



Jonathan Feki – Fourth Year Medicine Undergraduate - 2016

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

This is a question I find frequently asked by people “Why did you decide to choose Medicine”. The truth is I struggle every time attempting to answer it and even find it’s something slightly different each time. I’ve learnt that my reasons to choose this degree are not static but they are constantly changing and expanding. With every new year comes new opportunities and even more reasons to keep pursuing a career in medicine. I chose this pathway because I’ve always had a very deep interest and passion for the health and wellbeing of people and particularly of those in our Pacific communities. Enrolling at the University of Otago was largely based on the opportunities available here as well as the massive academic support and resources exclusive to this University. However, I’ll admit, being the youngest of six moving away from home and pursuing medicine was a great way to prove to my older siblings I could achieve something and exceed that expectation.

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

Health Science First Year was probably the most difficult part of my academic journey so far. A lecturer describing it as ‘sanctioned torture’ which I thought was quite amusing, but not at that time of course. In saying this it was a massive learning curve. It was a time where I was challenged in so many ways and pushed to re-evaluate and reassess my goals. More recently in my second and third years I’ve found that I have more time in which to enjoy and find satisfaction with what I’m learning. It has really been a privilege to start interacting with real life patients with medical histories outside of the textbook. All in all I have enjoyed both the learning experience that comes from the challenges but also the academic learning involved and realised just how important it is.

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?

During my years at Otago University I’ve had the privilege of becoming a mentor for Pacific students in their first year of health science as well as the Dunedin medical rep for the PIHPSA association (Pacific Island health professional students association). Through this I’ve been able to form key relationships with both staff and my peers. I think this is crucial as I progress through my degree and gradually form a support network but also to surround myself with people who have similar goals and aspirations. Key sources of support have been first and foremost that of the Pacific Island Research and Support Unit (PIRSSU) and the Pacific Orientation Programme at Otago (POPO) which I would encourage Pacific students to join should they decide to pursue the health sciences. They have provided tremendous academic support over the years and I am so grateful for it. The Pacific Islands Centre has also provided some academic support particularly in my first year.

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

With another academic year I'm gradually working toward building that support network, finishing strong for the year and also enjoying my time at Otago while I can. Looking further ahead after I've graduated I want to go on to specialise in a field that drives me, perhaps cardiology or oncology and also allows me to give back to my community in some way. I also hope to inspire other Pacific students to pursue a career in medicine or any other health profession.

5. What advice would you give to new students?

I strongly believe that one of the key elements to success is determined not by the obstacles you may encounter but by the way in which you respond to these obstacles. Your first year of university may be challenging in every facet, whether it be academically, socially, mentally and emotionally or even physically. Through this you may face a great deal of people telling you "no" and "you can't do it" but what is vital here is whether you think the same. I can say from experience that when the going got tough I lived by two words which were "I am..." I am hardworking, I am successful, and these are just some examples of my own personal motivation during the difficult times. Your attitude determines your altitude and ultimately you are your greatest obstacle.

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