



Ala Mai Pasifika

NEWSLETTER FOR PACIFIC ISLAND STUDENTS, UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

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Greetings, Kia ora, Ni sa bula, Kam na mauri, Talofa lava, Fakalofa lahi atu,
Halo olgeta, Malo e lelei, Kia orana

Graduation Special

Welcome to this special second edition of 'Ala Mai Pasifika'!

Graduation week has come and gone and we are very pleased to be able to publish a few interviews with some of our Pacific Island students.

We hope that these interviews will give prospective students some ideas of what to expect when they come to university.

Look out for the June issue. From then on, the newsletter will come out bi-monthly.

If you are not on our current mailing list please ring or write and we will see that you get the next copy.

If you have some news or something you want advertised in the next issue we'd really like to hear from you.

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Congratulations to all those graduates who put in a lot of time, hard work and effort to complete their degrees!

Sefika Siaosi Niuvai

(BA Hons - Pacific Studies)

Sefika enrolled late into the honours course because he did not want to "be left behind".

With the assistance of Dr John Henderson, HOD, Political Science, and Pacific Studies Director and Pacific Studies course co-ordinator, Ueantabo Neemia-Mackenzie, Sefika graduated this year with a BA (Hons) in Pacific Studies.

"There is nothing like that feeling you get when you walk up that aisle to get that degree. No words can describe it — it is an awesome feeling — especially knowing that your family is there to support you," he says. His regret was that his father who passed away in 1994 was not there to see him graduate.

Sefika, son of a Methodist pastor is the fourth in his family to graduate, and it doesn't look like the last time either. This year, he is pursuing a Masters Degree in Political Science. A change in codes perhaps, but Sefika still maintains his interest in the Pacific by writing about the Samoan authoritative system.

For this Samoan, one of the hardest thing was finding that financial support to see him through his studies. Last year, he juggled working a 9 to 5 job as a Pacific Island Family Development Officer for an alcohol and drug resource centre, before going to the library for research from 6 to 11pm and then onto the MacLab from 11 to 3am. That was his timetable for three solid weeks during the final term, but all that hard work has paid off.

When he is not studying Sefika plays the keyboard for his Methodist church in Addington, and spends time with friends. Says Sefika. "Life goes on, you gotta go with it."



Italia Toeieiu



Vailoa Tu'U'Au



Sefika Noa



Centre: Atumaisa Siwatibau



Centre: Iati Iati



Gilbert Enoka

Rachel Taufaga - Godinet

(BA - Psychology & Sociology)

Rachel was born in Western Samoa and came here when she was three. Her mother is Palagi and her father Samoan. At 21, Rachel Taufaga has landed a position with the management consulting firm "Cowles & Notley" as an Occupational Testing Assistant. Rachel's role is to test and to compile a report on the applicants' suitability for a job. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Canterbury majoring in Psychology and Sociology in 1995.

In 1993 Rachel was the recipient of one of fifteen "Maori and Polynesian Higher Education Scholarships" which are offered through the "Achievers" magazine.

Rachel's advice to students is to be organised and to set aside enough time to write essays and assignments.

Rachel would eventually like to return to university and complete a masters degree in psychology to enable her to work as a consultant in the area of occupational psychology.

Kimberley Polata

(BA - History)

After completing a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in history Kimberley, of Niuean descent, is now training to be a journalist on the Diploma of Journalism course at the University of Canterbury. She came to university straight from school, although tertiary study was never really an option until the final months of her seventh form year. For the past four years Kimberley has been one of the recipients of the "Pacific Island Youth

Leadership Trust" scholarship and this year gained one of the "Special Award" scholarships advertised through the "Achievers" magazine. Her advice to prospective students is to manage their time carefully, but if you have any problems talk to your tutors and lecturers because they are there to help.

Her plans for the future are to work for a couple of years in New Zealand then to travel and work overseas.

Atunaisa Siwatibau

(LLB)

After seven years of studying, Atunaisa, aged 24 and of Fijian descent, has completed two degrees in Commerce and Law. He started the Commerce degree in 1989 and after finishing it in 1991 decided to do a Law degree. Atunaisa says that one thing he had difficulty with was learning how to manage his time. "The main thing is to get your priorities right".

Atunaisa has just completed a course in the Institute of Professional Legal Studies at the University of Canterbury. He now lives in Auckland and will be admitted to the bar there.

His future plans include setting up his own law firm.

Gilbert Enoka

(BA - First Class Hons)

A first class honours degree in Psychology was not enough for Gilbert Enoka so he's gone straight into a PhD in Psychology and really enjoying it. His research looks at ethical decision making in sport.

"It can be hard to focus on things, but it really helps if you have a passion for it, an interest in what you are studying", says

Gilbert. His advice to others still working hard to graduate is to set goals. "You've got to set targets and look ahead. Of course, you've got to make sacrifices to achieve your goals. Like not spending as much time as you would like to with family and friends because you have to go to the library.

Italia Toelei'u

(Dip Journalism)

Completing a course in journalism has always been a desire for Italia, even at a very young age. "I've always had an interest in the field since I was young. I enjoyed writing and wanted a career that drew on my skills."

Having already completed a BA and MA (Hons) in English, this Aucklander made the move South to do the only Post-graduate journalism diploma in New Zealand. Now working at a suburban newspaper in South Auckland, Italia is expanding on her skills learnt from this intensive journalism course.

"The first year is the hardest. I still

feel like I'm in training. It is a very busy occupation, but it keeps me on my toes". She hopes to eventually move into magazine work, such as writing for "Mana" magazine.

"I recommend this career for anyone who wants an exciting and challenging career, other than being a lawyer or a doctor. I believe there is a need for more Pacific Island journalists to give a 'PI' perspective on issues within the wider community", says Italia.

Her advice to other Pacific Islanders is to know that journalism is a valid career option.

Iati Iati

(BA - Politics)

Although he remains humble about his achievements, Iati Iati graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Politics. This year he is taking some papers that will complete his second degree, a Bachelor of Commerce. The transition from high school to university was a challenge for this 23 year old Samoan. "At high school

you spend a lot more time with your friends", says Iati.

Knowing when to stop playing his favourite sports such as rugby league or touch was another. Iati's attitude to study is a positive one. "If I can do it, you can too", he says.

Vailoa-i-Palauli Tu'u'au

BA (Sociology & American Studies)

Born and raised in Samoa, the first year at Canterbury University was the hardest for this LMS pastor's son.

Having come to New Zealand six years ago Vailoa worked in numerous temporary jobs, completed a computer course at Polytech, before deciding to enrol at university as an adult student. Unsure of how to cope with varsity life, six papers in his first year seemed like a lot of work. "Just knowing how to write an essay was the hardest thing. Hadn't done a university essay before — it is very different to a high school essay", he says.

His hard work paid off, passing all six papers, and Vailoa did seven papers in both his second and third year.

"Help is here on campus. Tutors and lecturers are there to help you. Don't be

afraid to ask questions. University challenges us to question — and that was the hardest thing to come to grips with in my first year".

Vailoa majored in sociology because he "loves meeting people", while American studies widens his career opportunities in New Zealand and Samoa. Making the most of opportunities here in New Zealand was a motivating factor for Vailoa. "This includes having to be committed and to make a lot of sacrifices with friends, sports and social events".

His success is shared with family, friends, village and church. This year he is completing part of a Masters degree in Pacific studies, and hopes to write an MA thesis next year. His academic life goal is to complete a PhD in Pacific Studies.
