2025
Impact Report

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

NGĀ HOE A KUPE PATHFINDER SCHOLARSHIP



THE STORY OF YOUR IMPACT BEGINS HERE

51
SCHOLARHIPS AWARDED SINCE PROGRAMME LAUNCH

131
GENEROUS DONORS

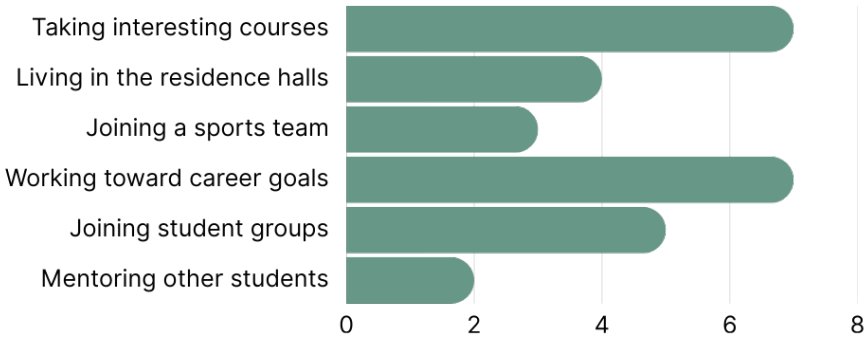
8
SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED IN 2025

Thanks to your support, talented students who come from under-served backgrounds can now pursue their academic dreams. Your gift doesn't just remove financial barriers—it fuels ambition, nurtures leadership, and opens doors to a bright future.

Your generosity changes lives. Thank you.

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

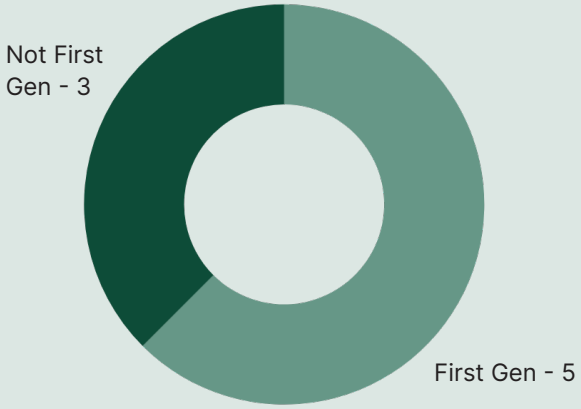
While they have a range of interests, they are most excited to dive into their courses and work toward a fulfilling career.



Five of the eight recipients in the 2025 Kupe cohort are the first in their family to attend University.

Your gift supports both their dreams and the aspirations of the generations that come before them.

Are you the first in your family to attend uni?



"I'm astounded that you give with only the hope that a kid like me could have a decent shot at following his dreams. One day, I hope to help others just as you have done for me."**—Zung Bawm Lahtaw, 2025 Kupe recipient**

A WORD FROM OUR PROGRAMME MANAGER

As of this year, the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarships programme is officially out of its pilot phase. It required a lot of collaborative effort to get to this point, but we are well on our way to solidifying these scholarships as a permanent fixture of the Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington legacy. I'm grateful to have your support as we navigate the winding road ahead.

In February, we welcomed a new cohort of students and watched them take their first steps toward a bright future. And then a few months later, we celebrated several Kupe graduates who are now taking the leap into adulthood and pursuing their career goals after a successful undergraduate experience (read Nicole's story on page 6).

While much of the programme's day-to-day functioning continues as normal, this year was marked by an uptick in the number of students requesting extra support around community and wellbeing. To address these needs, we integrated the Kupe Prep Programme into the existing Pasifika Orientation Week to broaden the recipients' sense of connection to the University and their peers. Mixing our new cohort into a larger orientation programme connected them to more first-years with similar cultural backgrounds, family circumstances, and worldviews than our small Prep Programme could ever offer.

A core component of the Pasifika Orientation Week included an interactive discussion on "mental wealth" led by Le Va. This incredible organisation facilitates workshops that promote wellbeing practices for youth who are navigating challenging transitions, such as starting university. The 2025 Kupe cohort reported this workshop was their favorite element of the entire orientation; not only did it set them up with personal stress-reduction skills, but it also connected them to a wide network of peers they can rely on for support later down the line.

Listening to our students' call for an expanded network of care has benefited the Kupe programme in many positive ways. It gave us the opportunity to invite collaboration with other groups on campus, increase our focus on wellbeing resources, and further knit the programme into the fabric of the University.

None of these refinements would have been possible without your support. Your generosity is truly life-changing for these talented rangatahi who are working hard to turn their dreams—and the dreams of their whānau—into reality. No matter what obstacles they come up against during their studies, they always tell me that they are determined to succeed because of how many people believe in their potential to accomplish great things. People like you.

Thank you again for being such a critical part of the Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarships programme. I will keep you updated on our progress as we grow, shift, and settle into maintaining this work at the highest possible level with longevity in mind.

Gail Ah-Hi
Poutaki Karahipi Taurite
Equity Scholarships Programme Manager



A WORD FROM THE STUDENTS YOU HAVE HELPED

Our 2025 Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship recipients share what a difference your gift is making to them.



"My parents migrated to New Zealand from the islands of Tuvalu and Kiribati. My dream is to become a lawyer or data analyst. You all have contributed to making me a step closer to my dreams. I can't imagine the number of hardships I would've faced without this scholarship. When I walk across that graduation stage, I'll remember this scholarship and the donors who contributed!"

Teniku Vailahi
Bachelor of Law, Bachelor of Commerce in Information Systems



"My older sister is currently the only one earning an income for my family of four, so it would've been extremely hard to attend uni without this scholarship. It was a huge relief to receive because I didn't have any other options. I hope to become a geologist and potentially do a Master's degree in the future. Thank you very much for being a donor – you've given me so many more opportunities than I ever dreamed of having."

Kyros Repia, Chloe Wright Scholar
Bachelor of Science in Earth Science



"My family arrived in New Zealand as refugees from South Sudan in 2017. I'm the first of my eight siblings to pursue a degree, and prior to receiving the scholarship my family was dependent on a single income. This would have made it difficult to attend University as I would have most likely had to get a job to aid in supporting my family. The scholarship helped me pursue my dreams without worrying about tuition. I plan on using my degree to create products that help people in my home country with electricity and to also create prosthetics for people in New Zealand. Thank you for giving me the freedom to fully focus on my education and future goals."

Emanuel Atak
Bachelor of Science in Engineering



“Going to university without this scholarship would have been a pipe dream for me, and it’s made dreams come true that I thought were impossible. I want to become an architect so I can contribute to sustainable architecture that improves the living conditions of those who are under-resourced. I want to work alongside my iwi and use a Māori perspective for the structures I create so they strengthen communities, preserve traditions, encourage human connection, and ultimately improve the quality of life for all. Thank you for your generosity, kindness, and ability to see something great in me.”

Asher Rei
Bachelor of Architectural Studies



“Living in a small town like Wainuiomata, you witness a lot of criminal activity and I’ve experienced the shame that comes with being part of a gang-affiliated family. However, I want to be a role model for our future generations and I’m an advocate for Māori youth in my community who are unable to speak about the issues surrounding us. It’s my goal to become a lawyer and use my degree in every way that I can to be an advocate for Māori youth in need of support. Thank you to the donors who’ve made it possible for me to have a better life and career. I’m excited to share this gift with my family and community.”

Anahera Eru
Bachelor of Law



“I’m a former refugee from Myanmar. I’m the eldest in my family and am one of the older kids in my community, so I try to be a role model for them. I want to get into postgraduate studies for Machine Learning and hopefully make it to a PhD. After that, I want to be able to work in a top tech company and contribute to the AI revolution. Words can’t express my gratitude for your kind and generous hearts. I’m astounded that you give with only the hope that a kid like me could have a decent shot at following his dreams. One day, I hope to help others just as you have done for me.”

Zung Bawm Lahtaw, Ralph & Eve Seelye Charitable Trust Scholar
Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence and Mathematics



“My goal for the future is to start my own law firm and create opportunities (such as this scholarship) for people with the same aspirations and perseverance as me. I want to be the beating heart and voice of my people, my ocean, my Pacific. “Thank you” does not summarise the depth of my gratitude. This scholarship is more than support, it’s a contract of trust, a belief in my potential, and a commitment to my responsibility to give back.”

Efeso Tuuga
Bachelor of Arts in Criminology, Bachelor of Law



“I grew up facing significant challenges after losing my dad at the age of 15, which brought financial and personal struggles for my family. Without the scholarship, it would have been nearly impossible to pursue my degree, and I wouldn’t have the chance to reach my full potential. I have ambitious goals and hope to contribute to organisations through the fields of operations, logistics, and information systems. Thank you for your generosity and support—this scholarship has given me confidence, encouragement, and a sense of purpose knowing that there are people who believe in my potential.”

Alexander Symons
Bachelor of Commerce in Information Systems and Management

Success story



Growing up with foster siblings inspires a passion for supporting people through crisis

Nicole Odeyami’s childhood was full of movement, change, and connection. Her mother was a foster parent, and they frequently welcomed new children into their home who were experiencing complicated family dynamics.

“I grew up in a home where people were always coming and going, each with their own story, needs, and energy,” says Nicole. “It taught me empathy early on and made me adaptable.”

When Nicole began university in 2021 as part of Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's inaugural Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder scholarship cohort, she found that her upbringing perfectly prepared her for life in a hall of residence.

The diverse backgrounds and mix of personalities coexisting under one roof felt incredibly familiar. When the opportunity arose to become a residential adviser at Te Puni Village, it seemed like a natural next step.

"Growing up I was surrounded by people from all walks of life—many of whom carried trauma," explains Nicole. "I saw early on how powerful it was when someone felt seen, heard, and genuinely supported. That shaped my values. On top of that, I personally know how hard it can be to open up and ask for help. I wanted to be someone who makes it feel safer to do so."

Without the Kupe scholarship, Nicole wouldn't have experienced life in a hall of residence. The scholarship programme, which supports a cohort of eight to ten students each year, provides full tuition, first-year housing, academic monitoring, and a suite of other services for rangatahi facing financial hardship.

Nicole graduated earlier this year with a Bachelor of Health in Health Promotion and a minor in Cultural Anthropology. She cites the Kupe scholarship as the catalyst for the immense growth she experienced throughout her degree.

"The Kupe scholarship changed everything," says Nicole. "It didn't just ease the financial burden. It gave me a sense of belonging and belief. Knowing I was chosen for something so significant gave me confidence I didn't even know I needed. It allowed me to say 'yes' to opportunities like leadership roles, mentoring, and volunteering without the constant worry of how I'd get by. The Kupe Scholarship didn't just fund my education—it helped me find my purpose."

During her two years as a residential adviser, Nicole encountered many challenging scenarios that required delicacy, empathy, and strength. She was the first point of contact for students who needed someone to talk to about academic stress, mental health challenges, or interpersonal conflict.

"Being there for students during their hardest moments gave me a deep sense of purpose and reminded me why I chose this path in the first place," Nicole says.

"Over the years, I supported students through some incredibly difficult moments—mental health issues, feelings of isolation, and identity struggles. Being the person who could help in those situations really shaped who I am and what I want to continue doing."

In addition to being a residential adviser, Nicole worked with Te Amaru—Disability Services on campus during her final year to provide support for the disability community at Te Herenga Waka. While it was a temporary role, it gave her the chance to pursue the kind of mahi she wants to continue after graduation. Even though she's still searching for the right opportunity in today's tough job market, Nicole is determined to find work that serves people in need of extra support.

"I'm hoping to keep working with our minority and disparity communities, whether that's within the University or through other organisations," Nicole says. "I'm currently exploring opportunities in the youth and wellbeing space, and I'm feeling excited and hopeful. I know that whatever comes next, the work will be centered on care, connection, and empowerment."

Thank you
for your support

