

Vice-Chancellor appointed

Message from the Chancellor, Dr Royden Somerville QC

Tēnā koutou,

I am delighted to announce that Professor David Murdoch has accepted the invitation of the University Council to be Otago's next Vice-Chancellor, taking up the role early in 2022.

Professor Murdoch is currently the Dean and Head of Campus at University of Otago, Christchurch. He is a distinguished academic and recognised world-leader in the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, particularly pneumonia and other respiratory infections, and will be an outstanding leader who will ensure that we are well positioned to face the future and confront the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Professor Murdoch was selected from a pool of outstanding candidates after an extensive global recruitment search. He is an internationally-renowned researcher and teacher who has several global partnerships. He is a values-driven and empathetic academic leader who has a demonstrated record in developing positive organisational structures that encourage diversity and inclusiveness. Professor Murdoch is also a strong advocate for equity, global citizenship and Te Tiriti-led partnership.

I know that he is committed to building the University's future as a leading public university with a rich heritage, not only here in Aotearoa, but also internationally.

Last year, Professor Murdoch was the recipient of the University of Otago's Distinguished Research Medal. The Medal is awarded for outstanding scholarly achievement, including the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge, or development of concepts that lead to significant advances in the field.

He was the Head of Pathology at University of Otago, Christchurch during the Canterbury earthquakes and more recently has been central to plans to construct a new building for the campus as part of the city's planned Health Precinct.

Among Professor Murdoch's other notable achievements are a leading role in a landmark Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded global study of childhood pneumonia that changed the way the disease is diagnosed, treated and prevented in developing countries; and years of research that has re-written the world view on Legionnaires' disease. He is also the co-director of the One Health Aotearoa research alliance, a diverse network of infectious disease experts working to address health hazards at the human, animal and environmental interface.

Professor Murdoch has advised the Government during the COVID-19 pandemic and was one of three international experts invited to advise the Oxford University team developing a vaccine for COVID-19. Many will know him as a public communicator on COVID-19.

Professor Murdoch has told me he is honoured to take on the role of Vice-Chancellor and that he is looking forward to beginning in the role next year, and working with staff, students and the many groups of people who are important to the University's future.

Born in Dunedin, Professor Murdoch started school at Ōpoho Primary before moving to Christchurch at age six. He graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Otago in 1985, following that with a Doctorate in Medicine at the University in 2003. He also has a Master of Science degree in Epidemiology from the University of London.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (infectious diseases), the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (microbiology) and the Faculty of Science, Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. He also holds a Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene from the University of Liverpool and a Diploma from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Professor Murdoch's career awards and distinctions:

- University of Otago Distinguished Research Medal (2020)
- Outstanding Leadership Award, University of Otago, Christchurch (2020)
- Fellow, American Academy of Microbiology (2019)
- Honorary member, Holistic Health Society – Nepal (2017), for outstanding service and contribution in the health sector of Nepal.
- Fellow, Infectious Diseases Society of America (2005)
- Honorary life member, Himalayan Rescue Association, Nepal (1988)

I know you will join me in welcoming Professor Murdoch to his new position when he begins. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Helen Nicholson, who is currently Acting Vice-Chancellor, for her invaluable leadership during this time and the months to come.

Nāku noa, nā

Dr Royden Somerville QC

Chancellor, University of Otago