

Otago dental school earns prestigious top 10 ranking



Above: the proposed new Dental facilities. Image courtesy of Jasmax.

Otago dental alumni have new bragging rights, thanks to a recent report ranking the Faculty of Dentistry among the best in the world.

The Otago dentistry program is ranked eighth worldwide in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2015, beating some of

world's most prestigious institutions, including American Ivy league heavyweights Harvard and Columbia, the UK's University College London and Australia's University of Melbourne and University of Sydney.

"We expected the faculty to do well, but a top 10 ranking was a pleasant surprise," says Professor Paul Brunton, the newly appointed Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry. "It is a welcome endorsement that will help us to continue to attract the best and brightest students, faculty and staff."

The annual international league table is compiled based on academic reputation, research impact and employer reputation. The 2015 rankings are the first to rank Dentistry as a subject and it also marks the first time a New Zealand university has had a subject ranked in the world's top 10.

Professor Brunton says the quality of the Dental School's research portfolio and teaching were two areas of strength which helped Otago to rate so highly in the QS report.

The timing could not be better as the University of Otago has recently revealed detailed plans of a \$100-million investment in the Dental School and construction of a new clinical building beginning later this year. The new facility will boast new teaching, research, laboratory and clinical facilities and provide modern equipment – including 211 new dental chairs – 61 more than at present – that will enable the Dental School to improve the quality of instruction to its 600-plus undergraduate and graduate students.

Both the QS ranking, published in April, and the expansion of the Dental School have been helpful in raising the profile of Otago's Dental programmes in the broader community and are a solid platform on which to continue to promote oral health as an important part of overall health, Professor Brunton says.

"Oral health is fundamental to good health. We have the opportunity to be more visible, more vocal in promoting the important role we play in keeping our communities strong and healthy," Professor Brunton explains.

Special needs dentistry and graduate dental programmes are other areas where Professor Brunton says the Dental School will be able to grow its expertise in the coming years thanks to state of the art facilities and greater capacity.