Creating an Office of Student Success to listen to the stories
Dr Stephen Scott, University of Otago

The Office of Student Success emerged as an initiative for the University of Otago in late 2018 with a mandate to support the improvement of student performance across the University. To address this mandate, the Office is able to conduct independent research into the stories around student success. This is a very broad mandate so where do we start.

One approach is to use institutional data to investigate the numbers around the story of student success. However, we may see patterns and trends, but it is difficult to say why we see these patterns. In this case, the stories we hear from the students and staff gives us clues as to the why the patterns may exist. This can be followed up with qualitative research, listening to more stories, to give a deeper understanding of the why. We can then suggest an action to support student success, create a pilot a project and see if we can make a difference to the student’s stories.

An alternative approach is to have a story in mind and use the institutional data to test the story.

Examples of both approaches will be presented in this kōrero (talk).

Learning outcomes
- Knowledge of the Kaupapa (purpose) of the newly established Office of Student Success.
- Knowledge of the where the Office of Student Success fits in the organisational structure of the University of Otago.
- See examples of the use of stories to direct and inform research into student success.

Presenter
Dr Stephen Scott, University of Otago

Stephen is Head of the newly formed Office of Student Success at the University of Otago. He is of Ngāi Whātua and English descent. Stephen has a background in teaching Zoology and developing support for Māori science students. He was appointed as the Director, First Year Experience in 2016 where his research focus was on the use of institutional data to investigate student engagement, retention, wellbeing and success for first-year students and for first-year indigenous students in particular. Stephen now has the mandate to investigate opportunities to support student success in any student cohort within the University of Otago. He also worked, with a number of caring staff, to develop the Locals Programme, which supports students flatting, or at home in their first year at Otago.