

Changes in Pacific student support and learning advising

I'u Tuagalu (1962 – 2025)

Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

Kia ora, my name is I'u Tuagalu, and I've been a learning advisor since the year 2000, and all at Auckland University of Technology. And my reminiscences are around two particular areas. One is specific support, and the other is the adoption of a viable sort of way of doing things, a philosophy, if you like, to our work.

Now, in terms of Pacific support, when I first got here, the academic advisors, the learning advisors, were part of student support. And I guess the first revolution that we had, or the first innovation that we had, was bringing the academic Pacific support together with the student support. And together, we did quite a lot of really good work. We organised all first years' orientation activity, and we ran that for a number of years. It was really quite successful in terms of accessing the Pacific students before they started at AUT. Yeah, from about 2010 to about 2012, Pacific support in that version of being under Student Support Services were discontinued. And Pacific Student Support was actually disbanded because our office, the Office of Pacific Advancement, took that over.

In terms of the learning advisors, we got shipped off to the Library, and academic support became part of the Library. And for a little while there, we were a bit in no man's land, actually, as we didn't really know what we were doing. But with the, and sometimes these things happen, with the arrival of new staff, etcetera, we took on a philosophical approach to our work, underpinned by systemic functional linguistics [SFL]. And in particular, Dr Lucy Macnaught came along with that sort of background, and it really gave us a way of sort of approaching the learning advising role that we had.

A second thing that led to the consolidation of this particular approach was the COVID epidemic forced online learning, which fits in really quite well with the SFL activities in terms of

concentrating on colour, concentrating on language, sorry, concentrating on language and showing the shifts of language by using colour coding of some sort.

So, yeah, I guess those are the two main issues that I can see happening from about year 2000 to about 2024, where Pacific Student Support, because of political sort of moves or economic moves, became disbanded.

But a positive point is that the unit that the Pacific Student Support Officer, [unclear] myself, academic support person, ended up in had a philosophical direction and, of course, much more exposure because our work is now on Canvas. It's a Canvas course that's available to all students. Well, we make it mandatory. It's on their Canvas pages when they open up. However, I still have questions in terms of the future for Pacific student support, because even though we've got these wonderful resources and I can recognise the positive things that we've got, the resources that we've got and the access that we've got via Canvas of these students, I'm not really sure of the Pacific students' uptake. I know that they have been accessing our resources, but the quality of instruction on how to write, etcetera, is yet to be determined.

So I guess that's me. Those are the reminiscences and the things that I'm constantly thinking of in my job right now.

Editor Note

I'u Tuagalu suddenly and sadly passed away on 6 July, 2025. He is missed immensely by family, friends, and colleagues.

This is a transcribed version of an audio recording that I'u created for the 2024 ATLAANZ Conference Padlet. You can hear I'u's voice in that recording by opening this link: https://u1.padletusercontent.com/uploads/padlet-uploads/3082279110/d4bb3e9cf6b42b39a0a3b4c9ccccce5b/Memories_for_padlet_.mp3?token=FfXQMF8XIY3j-BMK0Yd7CMoyeOshQzzB2f9IXfObfee2oWisBXABQlQ-gCzs9f-IwwLBZdmu4kUG9D3ZVRZ5CVFcfGjy5EVG_j1lE_HoX4171G2BGvUnhbagmBasXWJd_QpKQvbPB78zjvVJqfzLHwif34nmKV0exA5F5LRMeQ-fZuVmjOvi3lDnkaJucXCYYLdBYdDz_-7kaWUuM11CB65Y4aoPfRLY0kRXXVrmOCw6Mt_OJze8bNwH84L7z7a