

## Tributes to visionary leadership

Dr John Hood's appointment as Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University recognises his "very special talents", says Auckland's Chancellor, John Graham.

"It is a brilliant — and to use a much loved John Hood word — 'stunning' achievement for a New Zealander to be appointed to such a great British university."

It reflected his varied experiences and achievements over many years and especially his outstanding leadership of the University of Auckland over the past four and a half years, said Mr Graham.

Enumerating Dr Hood's qualities he said he had:

- Gathered around him men and women of ability — always the sign of a special leader.
- Stated and carried out with vigour and wisdom a fresh and vital vision for a modern university.
- Set clear goals and directions for the University and taken people with him.
- Never deviated from his demand and search for excellence.
- Won support and understanding of the University from the wider Auckland and New Zealand community, and done much to promote the University on the international stage.
- Unquestionably become the leading national university figure in tertiary education, relentlessly questioning and assessing Government and Ministry policy.
- Defended academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The Council had totally supported Dr Hood's vision and goals for the University, said Mr Graham adding: "The direction we have been given and are pursuing under

this Vice-Chancellor's leadership will be continued."

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Raewyn Dalziel, described the offer to Dr Hood of "this most highly sought after Vice-Chancellorship" as "a tremendous tribute to his understanding of the modern university and its role, to his vision, to his ability to set direction and goals and to motivate people in achieving these".

That Oxford, for the first time in 900 years, had found a Vice-Chancellor outside of its own ranks was "a signal honour and one in which the University of Auckland can rightly share".

Professor Dalziel said that as well as feeling a great sense of pride staff would also feel a sense of considerable loss to the University and personally. Dr Hood had, with the help of many people, put it on to a new path towards excellence and international recognition.

"It will be very important for the University over the next year and into the future to maintain that sense of purpose, to continue to strive after the goals that we have set. We have claimed national pre-eminence and we must ensure that we make that claim good. We have set international benchmarks and we must match them."

Dr Hood's legacy to the University would be one of outstanding leadership, wise management and prudent financial control, said Professor Dalziel. But the main thing he had done was to "challenge us all to ask the question — are we doing this as well as we might be? And too often the answer was no.

"We were not complacent, but there was a sense that alternatives were not possible. Under his leadership many things have become possible." ■



Oxford from the Magdalen Tower. Photo Bill Williams



## Information Commons packed from start

Students enter the Kate Edger Information Commons.

From 7am on April 28, Hester Mountifield, manager of the Kate Edger Information Commons, was with her staff in their offices on the fourth floor awaiting the arrival of the first students to the brand-new building.

This was the climax of several years work, stepped up to a more and more challenging pace over the previous months.

From around 8.30am, the flow began. Staff watched the surge of students from the interim commons in the Maths/Physics Buildings whose doors were closed to the new Kate Edger Information Commons.

By 9am the computer workstations were fully in use, and they have remained so more or less ever since, at least between the hours of 8.30am and 8.30pm, says Hester.

The Kate Edger Information Commons is the largest facility of its kind in New Zealand, comparing favourably with similar international facilities in terms of size and resources, and offering more than 500 multi-purpose computer workstations, a number of electronic classrooms and an additional 500 plus flexible study and social spaces.

It differs from most other Information Commons facilities in having a separate building of its own rather than forming part of an existing library, says Hester. The real innovation lies in its bringing together three



## Comments from student users

### *Daniel, a second-year student in Science*

"It gives an extra place to work in addition to the Library, and it's good to be able to access email, and do work towards assignments here. The Information Commons is well-designed because it feels spacious. It's also an advantage to have the bank and shops nearby."

### *Milton, a postgraduate student in Theology*

"The workstations here are very useful because I haven't got a PC at home. I'm using it to learn computer skills. Compared with the facilities offered at the two other overseas universities I have attended, this is a fabulous and very helpful resource."

### *Rebecca, a first-year student in Science*

"Before the Information Commons opened, I used to study at the Library. This is better because there are many more computers; I also use the quiet space upstairs and the group study space downstairs but the computer stations are the most important for me."

components: the custom-built building providing a pleasant study environment, the appropriate technologies and the "student desktop" software, and integrated learning support services readily available close to the workstations.

The overall goal is to improve learning outcomes as well as the social environment for students on the City Campus.

Of the 500 computers provided, 398 are multi-purpose, allowing students to access standard software and University of Auckland enterprise systems such as CECIL, the e-learning platform; nDeva, the student enrolment system; the Portal; student webmail; and the University Library's electronic resources. Of the remaining computers 26 are express, offering limited services at speed, while 68 are in the training rooms.

Other equipment includes 14 printers, 18 photocopiers and four scanners, while remaining study spaces include 235 group study seats, 161 quiet study seats and 217 casual seats.



**Workstations have been fully occupied for most of every day since the building opened.**



**The first student to use the Information Commons on the day it opened was Law and Commerce student, Gregory Langton (seated), seen here with IC Consultant Ozlem Altinok.**

The Information Commons provides an enhanced learning environment for students by co-locating learning support providers such as the Student Learning Centre, ELSAC and core University Library Services. A key focus of the Information Commons is on IT, learning and information skills development.

The IC Help Service, managed by the University Library, is a new integrated support service that was established by merging the Electronic Campus HelpDesk with the University Library's Learning Services.

This service consists of two components. The highly visible IC Help area provides walk-in support to students, NetAccount sales and open consultation space, while the Information Commons Consultants provide a roving consultation service, assisting students using the workstations. Consultants also work shifts on the IC Helpdesk and assist with special projects.

These consultants are fellow students who have a knowledge of electronic resources, software and databases in the Information Commons, on the Internet and on the campus network.

In the first month, the help service dealt with around 10,000 inquiries, the majority on computing, though help was also sought on directions, information, research skills and CECIL.

ITSS and University Library staff worked together for almost a year to plan and implement the IT and support service environments in the Information Commons. "ITSS staff have been wonderful, working with us to get everything ready," says Hester. "We have established a great working relationship."

Hester's staff in the Information Commons consists of an Information Skills team, which runs training courses to develop information literacy skills; the IC Help team; and the Short Loan team, which looks after the short loan collection also located in the Information Commons.

The building is a very attractive, highly-glazed five-storey structure on the corner of Alfred and Symonds Streets, with a stainless steel mesh screen along the Symonds Street façade providing a thermal barrier and privacy from the road. The student areas are large spaces facing the street with beautiful views towards the Waitemata Harbour and the Domain.

Hester has already taken senior staff from Otago and Massey Universities on a tour through the new building. "They thought it was great, a beautiful design with a feeling of space and flow, a wonderful development for the University," she says.

University librarians and IT managers from Australian universities have also shown a strong interest in coming to visit after Hester presented a paper at a recent Australasian Educause Conference in Adelaide.

The Information Commons is open Monday to Friday from 7am to midnight and from 8am to 10pm at the weekends. ■



**Hester Mountifield**