

rebel WITH A cause

Dr Hinewaiora McCleery MBChB

WAIKATO TAINUI

Studying medicine nearly didn't happen for Hinewaiora McCleery, but opportunity knocked thanks to the men in suits.



Hinewaiora

Pathway to Medicine

Becoming a doctor was something I wanted to do from a young age. Unfortunately I was not a good student during my high school years. I rebelled and my lack of attendance got the better of me, I barely passed NCEA Level 2. I then failed NCEA 3 and therefore did not have university entrance.

Luckily, I applied for a scholarship through the University of Otago which did not require NCEA Level 3. I did not quite know what I had applied for at the time, but it turned out

to be the best decision of my life. The University of Otago's Tū Kahika Scholarship is a two semester Health Sciences programme. It is a bridging course which prepares Māori students for their first year of tertiary study within the health sciences sector – another pathway to gain university entrance.

The Interview

I received phone call to say they liked my application and wanted to interview me kanohi-ki-te-kanohi. Mum and I were very nervous. Two men in suits parked in a flash car

outside my house was very noticeable. They wanted to know a bit more about me; about my drive, what I wanted to do in life, hobbies, future plans. At the end of the interview they told me they had accepted me for Tū Kahika.

“ Thanks to KOH I had the opportunity to mentor students from a local Kura Kaupapa Māori School ”

Coping in a new environment

I found it really hard at the start – It was a different environment, I was home sick, and it was cold all the time! But I had a great core group of Māori support which made it feel like a home away from home. My friends within Tū Kahika, our Tū Kahika kaiārahi, my friends within Arana College, our academic support and the Māori Centre staff at the University of Otago were all comforting and supportive networks.

Kia Ora Hauora

Kia ora Hauora (KOH) funds lots of student events, particularly once I was in medicine. I registered for KOH when I met them at the first wananga in Otago and I thankfully continue to have regular contact with KOH throughout the years. They have provided me with advice regarding scholarships and have helped me network when I have changed regions.

Thanks to KOH I had the opportunity to mentor students and to chaperone some of the secondary school events hosted by Capital&Coast DHB in Wellington Regional Hospital.

Best part of the job

That's easy, I love it when I see Māori whānau. I feel there is a connection, I can help them feel comfortable, help them understand their illness and navigate the hospital system. Just being Māori starts the conversations, and being able to help improve their health or experience within Health, is just the cherry on top for me.

Future career plans

I really love surgery, so I am going down that pathway now, but medicine is great because every door is open – you choose what you love and pursue it.