

Peers as informal professors: Peer-based Learning that supports the Success of Indigenous and Minority Students

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Every university student has a cast of many teachers – some inside the university and some outside. This presentation is about the role of peer-based learning for supporting the success of Indigenous and minority students in their first year of university studies. The student voice is used (via the critical incident technique) to understand how students use informal and social spaces to support success in university studies. In these spaces the student is like an informal professor of their peers, yet also a learner. In this presentation we look at how peer-based learning happens and is helpful from the students' perspectives. Peer learning has been described by Topping (2005) as *“the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions. It involves people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by doing so”* (p.631). This presentation will show how Māori and Pasifika students in their first year of degree-level studies use peer learning in social and informal spaces in order to experience success in their first year. This presentation will also show how social and informal spaces for teaching and learning are important for the success in the first year of an undergraduate degree.