

A healthy future ahead

Living on a benefit with two young children, Jessica Korach was faced with a big decision - move to Australia or study here in New Zealand. Now three years later, the solo mother is in her last year of a Bachelor of Health Science at AUT University and loves it.

"I've really enjoyed it. The first year was the hardest but I can really see the relevance now that we are doing the practical stuff. That's me."

Ultimately she will be seeking a role as a dental therapist which includes doing injections, extractions, crowns and hygiene work, which she enjoys doing the most.

Like many courses at AUT, a large component of the curriculum in third year is practical. She says spending time at the Buckland Road Clinic in Mangere is a part of the course she enjoys.

"Kids from lower socio-economic families are turning up in pain with fully blown infections. I can help them, which I find really rewarding."

AUT has an arrangement with the Buckland Road Clinic whereby supervised students gain invaluable experience by working on patients in the clinic.

Jessica is now back in the environment

she found herself after leaving school as a 16-year-old. After moving from her hometown of Wellsford, she immediately moved to Auckland where she found work as a dental assistant. Three years later and still a teenager, she had a young boy and girl to look after which meant she was unable to continue working.

"I didn't want to spend my life on the benefit. I wanted to earn decent money so I could buy groceries or a reasonable car."

With her three year degree almost finished, Jessica is already considering her options but she says finding work shouldn't be too hard. "They are screaming out for us everywhere."

While Australia is still an option, moving back to Northland is highly likely.

With a passion for Maori health, Jessica is looking to use the skills and education gained during her degree to benefit her community in Northland.



Jessica Korach, AUT University, Bachelor of Health Science student.

"Some people may be unaware of the cultural differences with the Maori culture. For example, after an extraction, it is important to give the children their teeth back. Half of them will put it under the pillow of the tooth fairy, but half will keep it for spiritual reasons."

Pro Vice-Chancellor's Perspective

A New Zealand GP, visiting a Spanish speaking Caribbean island, was relaxing on a park bench. She noticed a young man reading the British Medical Journal. She waved and asked "are you a doctor?" He said he was and they started a conversation. She inquired further "if you don't mind me asking why on earth did you take up medicine?" "I understand that in this country doctors only get paid a bit more than that guy over there raking leaves." The young man, somewhat surprised, replied "to cure the sick, care for the infirm and work alongside others to improve the health of my community." What was your reaction to this? It could lead into discussion of various matters, some of fundamental concern to the future viability of our health services.

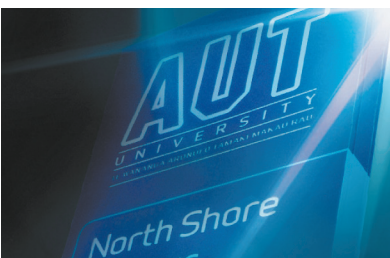
Currently we are accepting applications at North Shore Campus for health science programmes, as well as for education and sport science. The last few years have been frustrating because while we need to increase the number of graduates to meet workforce needs, government has placed a cap on the places universities can provide. Government has recognised this need in relation to medicine, and has funded additional places. However, this does not apply to the other 30 or so health professions and sciences. Consequently we have had to turn away many hundreds of eager applicants who

meet entry criteria. Most are motivated by a desire to have an interesting career and make a healthy difference to the lives of individuals and communities they work with. Also, relatively speaking, health professionals are well paid in this country and in most parts of the world. There is also huge potential, across the health professions, for current practitioners to undertake advanced study and move into more specialised clinical roles as well as into research, teaching and management.

Across the Tasman a decision has just been made to remove caps on student numbers - in recognition of the need for a highly educated workforce for the economy and society of the future - and the realisation that it is better for people to be studying than unemployed or underemployed and bitter about the hand society has dealt them. It would be timely to examine and discuss this here, even more so now with the recent announcement of benefit reform and ACC changes. Be this as it may, at AUT, we have held a significant number of places back for the second semester and are now in a position to enrol new students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.



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