



Kia orāna, mālō e lelei, tālofa lava,
fakaalofa lahi atu, ni sa bula vinaka,
taloha ni, halo olgeta, ia orana,
ko na mauri, waa waa waa, aloha mai,
and warm Pacific greetings.

Pacific peoples are pioneers in navigating the constantly changing landscape of Ka Moananuiākea, the vast and expansive Pacific Ocean. Today, our ancestral home is still a place of expansive possibilities and even the ocean of the future, where the fate of the world may be decided.

The University of Waikato is a place where Pacific learners have thrived for generations. When you study at Waikato, you follow in the footsteps of Pacific leaders, engineers, nurses, lawyers, educators, scientists, technologists, artists, and innovators who have changed the story for Pacific people.

You too can write your own story, get a life-changing education, and earn a university qualification that will open many doors and opportunities. Like our voyaging ancestors, you may go to new places and challenge the horizon.

Our programmes, activities and events are designed to help you i mua (Hawai'i)- that is, to go forward and lead from the front. Our team and wider aiga will be with you on every step of that journey.



Dr Keakaokawai (Keaka) Varner Hemi
Assistant Vice-Chancellor Pacific

Why Choose Waikato

At Waikato, you'll join a vibrant Pacific family where culture, identity, and leadership are celebrated. We see education as a journey of growth - not just in study, but in who you are becoming. Strong ties with iwi and hapū, alongside Pacific communities, enrich this journey and support your success.

Our suite of Pacific initiatives reflect deeply embedded cultural values of learning, leadership, and service, and offer smoothed learner pathways from high school into study, through your degree and beyond.

From the start, you'll meet aunties, uncles and cousins that you did not know that you had through the Imua Initiative and Palu Navigators. Every programme is rooted in Pacific languages, cultures, and leadership.

You'll study in a place where Pacific research, language, and leadership thrive - from degrees in Climate Change to the new Graduate Medical School (2028). Leaders like Tafoaimalo Professor Leilani Tuala-Warren are shaping the future right here.

Culture and academic excellence go hand in hand. Pacific stories are celebrated through Pacific language weeks, independence days, and everyday connection brings culture to life on campus. Our Pacific Strategic Plan recognises your mana - and invites you to lead with it.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

FOR THE PEOPLE
KO TE TANGATA

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Culture, curriculum, connection: what brought Associate Professor Vaka to Waikato

In nursing, Dr Sione Vaka found his calling, and at the University of Waikato, he found a second home.

Specialising in mental health, Dr Vaka was drawn to the University by its strong Pacific and Māori representation, as well as its integrated mental health curriculum.

He is now the Poutumatua Pasifika Tausioifua Associate Professor and Associate Dean Pacific in the Division of Health.

He says he finds Waikato's Pacific community to be diverse and cohesive, and he sees the University embracing different cultures.

"We see strong representation from Fijian, Kiribati and other Pacific groups who are visible and active. It's a representative mix and notably, a cohesive one in how we collaborate and support each other."

There are initiatives to support Pacific students on campus as well. Dr Vaka said the Imua initiative, led by Assistant Vice-Chancellor Pacific Dr Keaka Hemi and her team, is a powerful example of student and staff support in action.

"Within the Division of Health, our whānau gathers in the Fono at the Fale - a culturally grounded space where we host mentoring sessions, share kava, and sit together on the fala (mat).



From big waves to big ideas: surfing scholar carves her path at Waikato

The phrase "you can't be what you can't see" has shaped Dr Mihi Nemani's journey, from the surf breaks of Hawai'i to the lecture theatres of the University of Waikato.

Dr Nemani, who is Samoan and Māori, wants to increase representation of Pacific people in universities and ultimately become a professor.

Now a Senior Lecturer in Sport Development, she's on her way to her goal and is seeing positive progress at Waikato.

Having joined the University over a decade ago to do her Master's and PhD, she says during that time she has seen the University's support and recognition of Pacific cultures grow.

"There is a very strong Pacific culture at the University of Waikato. [As a Pacific person], you will be taken care of - there are Pacific staff here, there's support for Pacific students. All that sets you up to be successful here at Waikato and that's really purposeful," she says.

"Our celebration of important Pacific occasions, including all the various Pacific language weeks, shows we're embracing the Pacific cultures as individual cultures."

Dr Nemani says there's plenty of different programmes to help Pacific students feel comfortable, along with activities that are run with Pacific staff and students together.

An Ecosystem of Success: Aiga, Culture and Community

At Waikato, support begins the moment you arrive. From your first lecture to final assessments, you'll never walk the journey alone. Our support programmes are built on the belief that success is something we achieve together.



Imua Initiative

Leadership and success in your first year

Rooted in the Pacific concept of i mua (Hawai'i) - to lead from the front and move forward - this programme is for all first-year Pacific students aimed at being set up for success. With a focus on manākitanga, skills-building, and cultural connection, Imua helps you gain confidence, achieve success, and grow as a leader.



Palu Undergraduate Navigators

One-on-one peer mentorship and guidance

Inspired by the master navigators of Micronesia, Palu Navigators are senior Pacific students who offer one-on-one support to undergraduate students, whether it's study tips or campus services.



Calling the Island

Preparing for careers, further study and finishing well

Named after a traditional Pacific navigation technique where the voyager's focus is so strong it feels the island comes to them (Hoturoa Kerr-Barclay), this final-year initiative helps Pacific students complete their journey through workshops on academic writing to career readiness.



Famili is Part of the Journey

At Waikato, we know when one student succeeds, the whole family does. That's why we welcome 'āiga, whānau and communities into the heart of the journey.

'Āiga on Campus

A dedicated day for Pacific families to explore campus, meet staff, and celebrate with connection and kai. It's your chance to see how your student will be supported and how you stay part of their success.

Pacific Voices Matter

Pacific students bring deep knowledge, strength and purpose. At Waikato, we make space for those voices - in class, on stage, and in the community. Bring your whole self. Stand proud in your identity, your culture, and your future.

Why did you choose Waikato?



Professor Asofou So'o - Pacific Scholar in Residence

"I chose Waikato University because it was, and still is, one of best universities in New Zealand in terms of the many quality programmes it offered. I came back to Waikato University in the mid-1980s to undertake studies towards a master's degree for the same reason."



Saumaleula Gardenia Lau Young - BSocSc, Lecturer

"I chose Waikato because our community is here. You can definitely go into Waikato and find your Pacific community here. That's really key to getting through study, is studying within your community and knowing that you'll be supported throughout the journey. It's not going to be easy at times, but that's why it's crucial to find your community here."



Tyler Jahnke Smith - PhD, Powerlifter

"One thing that really twisted my arm was the student ambassador who came to my high school and showed that Waikato has all these programmes with Māori and Pacific people; that got my attention. The ultimate reason was the fact that the degrees at Waikato are just so well-rounded."



Agatha Gibbons - PhD, Pacific Health Science Academy Coordinator

"I chose Waikato for its strong reputation in research and innovation, and its commitment to practical, hands-on learning that prepares students for real-world careers. Waikato's recognition of bicultural values and connection with Māori and Pacific communities aligned with my own values. While its balance of city life and nature, also appealed to me."

Scholarships and Awards

We have many scholarships to support the journey. Each one recognises leadership, academic excellence, and bright Pacific futures. These awards offer more than financial support - they're an investment in your growth, your confidence, and your potential to lead.

Edna Money Future Pacific Leaders' Scholarship

Up to \$18,000 over three years

Supports new Pacific students passionate about leadership and community impact.

Pacific Excellence Scholarship

Up to \$20,000 over three years

Celebrates academic success in NCEA or equivalent - recognising Pacific excellence in school and beyond.

Te Paewai o te Rangi: Outstanding Academic Achievement

Up to \$30,000 over three years

For students of outstanding academic achievement - including Pacific students - ready to reach higher.

Ko Te Tangata School Leaver Scholarship

\$5,000

Awarded to school leavers with strong academic results - recognising your commitment to learning as you begin your journey.

TAPA (Tertiary Achievement in Pacific Ako) Awards

Up to \$2,000

This award celebrates well-rounded Pacific student leaders who excel academically and actively contribute to both the Pacific and wider communities.



Find more information
about scholarships on
our website.

