

Scholarship recipient finds links to Taranaki hometown at University of Otago

Receiving a University of Otago Academic Excellence Scholarship, worth \$45,000 over three years, was a significant – but not the only – factor in Ellen O’Byrne’s decision to head south for university.

The variety of opportunities available at the university and Dunedin’s appeal made Otago her first choice when it came to setting herself up for future success.

The New Plymouth Girls’ High School graduate is looking to enter the Bachelor of Science programme, majoring in Pharmacology or Biomedical Science after completing this year’s Health Sciences First Year programme.

The unique academic reputation of the university has helped her succeed, she says.

“Despite Otago being tucked away in a corner of New Zealand, many lecturers have studied all over and bring unique international insight to the course, alongside the talented local lecturers.”

While in Dunedin, Ellen lives at Te Rangi Hiroa, one of Otago’s smaller residential colleges; one that she says has a “real sense of community”.

“Moving away from home I immediately wanted a place to study which was vibrant, exciting and most of all a welcoming place to live.

“Te Rangi Hiroa is a superb home away from home. An unexpected touch is that Te Rangi Hiroa, the New Zealander who the college is named after, had ties to my home region of Taranaki, and each floor is named after a river from home. It’s a lovely connection to have.”

The supportive atmosphere of her college extends to both academic and social pursuits, and Ellen mentions a “succeed together” academic environment.

“The college provides tutorials with engaging tutors, plenty of people to discuss study with, and many organised social events. I’d recommend Te Rangi Hiroa College to anyone.”

Outside of study, Ellen plays hockey for the university hockey club.

“My team, the Orcas, are part of a community which has multiple events both on and off the turf and has been a great way to get involved and meet new people. Altogether this has been a sea of fun.”

During her first semester she participated in Relay for Life as part of her college team – an experience she found “incredibly rewarding”.

Having visited Dunedin twice previously on sports tournaments, Ellen says she has discovered a more vibrant side to the student city than she had previously realised.

“My trips to Dunedin gave me an idea of what to expect and the beautiful landscapes, but the city itself is made more vibrant by the student life. It provides student-run events, societies and clubs which the whole town can enjoy.

“It is a very easy place to fit in and become a part of the unique culture.”

Learn more about [University of Otago Entrance Scholarships](http://www.otago.ac.nz/entrance-scholarships)
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