

# Promising Practices for Supporting Pacific Women in Universities

Patterson, S. E. (2018). *Beyond the Dusky Maiden: Pasifika women's experiences working in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia).  
<https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0370998>

These promising practices for recruiting, retaining and promoting Pacific women in New Zealand universities was developed from talanoa with twenty-seven collaborators who collectively represent 216 years of experience working in higher education.

## **1. Mentoring for Pasifika women**

Collaborators identified the essential role of mentoring by other Pasifika women for surviving higher education institutions. As a result, higher education institutions should seek to make formal or informal arrangements for Pasifika women to be mentored by other Pasifika women in their current roles. Pasifika women should foster mentoring relationships with other Pasifika women, providing guidance in both surviving and thriving within higher education. This mentoring is a strength-based approach that recognises that Pasifika women have the knowledge and skills to support each other to survive and thrive in higher education.

## **2. Collective approaches to change-making**

Collaborators identified the importance of collaborative approaches to change-making. As a result, higher education institutions should provide spaces for Pasifika people to come together. This can be in the form of physical space or in process space such as Pasifika councils or advisories. Pasifika women should engage in collaborative change-making models that enable them to move forward as a group. This will lead to navigating to the island sooner.

## **3. Pasifika women at all levels and roles in the institutions**

Collaborators identified that there needed to be Pasifika women at all levels and roles within higher education institutions in order to speed change. This means that we need more Pasifika women bodies within the institution, such that higher education institutions need not only to recruit more Pasifika staff, but also to consider how they retain these staff (including the implementation of the promising practices outlined above). There needs to be investment in professional development for Pasifika women so that they are able to fill roles higher up in the structure of higher education, and a proactive approach to shoulder-tapping Pasifika women to take on roles throughout the institution.

## **4. Develop institutional awareness**

Collaborators reflected on the importance of understanding how change is made in higher education. In practice this means Pasifika women must continue to build relationships around the institution so that they are able to see and interact with the different leverage points for change throughout higher education institutions.

## **5. Collaborative approaches to wellbeing**

Collaborators noted the importance of community in their wellbeing when working in higher education. This means that higher education institutions need to ensure that the wider Pasifika community feels welcome within the institution. Pasifika women need to continue to engage with their communities and find strength in their community's care of and for them in order to survive the cyclone. Pasifika women also need to care for each other; this can be in the form of mentoring (outlined above) or in the simple process of building relationships with each other in ways that enable check-ins or supports.

## **6. Have a Pasifika strategic plan**

Collaborators identified that Pasifika strategic plans acted as levers for institutional change. As such it is important that higher education institutions have relevant and powerful Pasifika strategic plans that can be used to make changes throughout the institution.