



Troy Ruhe – Fourth Year

Bachelor of Physical Education with Honours – July 2016

1. Why did you choose your degree programme, and what made you enrol at the University of Otago?

Initially, Physical Education was seen as an avenue into promoting healthy lifestyles through schools. I have always been aware of the negative health statistics of Pacific and Maori people and have always felt a responsibility to give back. I enjoy physical activity and understand the health benefits of being physically active; my mission was then to find a way to provide a meaningful and engaging way for communities to participate more frequently in physical activity.

The University of Otago was always highly recommended as the best University to study Physical Education and I had no second option as Otago was the University I had my mind set on.

2. What have you enjoyed most about your academic journey thus far?

Learning! More than just learning course content, but, also learning different methods of learning. Nothing is always clear cut which has forced me to identify my core beliefs and values as an individual to best find an efficient way to approach problems posed in course content. Along the lines of learning, I have discovered a lot about myself. Being away from the comforts of my family forced me out of my comfort zone which has allowed me personal growth and independence.

3. So far during your studies what key relationships have mattered the most? What key sources of support have you encountered at the University of Otago?

The key relationships have been those that have provided me support while allowing personal growth. The staff at both the Pacific Island and Maori student support centres, my supervisors and lecturers; as well as staff members from the University who have recognised my ability as an aspiring academic and provided opportunities for me to flourish. Such opportunities include inviting me to conferences on particular issues, travel opportunities to meet with particular Pacific scholars as well as the opportunity to become a head researcher myself. Being recognized as an individual capable of being an ambassador for the University has strengthened my relationships with students and staff alike as I become the link between the two.

Lastly, I've valued the friendships I have gained, it is important to keep a balance in life and having my friends helped me maintain balance by breaking up my hours with my head in the books.

4. What are some of your career and/or academic goals and aspirations?

I am passionate about empowering Pacific and Maori communities. Providing tools and resources for them to become experts in their own health by understanding how and why to make lifestyle adjustments. It is therefore my aspiration to continue my role as an academic to identify the needs of the Pacific and Maori communities I aim to work with to ensure that their needs and preferences are being met. It has also always been a dream to move back to the Cook Islands and work for the

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Ministry of Health in the area of lifestyle modification. Except, the modification would be tailored by the preferences and needs of the communities.

5. What advice would you give to new students?

Come to University with an open mind. Keep your options open and get involved with multiple activities. This is a great way of networking and forming relationships that may lead to opportunities later down the line. The key to being successful at university is to maintain a balance. Enough time spent studying, exercising, socialising and so on. Too often, I would knuckle down into my work and sacrifice my normal routine of exercise and even eating to get work done. In the long run, this wore me down and I became burnt out. It is also essential to maintain relationships with friends and also staff members, utilise the resources that are around and don't be afraid to ask questions. That is the reason you are at University, you are a curious individual and asking questions is one way of facilitating knowledge gathering.

Attempt to gain a strong understanding of who you are and your purpose for being at University. It is easy to lose motivation as you lose sight of your initial drive. It is thoughts of my family and improved well-being that keeps me motivated.

Which brings me to a very important point. Stay in touch with your family, if you moved away from your family, let them know that you are doing fine. From experience, they definitely value that contact. Lastly, never doubt that you can make a change to yourself, to the institution, to the world; the possibilities are limitless.

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