bose-Einstein condensate, Carl has recently been working to improve science education and outcomes for science students through the Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative.

His seminars, entitled "Science Education in the 21st Century – Using the insights of science to teach/learn science", highlighted the need to encourage science students to think and understand science as scientists do – asking questions, experimenting, making discoveries and mistakes. His mantra "students come first" is evident in the student-centred way he fosters learning. The presentation Carl used is available on the Ako Aotearoa website: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/ako-aotearoa/ako-aotearoa/resources/files/carl-wieman-science-presentation-dec-09>.



Professor Carl Wieman in action during his December seminar series for Ako Aotearoa.

Mentoring for Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards nominees

One of our roles is to provide teachers with support through the process of preparing a portfolio for the national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards. During December, we met with three teachers who were considering submitting a portfolio for the 2010 round. We talked them through the criteria in relation to their key areas of work. They were then confident to proceed with the process and we look forward to seeing their portfolios develop. We strongly encourage teachers from across the tertiary sector to contact us with questions and for advice about the award portfolio process, particularly with the addition of the two new awards for 2010 that aim to recognise the contribution of tertiary teachers in a kaupapa Māori context.

What do learners say about teaching?

Hearing students talk about their good and bad experiences at university provided an enlightening session at the 2009 Academic Staff Developers of the Universities of New Zealand (ASDUNZ) conference, held at the University of Waikato last December. Students see themselves as paying clients, who are entitled to good service. One student said being told the truth by lecturers was a "real world" experience, but having lecturers who were disorganised and turned up late to lectures was unhelpful. Lecturers could learn what students want by coming to tutorials, moving around the lecture hall, having quizzes in lectures, giving real examples, and having more interaction between students and lecturers. Students' advice was "stay up to date, push appraisals, make appearances outside of lectures (for example, in labs), have an open-door policy, and ask students what they expect."

Good Practice Publication Grants

Applications for the 2010 Good Practice Publication Grants (GPPG) are due by 5 pm, Friday 30 April. These grants provide an opportunity to obtain time and resources from your organisation to share your proven good practice, for publication by Ako Aotearoa. I encourage you to consider submitting an application, and am happy to discuss this with you at any time. The collection of 2008 GPPG publications is available on our website: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/gppg-ebook>.

Same places, different spaces: e-learning specialist provokes debate

More than 400 people, including staff from the Northern Hub, enjoyed the 2009 Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) conference at The University of Auckland. The venue and surroundings provided a marvellous opportunity for people to interact.

Mark Nichols from Laidlaw College (a leader of three projects funded through the Northern Hub) challenged delegates to think critically about innovations in e-learning. Promoting debate, he suggested that “groupthink” (short for a group of people avoiding useful conflict and instead sharing a common consensus that is not critically evaluated) is particularly active in e-learning circles. Part of the reason is that Web 2.0 connections tend to narrow horizons; people tend to interact with others who think in the same ways



Attendees at the ASCILITE conference last December, at The University of Auckland.

they do, so conversations inevitably take place within a similar paradigm or system of thought.

Networking forum for academic staff developers

The second Tertiary Academic Staff Developers Education Network (TASDEN) forum was held during an afternoon of the ASCILITE conference. I was invited to give the 35 attendees a presentation on the strategic directions for Ako Aotearoa 2010 and beyond. My talk covered the increased focus the centre is placing on demonstrating impact for learners, as well as increasing our leverage with tertiary education organisations to look at how the systems themselves impact on learners, and how that will shape future policy.

Justin Sampson, Ako Aotearoa knowledge manager, updated the group on our website's functionality and second phase of development, and Ngahiwi Apanui, kaihautū Māori for Ako Aotearoa, presented on cultural awareness and Ako Aotearoa's Ako Framework – Te Tauāki Ako. The framework underpins the Māori strategy for Ako Aotearoa and was highlighted in December's issue of this newsletter.

Two workshops were also held: one looking at collaborative research, facilitated by Jane Stewart and Jacqui James (both from the Waikato Institute of Technology); the other led by Judith Honeyfield (from Bay of Plenty Polytechnic), entitled “Getting connected”, which looked at the future development of “signposts” – teaching tips for new staff.

The group's feedback about the forum was invaluable, telling us that:

- the Ako Aotearoa website is an excellent resource
- the forum offered good support for research with valuable contacts gained
- we had good speakers and break out groups
- the sessions were very informative – new ideas to support staff emerged and developed. These I found particularly useful.

Collegiality at TERNZ conference

The atmosphere at the 2009 Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand (TERNZ) conference, held at AUT University in November, was warm and collegial. A highlight included Dawn Garbett's (University of Auckland and 2008 national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winner) workshop “Teaching Clever: Reflecting on experience, heeding students' feedback, inviting peer review”. The workshop was aimed at educators who continue to ask how they can improve the learning outcomes for their students and themselves, and considered how we can generate data to help us better understand our teaching.

Another session discussed research into the national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards by Toni Tidswell, Sarah Stein et al (from the University of Otago). The research explores whether the awards help make better teachers; asking “does the national teaching award process influence the way teachers think about their teaching and learning practices after the award process?”.

We are particularly interested in this research because of our organisation's role in administering the national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards. Frequently in the course of our work we are privileged to work alongside award recipients and they tell us

that winning an award has brought about tremendous opportunities for career advancement and provided them with a chance to give something back to their organisations. They enjoy sharing their teaching techniques with others and being asked to contribute to the ongoing development of teaching and learning. One awardee commented to me after the workshop that she felt it was no simple feat to have received this recognition. It had involved hard work, with deliberate critical reflection and modifications to her style over many years.

We look forward to the completion of the research in due course.

National Project Fund – project highlights from the 2008 teams

Last year was interesting and productive for the National Project Fund. Seven new projects were selected for funding (see *Ako Aotearoa Alert*, Issue 7) and will get under way this year. The 2008-funded project teams have undertaken an impressive range of activities to promote and disseminate their work. We are delighted to share a selection of their highlights to date.

Te Kupenga Mātauranga o Taranaki's project, Exploring How Marae or Māori Community Courses Contribute to, and Meet, Community Aspirations for Development of Taranaki Reo, Tikanga and Identity, led by Kataraina Houia-Rongonui, is now contributing to the Taranaki Māori Tertiary Education Strategy. This connection will allow the completed strategy to impact upon community-based learning opportunities in an evidence-based manner.

The project, Dedicated Education Unit: Enhancing Clinical Teaching and Learning, run by Willie Fourie and his team from the Manukau Institute of Technology and Manukau District Health Board, secured additional funding from ProCare Health Limited. The project will involve trialling a community-based dedicated education unit, the first of its kind in New Zealand. The project has generated broad interest, and has had site visits from the Waikato District Health Board and Waikato Institute of Technology.

Several project teams have caught the interest of the media. Dr Elana Curtis was interviewed by Jim Perry on the Radio Waatea Te Puutaatara Programme about her project Tātou Tātou/Success for All: Improving Māori Success in Health Professional Degree-level Studies. John Bitchener's project, Best Practice in Supervisor Feedback to Thesis Writers in New Zealand Universities, also generated attention from the New Zealand Education Review (for the October *Higher Ground* supplement last year) and *TDU Talk* from the University of Waikato.

Tim Parkinson's team had the opportunity to present findings to date from their project Engaging Learners Effectively in Science, Technology, and Engineering: The Pathway from Secondary to University Education to Nobel laureate Carl Wieman while he was visiting from the University of British Columbia. This was an exciting and valuable experience for the project team.



National Project Fund 2008 – pictured are two University of Auckland project team leaders Dr Elana Curtis (second from left) and Dr Rhys Jones (second from right), with their team members Associate Professor Papatangi Reid, Dr Mark Brown, and Kirsty Weir, Ako Aotearoa research manager.

Nicholas Huntington's project, ITO Workplace Assessment Structures, has produced a literature review, *Assessment of Learning in the Workplace: A Background Paper*, available through the Ako Aotearoa website. Dr Rhys Jones's team presented an interesting and stimulating paper at the TERNZ conference on their project Assessing Cultural Competency in Workplace-based Professional Education.

Finally, Professor Tania Ka'ai's project, Te Kāwai Kūmara – A Pilot for the Synchronous Delivery of a Common Postgraduate in Te Reo Māori across Multiple Sites, was approved for the Master of Arts in Te Reo Māori by the Committee on University Academic Programmes in November.

Clearly, 2009 was a productive and rewarding year for the teams. We look forward to the continuing success of these projects and maximising the potential benefit they will have for learners.

Ako Aotearoa's new strategic plan

Dr Peter Coolbear foreshadows the release of Ako Aotearoa's new strategic plan at the end of March.

Ako Aotearoa is in the final stages of developing its new strategic plan for the period 2010–13. The plan reflects our priorities in the context of the Government's new Tertiary Education Strategy, its focus on outcomes for learners and the attention now being placed on course and qualification completion rates.

Our previous strategic plan for 2008–09 concentrated on increasing the focus of the sector on the importance of teaching and learning. We are now an established organisation with a clear sense of purpose. Our challenge is to ensure that what we do has the maximum benefit for tertiary learning.

Supporting good teaching practice will remain a vital part of our work, but it is not enough. We need to ensure that good teaching results in better learning and success in tertiary education and training. That is why we will continue to promote evidence-based improvement of practice. At the same time, we must ensure the system as a whole supports good teaching and learning – this is not just about individual teachers, it is about working towards a world-class tertiary system that values and fosters teaching excellence and seeks to provide the best possible opportunities for all learners to achieve the best possible outcomes.

While our mission, vision and goals remain broadly the same, our strategic themes have evolved considerably. Our current thinking is our new strategic plan will have seven themes as follows:

1. enhancing the service standards of tertiary organisations and aspiring to excellence
2. evidence-based enhancement of practice at the individual and organisational level
3. strategic and sustainable support for Māori educators and learners within an Ako framework
4. supporting Pacific peoples' advancement through tertiary education
5. hearing the learner voice
6. working in partnership and maximising leverage
7. synthesising and disseminating information to enhance teaching and learning.



These themes are deliberately broad and provide the basis for key actions in the coming years. These key actions will be reviewed regularly, informed by consultation with the sector on an ongoing basis.

The Ako Aotearoa Board is expecting to sign off the plan at the end of February with a view to its publication before the end of March. Copies will then be available via: www.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz.

AUSSE pilot for ITP sector

Dr Peter Coolbear, Ako Aotearoa, and Dr Hamish Coates, Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), report on their collaborative work with New Zealand's Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) sector to build their version of the powerful Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) tool.



Last December, Ako Aotearoa and ACER met with representatives of the ITP sector to discuss the project. This is the first time the sector will take part in a national study to determine student engagement, and it is exciting to see that 11 ITPs have committed to being involved in piloting AUSSE within their organisations in 2010.

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE), designed and managed by ACER, was developed to stimulate evidence-focused conversations about students' engagement in university study. Developed from the North American National Survey of Student Engagement, the AUSSE builds on methodology validated over four decades.

Hamish Coates, ACER principal research fellow and director of AUSSE, explains the student engagement survey reveals important insights into students' studies that provide institutions with key information to help them better support, engage and retain students.

"Collecting feedback from students themselves is beneficial in that it provides key insights into what tertiary students are actually doing. AUSSE provides insights that can help institutions better support student learning and development, monitor academic

standards and outcomes and ensure students are getting the most out of their tertiary experience," Dr Coates says.

Dr Peter Coolbear believes systematic collection of evidence using proven, internationally validated tools is well overdue in New Zealand and this is a critical next step in the development of a systematic approach to the improvement of tertiary teaching and learning. "Such data will be hugely valuable in institutional self-assessment processes and in assisting institutions in their decision making about how best to support their students," he says.

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In all, AUSSE provides data on 13 dimensions of the learning experience:

- student perceptions on six areas of learning:
 - academic challenge
 - active learning
 - student and staff interactions
 - enriching educational experiences
 - supportive learning environment
 - work-integrated learning; and
- seven outcome measures:
 - higher order thinking
 - general learning outcomes
 - individual and social development
 - average overall grade
 - departure intentions
 - overall satisfaction
 - career readiness.

While the data sets are owned by each institution, data collected can be benchmarked against aggregated data for tertiary education institutions internationally.

Both organisations believe AUSSE provides information that is imperative to ensuring the quality and productivity of the higher education system.

The 2009 administration of AUSSE surveyed more than 30,000 students from 35 Australian and New Zealand universities. The results are expected to be released in the first half of this year. For further information go to: <http://ausse.acer.edu.au>; www.acer.edu.au; www.akoatearora.ac.nz.

Institutional research – building a stronger response to the student voice

To build on our recent collaborative work with the Australian Council for Educational Research on AUSSE mentioned in the article above, we are pleased to confirm our support for an Institutional Research Colloquium, which will be held at the University of Otago 28–30 April.

The colloquium is a continuation of the AUSSE university workshop held in December, and representatives from each university will be able to share insights on the effective uses of institutional research and explore how AUSSE data can be used in conjunction with other student surveys collected within an organisation. The group will also explore future projects relating to the use of institutional research, and foster ongoing relationships within the university sector. A peer-reviewed colloquium proceeding will be developed and shared across the tertiary education sector.



Institutional Research Colloquium – 28–30 April – University of Otago. Joint organisers are Dr Keith Comer, coordinator of the Academic Development Group, University of Canterbury (pictured here) and Dr Jacques van der Meer, coordinator of Student Learning Development, University of Otago.



The New Zealand Educational Theses Database

(www.nzcer.org.nz/edtheses)

Beverley Thomson, information services manager at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), introduces an important database for researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

Built to provide support for research, teaching and professional development, this comprehensive database contains 9,000 masters and doctorate theses in education topics from New Zealand authors, as well as by New Zealanders at overseas tertiary institutions. It has been developed by the NZCER library, as part of the Ministry of Education's Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) Programme (www.educationcounts.govt.nz/themes/BES).

The database is accessible, well indexed and easy to use. Information includes bibliographic details, abstracts and, where possible, full text. Indexing is based on the descriptors of other well-known international education databases, such as ERIC, and adapted for New Zealand terminology. There are six education level descriptors: adult, early childhood education, primary, secondary, tertiary and training, along with advanced search options.

Please tell us of theses you think should be included, and any other feedback. You can send information to: Beverley.Thomson@nzcer.org.nz.

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