2024
Donor Impact Report

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

NGĀ HOE A KUPE PATHFINDER SCHOLARSHIP



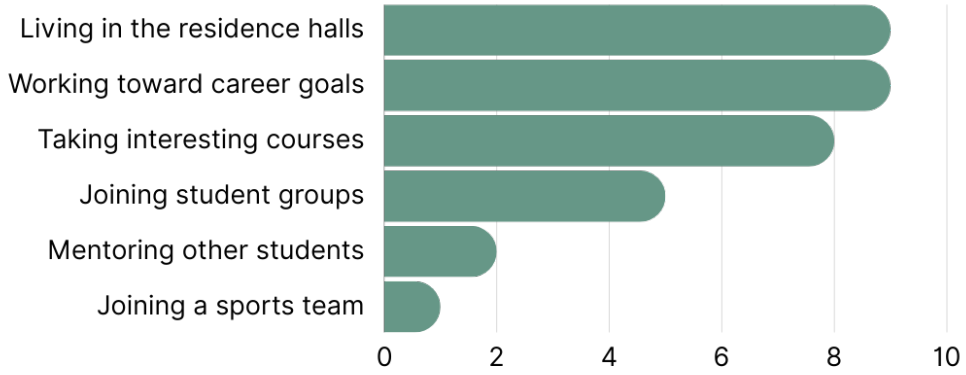
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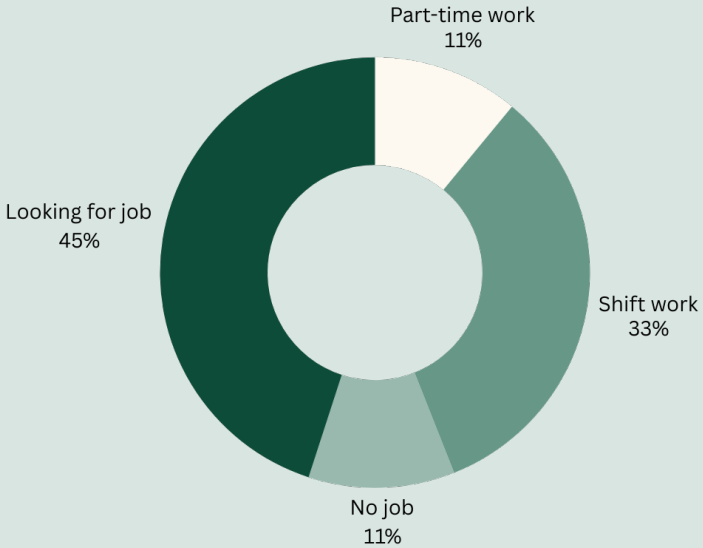
Thanks to your incredible support, talented students from underserved schools can now achieve their academic dreams. Seven out of the nine Kupe scholars in the 2024 cohort are the first in their families to go to university and likely wouldn't be able to attend without the support of this scholarship.

Your generosity changes lives.

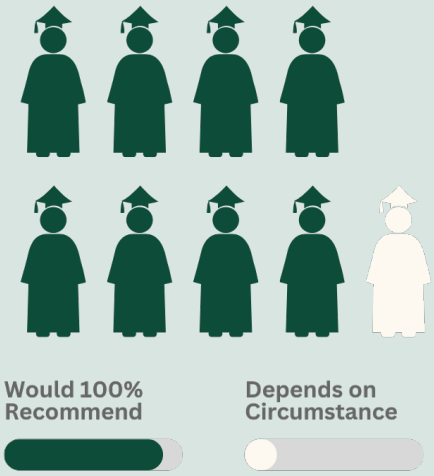


The Kupe scholars were asked what most interested them about university life.

While they have a range of interests, they are most excited for their newfound independence and the chance to work toward a fulfilling career.



More than one third of the cohort supports themselves with some form of part-time work.



Eight out of nine recipients would unequivocally recommend the scholarship to other students. Only one recipient commented that it would depend on a student's circumstances.

A WORD FROM OUR PROGRAMME MANAGER

This year marks a full-circle moment for the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship programme. Our first cohort of graduates received their degrees in May, and we have talented rangatahi enrolled in courses throughout every year of university. The flagship class (*read their story on page 4*) has paved the way for many more generations of Kupe scholars, and I couldn't be prouder to see our programme represented in both the active student body and the alumni community.

While many aspects of the 2024 cohort are the same as years prior, there is a distinct sense of camaraderie amongst the first years that feels quite new. The introductory Prep Programme was held in-person again, which is a great way for the students to build the support network that will carry them through the next three years. I'm particularly impressed by the resilience of this class and their ability to transform the challenges of their past—complex family trauma, homelessness, debilitating medical conditions—into motivation for their present studies. It's thrilling to watch them dive head-first into university life with such enthusiasm against all odds.

When I take a step back to look at the Kupe programme as a whole, it suddenly feels as if it's transformed from a small house into an entire village—a village that will only continue to grow as the years go by. Next year marks our transition out of the programme's pilot phase as we commit to solidifying this incredible scholarship into a cornerstone of the Te Herenga Waka legacy.

Our hope for the Kupe programme is to see it grow in both capacity and connection. One of our goals is to offer built-in internships that allow each recipient to gain valuable work experience alongside their courses that prepare them for a future career. We also aim to create more opportunities for the different cohorts to learn from each other and provide critical social support once students move out of residence halls. But most importantly, our mission is to expand the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship programme to ensure that every college in the greater Wellington region can send a deserving student to university who otherwise would not be able to attend.

Bringing this vision to fruition will make a profound impact on the lives of young people in Wellington, their whānau, and the communities they serve. However, we can only achieve this with the continued support of compassionate, innovative, and generous donors like you.

Thank you to everyone who supports the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder scholarship programme. I look forward to building our future together.

Gail Ah-Hi
Poutaki Karahipi Taurite
Equity Scholarships Programme Manager





From left to right: Shekyna Lolouta, Maepa Saolotoga, Shaniyah Munroe, Ivy Beck, and Dianna Revell

First generation graduates pave the way for underserved Pasifika and Māori students

As the giddy whirl of graduation gowns and well-deserved celebrations begin to die down, there's often one question on the mind of every new graduate: What's next?

Many will enthusiastically set their sights on the bright futures ahead of them without looking back at the late-night study sessions and jam-packed schedules that characterised their uni days. But for a small cohort of students, graduation is just as much a time to reflect on the legacy they've left behind as it is an opportunity to step forward.

Attending university wasn't on the cards for Dianna Revell, Maepa Saolotoga, Shekyna Lolouta, Shaniyah Munroe, and Ivy Beck. Financial hardship, family obligations, and limited support throughout high school placed obstacle after obstacle in their path to obtaining a degree. In 2020, the trailblazing Ngā Hoe e Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship programme was established to alleviate those barriers so rangatahi from underserved communities could pursue their academic dreams.

In addition to covering full tuition, first-year housing, and course materials, the scholarship provides a one-week prep programme before the students' first year to ensure a smooth transition into uni life. After three years of hard mahi, the flagship cohort of Kupe scholars graduated this past week surrounded by supportive whānau and friends.

Supporting future school leavers

While each recipient pursued different degrees and extracurricular activities, the common thread that bound this cohort together was a desire to use their academic accomplishments to serve the generation coming up behind them.

"I majored in criminology with the hope of helping our young Pasifika and Māori students," says Kupe scholar Dianna Revell. "I attended a low decile school and I would see quite a lot of violence and crime on a daily basis. Finding a way to contribute to my community to help lower those statistics is a passion project of mine."

Dianna isn't alone in her dreams of making secondary school a safer, more supportive environment for students in underserved areas. Kupe scholar Shekyna Lolouta made an impact on the lives of young learners even before completing her degree.

"I've been working as a teacher and attendances assistant at my old high school, Naenae College," says Shekyna "It's such a great way to give back and give those kids the help that I wish I'd had. I want to support them and encourage them to know that they can do anything if they put their mind to it."

Apart from working with high schoolers, several of this year's Kupe graduates became resident advisors during their time at Te Herenga Waka to support first year students transitioning into residential life.

"I found my passion for working with the community, especially with youth, during an internship with the Ministry for Pacific People," explains Kupe scholar Maepa Saolotoga. "In my second year I decided to become an RA to help guide the Māori and Pasifika students. I liked being in a position where I could help younger people get on the right path and give them hope."

Navigating tough times together

While these young women often focused on creating community for others, they reflected on how crucial it was to have their own support network to cheer them on through the highs and lows of university life.

"What stood out for me over the past three years is the relationships I built with so many amazing people who helped me throughout my journey," says Shekyna. "Coming to uni was a culture shock, and I didn't start off with the confidence I have now. The future I have in front of me is because of all the support I had throughout my time here."

Culture shock wasn't the only challenge the Kupe scholars faced. Imposter syndrome, isolation, difficult classes, and family losses provided plenty of challenges for each of the recipients to navigate.

"My father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer halfway through my first year," Dianna says. "It was hard to keep up with my studies as well as caring for my family and making sure we were up to date with my dad's bills and doctor appointments. I contemplated giving up a few times, but opportunities like this scholarship don't come around every day. I was quite stubborn to not let this degree go, even when my dad passed away last May. I kept pushing because I knew I'd be the first in my family to graduate."

Discovering who you are

But the past three years weren't just about writing papers and passing tests; the inaugural Kupe cohort expressed that this life-changing opportunity deepened their sense of who they are outside of an academic institution.

"I majored in Pacific Studies and Samoan Studies, and those courses made me realise how important it is to know your identity," says Maepa. "I thought I knew so much about my culture since I came from the islands, but as I did my papers, I realised there was so much I didn't know."

Several other Kupe scholars echoed the sentiment that their perception of their own identity had shifted during their studies.

"I know that for the majority of us islanders we always doubt ourselves and we feel like university is not for us," says Shekyna. "Financial problems are always a top issue for us Pasifika and Māori students, but I hope more students can use the scholarship to change their life and change that mindset."

We are so proud of everything these talented rangatahi have accomplished and the foundations they've laid to pave the way for future generations of students.

A WORD FROM THE STUDENTS YOU HAVE HELPED

Our 2024 Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship recipients share what a difference your gift is making to them.



"My mother passed away when I was two years old. Her death was so heavy on my father that he fled after her funeral and was never really involved in my upbringing, so my nan brought me up. Everything I do, I do for her. University wouldn't have been an option without the scholarship, and I see this as a chance to break stereotypes about Māori education limitations. My aspiration in life is to try to understand the minds of Māori inmates and offer them proper rehabilitation when released to prevent the likelihood of them reoffending. I'm extremely grateful that my dreams can now become a reality through this scholarship."

Keita Moses

Bachelor of Arts in Criminology and Te Reo Māori



"I dream of passing the bar and becoming a lawyer in the next four years so I can work in medical malpractice or dispute resolution. Receiving this scholarship has given me the chance to realise that dream. It's supported me not only financially, but also with the opportunity to stay in the residence halls and build relationships with other Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder scholarship recipients. I'm so grateful for the mentorship and learning support I've already received. Thank you to the Victoria University team and donors who made this scholarship possible."

Shania Meynell

Bachelor of Laws



"As the eldest child of six siblings, this scholarship is truly a blessing. Before attending Vic, my main role was to look after my younger siblings (who are all under 11 years old) and my elderly grandma who needs a lot of help with eating and bathing. My family was ecstatic when I got the news that I was one of the recipients because both my grandma and father excelled academically but were unable to attend university due to financial hardship. This scholarship broke this generational trend for my family, and we are all so grateful for it."

Tiatia Palakua

Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting



“Without the scholarship I would have to work part-time alongside my studies, and as someone with epilepsy, it wouldn’t be a smooth journey. This award has allowed me the financial freedom to chase my dreams of studying Political Science and Māori Studies to improve the lives of Māori through policy. Education has always been important to my family, and the Kupe programme really pushes me out of my comfort zone, encourages me to make new connections, and allows me to be an ambassador for my culture. My goal is to one day be in Parliament where I can change stereotypes and better the lives of my community.”

Wanita Muldrock
Bachelor of Arts in Māori Studies and Political Science



“My family is originally from Samoa, and in 2012 my parents made the difficult decision to immigrate to New Zealand in search of better educational opportunities for me and my siblings. I aspire to use this scholarship to pursue a Bachelor of Design and Social Innovation. From an early age my fascination with art and design was evident in all my doodles, and I dream of creating a clothing brand that is both aesthetically appealing and connected to the principles of love, unity, and strength that guide me in all my interactions with my community.”

Faamanatu Leiataua
Bachelor of Design and Innovation



“I was born in Auckland, but I was raised in my Samoa for 16 years. My mother passed away in 2019 which was really challenging for me. In 2021, I moved to New Zealand to live with my aunty. She is our family’s only financial supplier and provides for my sick grandma in Samoa and the rest of our family in New Zealand. She wouldn’t have been able to pay for my education on top of all these expenses, so the scholarship has made it possible for me to have a proper ‘university life’ and attend courses past the first year. Right now, I’m the only one in my family in university, so I feel it’s my role to do my best to graduate and get a stable job as a lawyer to help provide for my family.”

Sophia Tupolo
Bachelor of Laws



“Thanks to the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinders scholarship, I became the first person in my family to attend university. While many in my family were academically capable, financial constraints prevented them from pursuing higher education. My whānau works hard to make ends meet, so continuing my studies is a privilege that I am fortunate to experience. My goal is to become a strong female MPI business owner who makes a positive impact on my community.”

Hazel Albert
Bachelor of Commerce in Commerical Law and International Business



"I had a very abusive childhood and constantly shifted between different homes. I have worked hard to break the toxic cycles in my family, and I am now the first to attend university with the help of this scholarship. I avoid re-living the trauma by working hard to maintain financial stability, staying positive while studying, and keeping a strong connection with my grandparents. By majoring in Pasifika Studies and Art History, I aspire to pursue a career that challenges negative narratives and Eurocentric perspectives on my people. I desire to highlight the beauty and mana within our Māori and Pasifika communities to help develop fresh perspectives of our cultural identities. Thank you to everyone involved in blessing me with the life-long taonga of this scholarship."

Kataraina Tumatahi Tahana-Reese
Bachelor of Arts in Art History and Pacific Studies



"Before moving into the residence halls, I lived with my dad who was on the benefit because of an injury, and I took care of my younger brother a lot. I was the only person in the house with a full-time job but wasn't sure how I was going to make university work. When I received the scholarship, I was over the moon because I knew that this would be a real chance for me to succeed at becoming a psychologist and give a better life to my family."

Evania Bishop
Bachelor of Psychology in Criminal Justice and Psychological Science



THANK YOU

Please continue to change lives with your generosity.

Development Office—Te Kura Tangata

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