SOMALI GRADUATE JOURNAL

ISSUE 6 2014/2015

Celebrating Somali graduates and undergraduate students in New Zealand
Among our graduates are doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, scientists, IT professionals, teachers, and social workers.
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Welcome to this sixth edition of the Somali Graduate Journal. I never thought we would have such a good run with this initiative. As in many cases, community projects come and go, and even communities come and go. While many of our Somali families have moved to Australia over the years, the number of graduates keeps increasing rather than decreasing. This is mainly due to the fact that a greater number of Somali students who finished their high school here have been entering tertiary education. For example we now have the first Somali student, who had gone through the New Zealand schooling system, almost about to finish his medicine training at the Auckland University. In a year’s time he will be the second Somali doctor trained in New Zealand, following the first Somali female doctor who graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery. The other exciting thing is that we will soon have our first affiliate publication overseas. The Somali community in Australia is the first community outside New Zealand to embrace the initiative. On a visit in Melbourne in January this year, I met a group of Somali educators and community leaders. They showed interest in promoting the journal in Australia and perhaps doing a joint one (New Zealand and Australia).

I am hoping that the Australian edition will encourage other Somali communities in the Diaspora to follow suit, thus making the journal a unique global initiative that connects our Somali communities and particularly our Somali graduates all over the world. Through education and sharing of our experiences we will contribute to positive impacts on our children and youth by showcasing positive role models for them and a greater understanding of the contributions our community is making wherever we are.

We may also become good ambassadors for our homeland and even take part in healing its current wounds and shaping its future. For example, one of our graduates profiled in the journal (Abdirahin Osman) has been doing his bit to contribute back home. While his engineering degree has enabled him to get a good job in Brisbane, he hasn’t forgotten his homeland. His story is an inspiration to all of us. I believe that education success is best measured in the transformation effect it has not only on the individual, but also on the society the individual is part of. In other words, we should be using our education success for the greater good of our community and society.

And finally, to all Somali graduates featured in this publication and others, congratulations on your achievements and I wish you all success in your life endeavours. May your education contribute to a better world for our children and the generations to come.

“Albert Einstein was a refugee.”
Warm greetings to you all from the Office of Ethnic Communities.

It’s wonderful to see the continuation of this publication which recognises and celebrates the accomplishments of our Somali community.

My congratulations to all the Somali graduates past, and present, who have shared their beautiful, inspirational stories with us and I wish you every success in your future career.

I would like to pay particular mention to the former graduates of the Office of Ethnic Communities Young Leaders Programme who feature here and in previous editions. Seeing you continue to grow and realise your dreams is testament to your determination and dedication as ambassadors of diversity.

It is my hope that all these achievers will inspire not only others within the Somali community but those from across our migrant and former refugee communities to take advantage of the opportunities available to further their education.

We all know that resettling in a new country has many challenges but there are also opportunities and new experiences to be gained. It is important that members of our Somali community are able to see their achievements profiled in this publication in recognition of their resilience and perseverance and as an inspiration to others.

New Zealand is globally recognised as a culturally diverse nation and it is this blend of beliefs and tradition that brings the wealth of knowledge and experience that we can all, as New Zealanders, benefit from.

I look forward to seeing more achievements from our Somali community celebrated in the next edition of the Somali Graduate Journal and I wish you all continued success in your endeavours as a Somali New Zealander.

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Berlinda Chin
DIRECTOR OFFICE OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

“You have your own culture. Never let it go. Hold onto that and I’ll give you mine as well.”

JUDITH TE HIWI
Since 2013 (with the exception of few earlier graduates), 56 Somali graduates have graduated from New Zealand Universities and Polytechnics. 38 of these graduates are profiled in this sixth edition of the Somali Graduate Journal. It is to be noted that two of the graduates profiled here have appeared in a previous edition of the journal but have since upgraded their degrees, hence their second appearance in the journal. The regional breakdown is shown in the first chart while the second chart below shows the field of study breakdown. On the second page are the charts of the aggregate numbers, gender, and field study breakdowns.

The overall number of graduates since 1997 stands at 260 to date (see the second chart). Most of these graduates have graduated in the last 10 years as more students have gone through the New Zealand schooling system in recent years. While every attempt has been made to account for all the graduates regardless whether they are profiled here or not, there are always a few that are hard to find for one reason or other. Sometimes we come across some of these graduates at a later time and we profile them in the journal of that year. Among the graduates is our first medical doctor graduate. Another doctor is about to graduate. In our community we also have engineers, chartered accountants, and many nurses who have graduated over the years, to mention a few of the diverse professions chosen by our graduates.
Graduates field of study breakdown 2014/2015

Somali graduate numbers by region 1997–2015
Somali graduate numbers by region and gender breakdown 1997-2015

Field of study breakdown 1997-2015
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Abdullahi M Hussein

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 2002

**High School:** Christchurch Boys’ High

**Programme of study/qualification gained:** Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting and Information Systems

**Name of tertiary education institution:** University of Canterbury

**Year of graduation:** 2012

**Place of employment:** Accountant, Dubai (UAE)

**Educational and career choices:**
I came to New Zealand in 2002 with my family and we settled in Christchurch. After two years of intermediate school, I went to Christchurch Boys’ High School. During my time in high school, I gained an interest in business studies and therefore I took business courses such as accounting, economics, and business management. Upon finishing high school, I enrolled in the University of Canterbury in 2009 and from there I started pursuing a higher education in Accounting. Coming from a family with high expectations and following the footsteps of my older siblings, graduating from university was one of my personal goals that I achieved this year Alhamdulillah. My achievements would not have happened without Allah on my side and without the help and encouragement from my family who I cannot thank enough. I am glad to have wonderful parents who encouraged me and gave me advice throughout my studies for which I am very grateful.

My advice to the Somali youth and future students is to always remember Allah, listen to your parents’ advice, and choose your peers wisely. Make the most out of the opportunity you have because you might not get that same opportunity again. Never give up as “it always seems impossible until it’s done”.

I am very open to continuing my tertiary studies further whether it is doing my Masters or doing my PhD Insha Allah. I hope we can all return to our beloved motherland one day, ready to make a difference for the sake of our country and its future.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2004

High School: Hamilton Girls High

Programme of study/qualification gained: Enrolled Nurse

Name of tertiary education institution: Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)

Year of graduation: 2014

Place of employment: Looking for a job

Educational and career choices: In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful.

My choice of study was guided by an amazing person I met back in Hargadhere Refugee Camp in Kenya. The person was a nurse who used to work in the camp’s hospital. The nurse was a family friend and every time someone was sick or was bit by a scorpion, she would be called to treat the patient. She would give the person medications but also would care and comfort the person. Seeing how families would feel – being so relieved after the nurse gets there and how they were so grateful to have her around – invoked an inner emotion in me. I wanted to be such a helper to people in need like that nurse. I remember sometimes people would go to the nurse’s house in the middle of the night and the nurse would come with them. That nurse had great qualities, including being caring, calm, and respectful. This nurse was one of the people I looked up to and admire. I also always loved and enjoyed being around people and helping.

I believe that people are the only reason the whole world has been created and they are most important and amazing creation of God. During my nurse training I have gained so much knowledge and I have grown so much. I have worked with so many people in their worst times and also some in their best times. I have had some issues with wearing the scarf, praying, and also wearing Islamic clothes like long skirts. However I have also had positive times. I have seen people who respected me and my culture. I have worked in a facility where I was allowed to pray. There was also encouragement from tutors, colleagues, and clients.

Last but not least I would like to take this opportunity to let every Somali student or child know that you can be who you want to be. If you are on the path of becoming something, keep going and put your trust in Allah. You are better, smarter, and more amazing than you can ever imagine. Remember your roots, your values, your culture, your faith. You will only get to the right destination, when you know where you are departing from.

Also remember “You can’t hate the roots of the tree without ending up hating the tree” by Malcolm x.

Community involvement

One of the benefits of education is the realisation that you are part of something bigger than yourself. Giving back to your community is an obligation so that we contribute our skills and knowledge for the greater good of our community. During my study and even after graduation I have been part of our Somali youth/student group in Hamilton. I have been the president and helped lead many youth activities in our Somali community. I have always taken pride in supporting my community in any way I can and I still continue to have that commitment even though the student group is no longer active.

For my future aspiration, I want to help my people back home once I have gained enough work experience and more skills.

Hibaq M Omar
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2000
High School: Fairfield College
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Nursing
Name of tertiary education institution: Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: Laura Fergusson Rehabilitation Trust

Educational and career choices:
Assalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh
I thank Allah for making my studies easy for me and giving me the privilege to be where I am today. I also thank my dedicated family for their support and encouragement throughout my studies.

I started with a Diploma in Business course when I lived in Auckland a couple of years ago, but after completing it, I decided not to continue with this field and therefore changed my career pathway. I then moved back to Hamilton in 2012 to gain support from my family as I had two little boys, so I had the opportunity to study full-time nursing and raise my children. I am very happy that I chose the medical field. Nursing has broadened my perspectives and caused me to focus outside my own little world.

I absolutely love being in a profession that helps people, and I find the body of knowledge I have gained incredibly helpful in everyday situations. For example, we can use this knowledge and experience for ourselves, our families, and our community, in addition to our patients.

This journey was not easy for me despite the enormous support I was receiving, as I was a mom and a full-time student. I sometimes felt guilty that I could not always attend my children’s school competitions and prize-giving functions due to ongoing clinical placements which were very strict and intensive. I think that was the most painful challenge that I encountered, but hearing my children say to me “Mom, we want to be doctors when we grow up so we can work with you at the hospital” has relieved all my pain. I am very proud that I have become a good role model for my children and I hope every parent will try their very best to be a good example for their children, both in Islamic and worldly matters. Education and opportunities do not chase us or find us, we have to chase and find them. It takes a lot of effort and hard work to achieve our dreams, and my strong determination and motivation to accomplish my aspiration has fulfilled my dreams. In addition to this, regardless of how much we hate getting up early in the morning for classes, or studying all night long for assignments and exams, we should all understand the importance of education in the world we live in today. I’m not saying that an uneducated person cannot be successful in life, as opportunities are always there. However the majority of us will agree that an educated person has far more opportunities in life and it is easier for them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

Advice to fellow Somalis
We are in a foreign country today, and we all know the reason we are here.. We are the fresh future of our country; we need to make the most of being here so that we can make a difference for our people and our country. But if we don’t grasp this opportunity given to us, we are unfortunately unable to help our people and our country. Nelson Mandela said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. So I would like to stress to our Somali youth to grasp this opportunity and think of education as your powerful WEAPON.
Siciid Mohamud

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2003

High School: Hillcrest High School

Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Applied Social Science (Social Work)

Name of tertiary education institution: Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)

Year of graduation: 2015

Place of employment: Red Cross Refugee Services

Educational and career choices:
Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh (Peace be unto you and so may the mercy of Allah and His blessings)

First of all Praise be to Allah, secondly I would like to thank my family, friends, and classmates for all the support they gave me. I am sure I couldn’t do this without them. When I came to New Zealand in mid-2003 with my family, we stayed in Wellington until the end of that year. Then we moved to Hamilton where I enrolled at Hillcrest High School for year 10 class. After I had finished high school I decided to work. I left Hamilton as I did not find any job. I went to Hastings and I got a job in a squash factory as a food process worker for three years. After three years of labour work I wanted to change my career, therefore I came back to Hamilton and I enrolled myself in WINTEC. I selected to study Social Service Certificate for six months and after I completed Social Service Certificate I went straight into Bachelor of

Applied Social Science. I have chosen this profession because I always wanted to help people and I am very happy that I have achieved my first goal which was to get the Bachelor of Social Work. I am very pleased to be here in New Zealand and I believe I have achieved something important that I couldn’t do in my own country, thanks to the creator (Allah).

Community involvement
I have made an enormous contribution to my community through volunteering. I have been an active member in my community and strongly involved with a lot of community activities. I was member of Hamilton Somali Student Association for three years and currently I am a committee member of the Waikato Somali Friendship Society. I am very grateful to be member of the Somali Community and there is a lot to learn.

Advice to fellow Somalis
My advice to the other fellow Somali students and any other person reading this journal is to have patience and time management skills. The sky is the limit. I am sure anyone can achieve the goals they want to achieve if they put their trust in Allah and are willing to work hard. No one is going to knock on your door and tell you what you can or can’t achieve but you have to grab your chance before it is too late. I would love to encourage our adults to study as well or at least improve their everyday English speaking.
Harakah M Ali

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1997
High School: Hamilton Girls High School
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Nursing
Name of tertiary education institution: Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)
Year of graduation: 2015
Place of employment: N/A

Educational and career choices:
Asalamucalekum brothers and sisters, all praise is due to Allah, allaxamduuliah. I am very happy to be where I am today and I could not have done it without the help of Allah, subaxanwatacalaa. My first thoughts of becoming a nurse were mainly generated by self-interest. However, since my childhood I was always passionate about helping others and as my interest in the health sector grew, I decided to enrol in the WINTEC nursing school. If it had not been for the support and motivation of my family this would not have been possible; they encouraged me and installed a belief in me that I could be a mother and still study and obtain an education. I am also very thankful to those who also have supported me during my studies.

Challenges and highlights
The challenges I came across during the clinical were just so amazing, influencing people’s lives in ways that one could never imagine. The tears I have shed in watching a family suffer the pain of losing a loved one and the laughs I have shared with patients and colleagues. Also, coming home each day feeling that I was blessed to be alive and healthy, and I went through my days feeling satisfied because I knew that I made a difference in someone’s life, however large or small. There have been many highlights of the time of my study, and I remember that I had ups and downs, but Allaxamduuliah, it’s over now. I can tell you that it is not easy, but it is achievable.

Advice to fellow Somalis
To my brothers and sisters who are in the process of studying, or those who are planning to study in the future, I would say that it’s the best choice that a person can make for their lives. Education is the key to life and enlightens your horizons, so continue the hard work and it will pay off in the end.

My future plan is to further my studies because education will expand my horizons and my opportunities in the future. However, in the meantime I want to work and earn some money.
Sulekha Mohamed

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 2002  
**High School:** Fraser High School  
**Programme of study/qualification gained:** Diploma of Enrolled Nursing level 5  
**Name of tertiary education institution:** Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)  
**Year of graduation:** 2015  
**Place of employment:** Griffin healthcare nursing agency  

**Educational and career choices:** 
*Choices/Aspirations:* I always had a passion for nursing since I was a little girl, so when I finished my high schooling I decided to go study nursing. I really enjoyed the whole aspect of nursing because as a person I love to help those who are vulnerable and need my help, because at the end of the day I know I will feel that I have accomplished something by making someone smile and that makes me happy.

Challenges: Throughout my journey I had some obstacles and challenges that I went through during my study years, I realised being a student is not so easy. I was under a lot of stress at times, I use to be scared of my teachers as well as having the anxiety of failing but Alhamdulillah with prayers and making dua’a I had overcome my challenges and made it through my obstacles. Some people change what they are studying when it gets too hard or when they fail something, but I was committed to stay no matter what the result would be and that’s one of the hardest things to overcome. I was willing to go through till the end and I did not let anyone or anything stop me. I am so thankful to have my parents Alhamdulillah. I love them so much and I would be lost without them. One of my biggest challenges was not knowing how to drive while I was studying but to be honest it didn’t even feel like a challenge thanks to my wonderful parents; they are my best friends, if I needed to go to a placement they were ready to go no matter what the time was. Ila hayow haiga qadin Alxamdulilah.

**Highlights of my achievement**
My biggest highlight was my graduation day with my family and friends and my teachers all cheering for me while I walked across the stage. It felt great to be able to accomplish something in life and say I really “I made it”!

**Advice/Messages**
My advice towards tertiary study would be not to change your mind about something when you are halfway through it. You should choose what you really enjoy doing, not what your friends and family want you to study because if you go and study something you don’t like you will not enjoy it and eventually you will want to change. Changing too many times can cause lack of interest in learning and also financial problems (for example, getting an overload of student loan). So my best advice is finish what you start and spend your loan wisely.

I enjoy watching sports, listening and learning the Quran. I enjoy cooking. My future aspiration is to go back home and nurse my people who can’t afford expensive hospitals. I want to open my own clinic inshallah.
Ali M Hassan

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 1995

**High School:** Hamilton Boys High School, Fraser High School

**Programme of study/qualification gained:** Diploma level 6 Information and communication technology

**Name of tertiary education institution:** Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)

**Year of graduation:** 2012

**Place of employment:** Intertek Robotics Laboratories

**Educational and career choices:** I have chosen to study in the info tech field because I have always been confident with computers. I would come home from school and my mum would have a message for me from family or a friend requesting that I come over sometime as they suspected their computer had an issue, so you can say I was in the ICT field long before I decided to get a formal qualification.

When I first started my tertiary education a few people in the Somali community have told me not to waste my time studying as it won’t lead to any employment for me in that profession as I was a foreigner according to them. At that time I was very disappointed. I felt let down as I expected encouragement from these people. I didn’t pay attention to any of their nonsense as I knew a few Somali graduates who were employed before they even graduated, including my brother who was a Social Worker at the Ministry of Social Development. I am putting this out there so the youngsters who are studying are not misguided by these individuals.

I was employed within two weeks of coming to Australia as a ICT Support Officer after graduating, then I moved on to work as an Automation Technician at the Fortescue Metals Group looking after the robots on site.

I was lucky to have grown up in Hamilton as we had great community leaders who are good role models and mentors to many of us younger generation. Special thanks to some of the wise and knowledgeable community members, to mention a few Abdirizak Abdi, Ismail Gamadiid, and my brother Abdulaziz Mohamed. These three gentlemen were the ones I looked up to and would go to for anything I didn’t have an answer to, as I knew they were more than likely to have the answers to all my questions and took pride in my achievements.

I am currently finishing off my Bachelors degree at Deakin University, majoring in computer security, while also working. I love my job and loved my time at WINTEC and want to thank the awesome tutors at WINTEC, specially Blaine Rakena, Ed Corbett, and Garry Robertson.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2008
High School: Yemen
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Business Analysis
Name of tertiary education institution: Waikato University
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: N/A

Educational and career choices:
I have chosen to study Business because that is what I love the most compared to other subjects. During my study at Waikato University I have experienced many challenges and there were a number of times that I felt like giving up my study. However, with motivation and determination I persevered.

Community involvement
Involving in and being actively part of your community is important. No one is an island. We all depend on one another for meeting our social and cultural needs, as well as many other ways.

Since my arrival in New Zealand and even during my busy times at university I have always had time for my community. I love to interact with as many people as possible. My time serving my community in Hamilton as a treasurer and my involvement with the youth and student association has been the most rewarding activity I have done so far.

Before I conclude I would like to leave a sincere piece of advice for our young generation to come. Know that whatever your dream is, you can achieve it and make it real. Don’t listen to anybody telling you what you are capable of or not capable of. This could be a close friend or even your own relative. Don’t listen to negative people. I can guarantee you that you will be successful. Not only that, but anything you start will turn to be a great learning experience. Last but not least, always give back to your community.
Mohamed Jama

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2001
High School: Hamilton Boys' High
Programme of study/qualification gained:
Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical Engineering)
New Zealand Diploma in Engineering (Mechanical Level 6)
Name of tertiary education institution:
Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)
Year of graduation: 2015
Place of employment: Alto Industrial Engineering
Educational and career choices:
Assalamu Alaikum Wa rahmatullah
Wabarakatuh
Praise be to Allah SWT for making it easy for me and allowing me the chance to learn about my religion and culture as well as to be able to work towards my career in the engineering industry.
For me to end up as an engineer was Allah’s will; from a very young age growing up in Somalia one could see I was naturally gifted in terms of being able to make something from nothing. For example, as a small boy I was able to make my own play toys such as wheeled cars, planes etc, by using discarded appliances or e-waste. It was in those early years of my boyhood that I had also experienced the nomadic way of life when out of town looking after the camels and when in town I’d take time off to make my favourite toys. Long story short, at the age of eight my parents had decided to send me to neighbouring countries Djibouti and Ethiopia where my aunty lived in order to learn the Qur’an and the Somali writing. Few years later my aunty and I had the opportunity to be sponsored by a family member to New Zealand. Arriving here in New Zealand in mid-2001 was a new beginning for me trying to adapt to a new environment and new language. Though I never experienced anything other than Islamic teaching I knew I had to work extra hard in order to do lots of catch up to compete with the Kiwi students. When I arrived I managed to start my schooling from intermediate and in the following years I have also completed five years of high school where I managed to gain all levels of NCEA. During my high school my priority was always to obtain the university entry requirements. The subjects which I enjoyed the most were mathematics, physics, and sports. Deciding which career path I would take after finishing high school was not easy up until when I decided at 5th form I needed to talk to the career advisor at the high school. I remember we sat and talked through my options and the career advisor basically formed an idea based on the description I gave about my interests and how well I was doing in the subjects I was undertaking. For example, I would mention how I like solving problems, making stuff, and always thinking innovatively. From a simple discussion it appeared I was sounding like an engineer. Because engineering is a big field, I set my sight to major in mechanical engineering for my career choice.
After finishing high school, I enrolled at Waikato Institute of Technology and achieved a New Zealand Diploma in Engineering (Mechanical Level 6) and after I completed that, I continued to achieve the Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical Engineering).
My advice to those interested and serious about education, is to know your fields of
interests and never let people decide for you what your future career would be. For example, speaking from my experience during my studies at high school and tertiary level I have seen a lot of young students end up in wrong career options and that was due to not doing enough research of what one is capable of to set them a future career that suits them better; or some would think choosing someone else’s career options will suit them also and that will lead them to doing what they don’t like. So again my advice is, have a careful thought when choosing a career path, look up the current demand of your chosen career, talk to qualified people, talk to people with same interest background, and listen to the advice of parents.

**Final advice**

If you are going to attend high school or attending already remember that high school is where you set your foundation for better future career. Therefore, make the most of it and it will guarantee you enjoy the life of university. Some people find it hard at university and that is because they have not prepared well enough when the opportunity was there and free of cost at high school.

For those interested in doing mechanical engineering, focus on achieving the highest grade in science, maths, and technical courses in high school. If possible, get an early start on calculus and physics; it will be well worth it as most of your core classes are based solely on the concepts you learn from them.

My interest lies in engineering and now that I have obtained a degree in mechanical engineering, my long-term plans are to be a member of the Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand (IPENZ) and become a registered Chartered Professional Engineer (CPEng). Also I have the intention on returning to study in the future (Insha’Allah) to obtain a master’s degree and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in mechanical engineering.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2004
High School: Wellington Girls’ College
Name of Tertiary education institution: Victoria University of Wellington
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Arts; major(s): criminology and sociology
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: Victoria Police Recruiting Services
My educational and career choices: I have always had a strong passion for Criminal Justice, and when my parents did not share the same passion, I had to convince them it was what I wanted and Al-hamdulilah I got their support in the end. It took hard work, late nights, etc. What helped was having faith and believing that all my hard work will pay off and Al-hamdulilah it has. The journey and experience itself taught me so much, for which I am so much more grateful. I am content I have pursued in a career path that I love and look forward to going to work every day.

Advice for prospective students
My advice to my fellow Somali students is simply know what you are passionate about and ensure you reach the goals you set out for yourself because university is a place for anyone to study something they care about. You will be in a course with many other people just like you: people who are interested in the subjects and want to be there. This makes the atmosphere at university unlike anything else. You make sure you have the best experience and keep these three words in mind… Prepare, Learn and Succeed.

Reach for the stars.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1999
High School: Rongotai College
Name of Tertiary education institution: Victoria University of Wellington
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Commerce and Administration
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of Employment: Global Syndicate

Educational and career choices:
After finishing Rongotai College, I was looking forward to my next chapter in studies. However, I didn’t start studying straight away. I took a year off to figure out what I wanted to study. Reflecting on the subjects that I enjoyed at Rongotia College, computer studies was one of these subjects. Keeping this in mind, I started the Bachelor of Commerce and Administration degree at Victoria University of Wellington. After completing the core seven papers during my first year, Information Systems and Marketing were the two fields that interested me the most.

The reason why I chose to study Information Systems was because at the time, commerce and Information Systems were inseparable and the need for more sophisticated technology was becoming intense. Ecommerce was growing rapidly, companies were interacting on portable devices, and business transactions were more global than ever. This made my choice to study Information Systems easier.

Advice to my fellow Somali students:
One very important advice I would like to pass on to college students is not to overlook any subjects during your time in college. When I was in college I often asked myself, “why do I need to know this”? Then if I didn’t think it was relevant, I wouldn’t bother to study it. But in University, all those seemingly unneeded tools will be needed to get through University.
Guled Mire

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 1997

**High School:** Hillcrest High School

**Programme of study/qualification gained:** Bachelor of Arts in Criminology and International Studies

Currently completing a Master of Arts in Policy Studies

**Name of tertiary education institution:** Auckland University of Technology

**Year of graduation:** 2013

**Place of employment:** Department of Internal Affairs

**Educational and career choices:**

Ever since I was a child I wanted to make a difference. I believed that change was possible and that I could be at the centre of that change. While goals of leading a nation haven’t dimmed, my path has taken me towards a career and life style where I am actively involved in bringing about change to society. A journey that has humbled, fulfilled, and inspired me.

I made the decision to complete my undergraduate degree in Criminology and International Studies and after finishing my BA, I went on to pursue postgraduate studies in public policy. My passion for working at a macro level to engage with policy was rewarded when in 2014 I was accepted to study a Master of Arts in Policy Studies at AUT.

I completed the first year of my Masters degree whilst also working as a Teaching Assistant for AUT and am currently employed as a Policy Analyst focusing on issues relating to diversity and inclusion for the Department of Internal Affairs. The journey hasn’t been the easiest but through hard work, dedication, and faith (in myself but also from my family and friends) I have never wavered from the belief that good things come to those who persevere - and that has enabled me to always keep my goals in focus.

Contrary to what people might expect, I struggled academically and faced numerous challenges at high school. Some of my teachers simply couldn’t see my potential and I was told by one teacher that university was not for people ‘like me’. As a result, I struggled through the first year of university which significantly affected my confidence in my ability to produce excellent work.

However, I was fortunate enough to have studied at an institution that provided the right type of support services for students like me. By the time I completed my Bachelors degree, I had gone from a struggling first-year student to a high-achieving performing graduate. By developing confidence in my abilities to achieve success in my academic endeavors and through taking initiative to access the assistance I required, I was able to make a difference – starting with myself.

I was also fortunate enough to have great mentors and lecturers that nurtured me during my time at university and encouraged me to persevere, especially when I began to doubt my ability to succeed.

In December 2014, in recognition of my hard work and dedication, I was awarded the Electoral Commission Universal Suffrage Scholarship. This scholarship has enabled me to research and write a thesis on political participation in New Zealand. Winning this scholarship was one of the happiest
moments I have ever experienced. It was an assurance, loud and clear, that hard work really does reap rewards.

Five years ago, I would have never imagined that I would have been able to achieve half of the things I have in that time frame. If you are a young person who is thinking about pursuing university studies or has currently began their journey as a university student this is my message:

I want you to know that whatever your previous experiences with education, anything is possible. The recipe calls for hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. I want you to believe in your abilities and know that all your dreams are valid. They will manifest. Treat every assignment you work on as the most important thing you have ever worked on and never settle for anything less than your best.

If you have your eyes on the prize at all times - then there isn't the slightest doubt - you can make those goals a reality. You can make your dreams YOUR reality.

My current Master’s thesis is exploring the impact of political socialisation on voter turnout and participation amongst African New Zealanders. I am particularly interested in investigating the effects of the different political socialisation processes Africans encounter; and correspondingly, how that may affect not only their participation but also their New Zealand-born or raised children.

I am also working with a group of researchers to investigate the experiences of African youth in New Zealand’s justice system. This is the first study of its kind being done in New Zealand and will prove to be useful for both the community and policymakers that are seeking to understand African experiences of the justice system.

After the completion of my Master’s degree, I want to focus on building my policy career within government. I also hope one day to complete my doctorate.

Abdullahi F Ali

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2002
High School: Fairfield College
Programme of study/qualification gained: Diploma in Civil Engineering
Name of tertiary education institution: Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTEC)
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: N/A
Educational and career choices:
I came to New Zealand as a young adult and I didn't have much schooling background, and also my biggest challenge was to learn the language as well as the subjects in the high school. I didn’t have plans when I finished high school and I faced a lot of challenges such as choosing a career plan. I had overcome my challenges by putting a lot of time and effort into figuring out what I wanted and the interests I had as a person. My dream was to become an Engineer and that motivated me to study Civil engineering because it was the only department that covered more career choices in Engineering.

My advice to Somali students is to study hard because nothing is impossible if you put your mind to it and do the work required of you. But you must also have a passion for what you are studying. There is no point in following someone else's dreams. Follow your own dreams.

My interest is to get a job in Civil Engineering area. My future plan is to help people, especially those in need.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2000
High School: Papanui High School
Programme of study/qualification gained:
BSc Geology/Environmental Science (University of Canterbury)
PGDip Mining Engineering (Federation University Australia)
Name of tertiary education institution:
University of Canterbury, and Federation University Australia
Year of graduation: 2009
Place of employment: Downer EDI Mining (Blasting Division)

Educational and career choices
As a child, I was always fascinated with mountains and rocks. My passion for science grew as I got older, especially environment-related sciences. After completing high school I enrolled myself into one year of foundation studies to prepare myself for academic studies. I pursued my passion later and completed BSc in Geology and Environmental Science in 2009. I continued strengthening my practical skills and obtained PGDip Mining Engineering at Federation University Australia in 2013.

My highlight is achieving so much in such a short amount of time. It is important our Somali community understands and acknowledges what they have achieved during this time. It is also crucial to take some time to process their journey, obstacles, and losses since the civil war. It’s bitter-sweet for Somali people around the world who have been through the civil war journey. I hereby would like to emphasise celebrating our achievements and this journal is a very good example.

It is also important for me that graduates or skilled Somali people who have overcome the obstacle of education pass on their wisdom and knowledge to the upcoming generation. With this in mind, I went on to

“ It’s bitter sweet for Somali people around the world who have been through the civil war journey. I hereby would like to emphasise celebrating our achievements and this journal is a very good example.”
Abdirahin Osman volunteering for WWSP to help his people back home

volunteer with WorldWide Somali Student and Profession (WSSP) which is a non-profit organisation that aims to unite Somali Students & Professionals globally. The aim of WSSP is to mobilise young Somalis to use their talents, work together, and address the unmet needs of a proud nation.

My parents are my inspiration because they are the foundation of my beliefs in hard work and determination. I am also grateful to my parents and my whole family for the unconditional support they provided to me during my educational journey.

My advice to everyone is to utilise every opportunity life presents as life speaks to us in many languages. What is important is to embody a thinking that allows you to grow and challenge the status quo.

I have great interest in politics, humanitarian aid, and debate around political change. I cannot foresee the future but I look forward to all the upcoming challenges and exciting adventures.
Ikran Ahmed

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 2000

**High School:** Avonside Girls High school

**Programme of study/qualification gained:** Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication)
International Relations and Development Studies and Anthropology

**Name of Tertiary education institution:** Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology

**Year of graduation:** 2014

**Place of employment:** Hagley Community College / Canterbury Refugee Council

**Educational and career choices:**
I could not be more thrilled with the career path that I have chosen. I have always had a passion as early as I can remember for anything arts-related. Becoming a graphic designer was the perfect way for me to not only hone in on my creativity but also to be able to exercise it on a daily basis. There is nothing more exciting to me than being able to come up with creative solutions to problems. It gives me an outlet to express my individuality. I love working with various software and continuing to stay updated with the constant advancement of technology.

I have had the support of my parents right from the start. Once they realised that it is something that I am incredibly passionate about, they not only stood by me but also made sure that I succeeded. Without them and the will of Allah SWT I would have never gotten through it.

One of the challenges I have faced in my work has been making people in the community understand my subject. A lot of people are not familiar with the graphic design field or what job outcomes my qualification could produce. I did not consider it a burden to have to explain myself often (such as elderly people who are more challenged by technology). Over the years I realised that by talking about my subject, it gave me a chance to inspire other young people to get into the creative fields.

My advice to the students would be if you have a dream, it’s worth holding on to it. There are many challenges that are to be faced but once you know what you want, it becomes second nature to understand the struggles that come with it. The knowledge and skills gained makes it all worthwhile.

In the future I hope to continue with my freelance work and to open a graphic design studio. I’ve always wanted to provide a space for like-minded people to come together to share creative ideas and visions. I work for the Canterbury Refugee Council as a Community Development Coordinator. It fulfills my desire to stay involved in the community. I am blessed to be able to bring my skills as a graphic designer into my role at the Council so as to be able to design and create visual elements to support the work that we do.
Addis Mekonnen

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 1996  
**High School:** Wellington East Girls’ College  
**Qualification gained:** Bachelor of Arts International Relations & Development Studies  
**Name of tertiary education institute:** Victoria University  
**Year of Graduation:** 2013  
**Place of Employment:** Brimbank City Council  

**Educational and career choices:**
Having an education has always been a high priority for me. I have been fortunate enough to grow up in a country like New Zealand where education is both highly valued and easily accessible.

Choosing to study International Relations and Development studies was not a hard decision to make. Coming from a background that is mixed with Somali and Ethiopian cultures I have always been interested in different cultures and the political world we live in. I believe the international component is a must for the world we live in today. All countries are interconnected nowadays, so we can't study the situation of a country without talking about how it is affected by the situation in other countries or by international treaties.

In this world of globalisation, it is very important to have knowledge on what is going on around the world. You get a better understanding and you have the opportunity to continually learn. The knowledge I’ve gained while completing both majors while at Victoria University has given me the opportunity to diversify my skills over a variety of disciplines, which has been invaluable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family who have been my strength and I am forever grateful to them for supporting me through this journey.
Abbas Sheikh

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2003
High School: Rongotai College
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Arts; major(s): International Relations and Development Studies and Anthropology
Name of Tertiary education institution: Victoria University of Wellington
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: Red Cross Migration Support Programs

Educational and career choices:
I always wanted to study and work in an environment where I am helping others. I was extremely passionate about being involved in community-based activities and it was through this that I had met representatives from Victoria University, including Sara Kindom and Diane O’Rourke, who both guided me through social and cultural studies. I was particularly interested in studies that related to the African continent, more specifically focusing on historical events, for instance colonialism and the present civil wars. Through Development Studies – a very rich multidisciplinary field - I have learnt a lot about the structural inequalities that exists in our world today, between people and nations.

Generally speaking, International Relations and Development Studies are both multidisciplinary fields that relate to the study of inequality between people and nations, and the ethical issues that poverty and inequality create. As Development Studies investigates the world and the people who live in it, it encourages you to be confident and tolerant with cross-cultural issues, and to analyse and solve global problems.

University experience:
For me, University was more than just studying. It taught me a lot outside my studies. Balancing life such as when to go out with friends, play soccer, and when to study. Most of all university taught me how to take responsibility on my own. One of the main differences between high school and university is that at university ‘you are on your own’.

The responsibility is on you, as a student, to be an active participant in your educational pursuits. To some extent, you have gained independence, you are in a new place, you have choices to make and you know it. There is no secret to succeeding in university, everyone does it differently, in a style all their own. Just like in everyday lifestyle just remember ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going.’
What do you hope to do in the future?
This is an interesting question that had me questioning myself. Future? This life or the hereafter? In the society we live in today it teaches us that ‘more is good’ talking about more things that are impermanent. Things that mislead and take us away from the teachings of Islam. Never forget that everything on the face of the earth is created for a purpose. It is a most definite fact that everything you see around you serves a special purpose. There is also a purpose for which you and the rest of humanity exist. Knowing that this world is a temporary place and a test then one should always work towards pleasing Allah. Insha’Allah learning more about my religion and acting on it is my aim. Insha’Allah plan is to go back to Somalia to work with those who are in need. Devote myself to creating something that gives me a purpose and meaning, for this dunya (this world) and for my Akhira (the hereafter) Insha’Allah.

Advice for prospective students:
Follow your heart and do what you love! It’s also crucial to research and seek advice about the market demand for your chosen career field. Find out how it could help you, your community, your nation, and the world to be a better place.

Abdikadir Abdi

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1995

High School: Hamilton Boys’ High School

Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Creative Technologies (BCT)

Name of tertiary education institution: Waikato University

Year of graduation: 2014

Place of employment: Temporarily employed at Peachgrove Intermediate School

Educational and career choices:
I’ve always enjoyed IT throughout my schooling career and it was something I was passionate about doing in the future. My main field in IT is human computer interaction (HCI) which researches the design and use of computer technology, focusing particularly on the interfaces between people (users) and computers. The field allows me to observe the ways in which humans interact with computers and design technologies that lets humans interact with computers in novel ways.

I am looking to do my Masters in the near future Insha Allah.
The topic of mental illness and psychiatric care is not talked about in the Somali community, therefore the patients with mental concerns are the ones who suffer the most. This needs to be changed and people need to know there is help available. This is the reason why I got into psychiatric care, so that I can bring change back into the Somali community.

Throughout my experience I have seen that stereotypes, labelling, and judgements of all kinds often result from a lack of accurate information and even worse, false information. The Somali community and even the healthcare system, as a whole, has neglected to examine mental health to the degree that physical health has been attended to. The general public’s knowledge is lacking in the department of mental health, leaving most of society a bit nearsighted, if you will. I’ll almost guarantee you that the person next to you at the post office is blind to the fact that suicide ranks third among the leading causes of death for adolescents and young adults. Education and awareness regarding this important topic is needed in our Somali community to protect and aid our people with mental illness.

My short-term goals include the completion of my graduate programme and the postgraduate certificate in clinical nursing that I’m currently undertaking. One of the main reasons why I really wanted to pursue a career in nursing is the vast fields it can lead you to. For example, at the moment I am exposed to a great amount of patient counselling at my workplace. This has led me to take high interest in that particular area and Insha’Allah will look more into it in the near future. Another goal I have is to do my Masters in Midwifery next year Insha’Allah.

“There can be no vulnerability without risk, there can be no community without vulnerability, there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.”

M.Scott

My advice to anyone at university or school is study whatever you’re passionate about and don’t restrict yourself. By this I mean you can complete one degree, do various things, and take many different paths.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1995

High School: Mairehau High School

Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Human Resource Management & Industrial Relations, and Marketing.

Name of tertiary education institution: Victoria University of Wellington

Year of graduation: 2014

Place of employment: AMES Employment-Melbourne

My educational and career choices:
I began my journey in tertiary education like any other student, excited, nervous, and mildly confused as to where this journey would take me. After I had finished high school I spent some time working in various odd jobs, and I had never thought about studying at university, let alone graduating. After working for a year after high school, I made the move to Wellington, enrolled in a Bachelor in Commercial Law & Human Resource Management. After my first semester I realised my interest was more in management and marketing. University allowed me to learn not just about the principals of commerce but it also developed me immensely. After years of hard work, a few failures, and lessons learnt I finally managed to graduate from Victoria University of Wellington with a Bachelor in Commerce & Business Administration.

My time at university can be summed up in three words. Firstly hard work; nothing can substitute for hard work. There were plenty of times where I never was the smartest student, but through hard work I managed to accomplish the goals I had set for myself. The first lesson I learnt in my first semester was if I don’t put in the work the results won’t show.

The most precious commodity in this day and age is time. University essentially meant long nights and days, from attending summer school whilst all my classmates were on vacation, to doing all night study sessions to grasp difficult subjects. I needed to dedicate hours and hours on end to ensure that not only I pass but that I pass with great results.

This for me was by far the most difficult aspect to gain, learning to say no to social events and truly dedicating myself to my studies.

Lastly, perseverance. With any journey comes a time where you stumble; the key is to keep pushing and persevere. Tertiary education is not a walk in the park, however it isn’t a thunderstorm either. There will be times where you might second-guess your decision, and ask yourself is it worth all this stress. Keep your eyes focused on the goal and keep pushing through.

I am now employed at Ames Employment as an Employment Consultant. I started with AMES on their graduate programme and after 12 months secured a role an Employment Consultant. My journey with education hasn’t stopped. Currently my role requires a high level of understanding of contracts and compliance. Without the skills I have learnt at university I would not be able to competently undertake this role.

Finally I would like to congratulate all those who have graduated and to those who are currently in the midst of tertiary studies whether it’s your first semester or last semester. Be proud you have taken this journey and most importantly, take a moment to enjoy it.

Many thanks to all those individuals and organisations that are involved in the Somali Graduate Journal.

Abdirasaq Yusuf
Subeea Ege

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2004

High school: Naenae College

Programme of study: Bachelor of Commerce and Administrations majoring in Accounting and Commercial Law

University: Victoria University of Wellington

Year of graduation: 2013

Why did you study this area?
In high school my favourite subjects were maths and business. After seeking advice from my high school career advisor, she directed me towards commerce. In my first year of university I had taken eight core papers which cover all the aspects of business administrations. After completing my first year I decided to major in accounting and commercial law as they were the areas I enjoyed the most.

I chose accounting as it’s the main influencer of the strategic decision-making in all businesses and commercial law covers the laws surrounding businesses such as contracts, copyright, property law and etc. The two majors complement each other by giving a holistic perspective on any decision-making in terms of figures and laws.

Who else from your family went to University?
My older brother Mohamed Ege also studied at the same university. He did a BCom as well, majoring in marketing and management.

What was your experience at university like?
I started university in 2010, after taking a gap year and going back to Africa. The life style and experience I came across during my gap year made me realise the importance of education and how I can contribute to the rebuilding of my country, as well as help my family back home live a better life. I do have plans of going back to my home country in the future and giving back to my people by teaching the younger generations.

I can honestly say going to university was one of the best decisions I have made, even thought it was a difficult journey at times with early mornings and late nights and lack of social life. University has taught me to prioritise, sacrifice, and time management, also not to give up even if the journey gets difficult.

What are my future plans?
I am currently working towards becoming a qualified tax agent and opening up my own taxation business in the near future, as well as becoming a qualified accountant by becoming a chartered accountant.

What is your advice to the younger generation?
My advice to the younger generation: prioritise what’s important in life and focus on their education. It’s important to know that education is the key driver to success. Encouragement and support from families will help the younger generation achieve their goals.
Abdijabbar Ahmed

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1997
High school: Rongotai College
Programme of study: Bachelor of Business Information Systems
University: Victoria University of Wellington
Year of graduation: 2015
Place of employment: Hewlett Packard

Educational and career choices:
Whilst in high school I did not know where I would be in five years, what I would have studied, or where my career aspirations would take me. I studied graphics, physics, and mathematics at school in order to become an architect. However my interests changed after attending the open day at Victoria University. Technology was growing at a very fast pace and there was an enormous opportunity for graduates in this field. Being an opportunist, I decided to study information systems in order to achieve a stable, successful career in IT. Information Technology is more than just computers, programming, and sitting behind a desk which is what most people label it as. It is about people as much as technology and I decided to major in information systems management which focused on the management rather than the technical side of IT.

While studying I worked part-time in retail and in my penultimate year worked in Parliament as an intern. The role itself was more technical than I thought but looking back, it actually complemented my studies as I was gaining real-world experience in the technical space.

I achieved First Class Honours and graduated in 2015. Fortunately a degree in information systems enables a graduate to pursue many different areas in employment in IT and I was offered a Test Analyst position at Hewlett Packard (HP) which I accepted. I am thoroughly enjoying this role and look forward to whatever the future brings.

Advice to fellow Somali students:
To my fellow Somali brothers and sisters, you do not need to know exactly what you want to be at high school or at university for that matter. Have an open mind and don’t be afraid to try new things because you never know what you may be good at and what you might like. University is a roller-coaster so don’t expect it to be plain sailing all the way through. For those that don’t think university is for them, then give everything a go because who you are tomorrow starts with what you do today.

I enjoy being part of a community and have been heavily involved with the Muslim community here in Wellington, volunteering as a P.E teacher at the IMAN Holiday Programme and as a Quran teacher at Sunday classes for students between 9 and 13. I have been involved with open days and community iftaars for both the Somali community and the youth. Outside of the Muslim community I volunteered as a university mentor for first and second year students giving advice, guidance, and assistance to help students achieve their goals.

I love football, travelling, and spending time with friends and family but in terms of my future aspirations, I will keep my options open. I see myself working in the IT industry but there are so many opportunities that keeping a narrow mind or focus may hinder my future growth and my mindset is to be open to change. Whatever God has planned for me I am happy with it.

Jazakullah Kheir and Assalamu Aliekum
Mahad Warsame

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1997
High School: Somalia
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor Social Science
Name of tertiary education institution: Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: Auckland District Health Board, Ministry of Health

Educational and career choices:
I arrived in New Zealand in 1997 initially living in Palmerston North and then relocated to Auckland where I am currently residing.

In 2003, I joined Auckland District Health Board as a Refugee Community Health Promoter and in 2014 I completed my undergraduate studies and graduated with a degree in Bachelor of Social Practice from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. Initially there were settlement challenges that I had to overcome but with motivation and determination I was able to achieve my personal and professional goals. Working as a Refugee Community Health Promoter, Auckland District Health Board, is a rewarding role as I am passionate about the well-being and enhancement of refugee people. In my role, I work collaboratively with a range of government agencies and local authorities, non-governmental organisations and community groups on various projects addressing physical well-being, healthy eating and living, family violence, capability and capacity building, education, employment, and youth development.

Community involvement
Since 2000, I have been a strong advocate for refugee settlement issues.

I have contributed to the Auckland and National Settlement Strategy through my representation on the Steering Working Group. I have been a Board Member for the Auckland Regional Migrant Trust from 2005 to 2007. I was instrumental in the establishment of the Auckland Refugee Coalition and am a current member. I received the Auckland City Council Mayoral Award for Volunteering in 2005. In 2011, I was given a Certificate of Appreciation from Auckland Council, NZ Police, and Ministry of Social Development to acknowledge my contribution for my role within the community in family violence prevention and supporting the rights of Muslim women. I am a member of Auckland Somali Community Association and currently the Chairman. I am also a board member for Umma Trust.

My advice to our Somali youth and students
Education is a key step towards rebuilding your future in this beautiful country we now call home. You have every chance to be what you want to be in this country. Sure there are a lot of challenges and barriers but there is something for everyone. If one door is hard to open there is always another door that will open for you. In other words, if you find something hard, don’t give up; just find something else that you are good at. At high school you have the opportunity to try out a lot of different things to see what your interests and skills are suited for. I would encourage you to try as many things as possible during your time at high school. This is your trial period in preparation for your future career. Success is not built on what you are going to do but what you are doing now.
Hani Omer

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1997

High School: Zayed College for Girls

Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Science (Biological Sciences)

Name of tertiary education institution: University of Auckland

Year of graduation: 2015

Place of employment: Temporarily working for ‘Queensland fruit-fly response’ in search for permanent position.

Educational and career choices:
I always found science to be persistently relevant to our lives; depending on science to understand a bit more of the world we live in. Different branches of science deal with a variety of focuses – immunology, pathology, genetics, conservation and biodiversity, plant biology, microbiology and the list can go a mile long which made it a little difficult to choose which branch of science I wanted to pursue. I stumbled across a microbiology-based paper in my second year and was struck by the diversity and abundance of microbes, their interactions, and their interactions with us; and ever since I've been drawn to the study of microbes.

Fortunately I've had the opportunity to be involved in a summer research project looking at a disease-causing fungus (i.e. Botrytis) on grapes at Landcare Research. Grape rot is a disease typically caused by botrytis, affecting the quantity and quality of grapes and other host plants. Involvement in the research project has enabled me to understand the work-flow and enlightened me to see the practical significance of good laboratory practice. Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet amazing scientists, improve experimental and organisational skills I possessed while also acquiring new skills – all of which prove to be beneficial.

As for advice to my Fellow Somali students, study whichever field that interests you and you feel interested and/or passionate about. You might not have a pinpoint detailed plan of what you want to be, but start somewhere and figure things out as you go. Having a good healthy relationship with family members is essential in student life. Stress is to be reduced as much as possible.

I would like to thank my beautiful parents for the endless support and my siblings for being there for me to panic with and celebrate with. Above all I thank Allah the almighty who has blessed me with my wonderful family.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2014
High School: Wellington Girls College
Programme of study/qualification gained: BA Majoring in Education & Early Childhood Education
Name of tertiary education institution: Victoria University of Wellington
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: Currently not employed

Educational and career choices:
From a young age I developed a global mindset and passion for social justice and educational issues. I was born in Somalia and lived in Kenya for 14 years. We lived in poverty areas and were exposed to poverty life with limited resources to sustain ourselves. Both my parents were all of a sudden in a position where they could not support their family financially like the rest of the Somali parents who have been through civil war. As the youngest girl in my family, I was exposed to less barriers and responsibilities. Everyone in my family, including my siblings, was protective of me and created a platform for me to achieve my goals with minimal challenges.

I majored in childhood education because I enjoy children and studying their development. I enjoy studying or exploring multi approaches to engage with children including children with disabilities. When I was a student I had the pleasure of looking after children with disabilities which complemented my studies.

After completing this course, I want to lead in protecting the rights and improving the lives of women and children who are displaced by conflict and crisis. Displaced women and children are less likely to access their rights and are particularly at risk to discrimination and gender-based violence. I would like to utilise the practical skills and implement educational programmes in Somalia that empower women and children.

I come from a very supportive family where women are encouraged to be strong and ambitious therefore there were no challenges I can think of when it came to my educational journey. I enjoyed my time at university and I am enjoying my time as a married woman now. I am grateful to my family for providing me with supportive environment.

I intend on working around children and in the education sector and hopefully implementing educational programmes for our children in Somalia. Somalia has been without sustainable education for more than two decades. I cannot wait face the challenges and exciting adventures Somalia has to offer.
Fowzia H Omer

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1997
High School: Zayed College for Girls
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Education (Primary Teaching)
Name of tertiary education institution: The University of Auckland
Year of graduation: 2015
Place of employment: Teacher at Mt Roskill Primary School & Wesley Primary School

Educational and career choices:
Throughout my schooling life I had amazing teachers who made coming to class enjoyable. As I reached high school, I began to understand the major impact teachers have on students’ lives. Being a teacher goes beyond, ‘open your books and we’re reading this chapter today.’ Teachers spend so much of their personal time preparing, planning, marking, assessing, and giving constructive feedback in order to cater to each of their students’ needs and ultimately assist them to achieve their goals. I was motivated to pursue a career in teaching by the desire to become a contributory factor in the achievement and success of children in their educational endeavours.

The great teachers I have encountered throughout my educational journey are my heroes and role models. I believe that teachers individually and mutually can not only change the world but also improve it, and in the progression find personal and professional renewal. I want to be a part of this honourable profession and aim to someday be held in the same respect as educators who have been deemed inspirational.

“Education is the most powerful weapon in which you can use to change the world.” – Nelson Mandela.

Achievements:
During high school I took on leadership roles such as being a student councilor and head girl. These major roles required me to be a person that the younger students would look up to. As a head girl I was involved in many community and school events such as family fun days, netball tournaments, school galas, and open nights.

Advice/message for our Somali students:
Immigrating to New Zealand at the mere age of four meant that settling into a new environment (New Zealand) didn’t really have much of an impact on me. However, the process of immigration unequivocally presents some difficulties. Cultural differences compound with lingual and religious differences as one moves from a more homogenous society where most people are Somali, Muslim, and speakers of the same language to a new secular, less homogenous, English-language dominant society. Thus this change obviously had an impact on our beloved parents. They sacrificed a lot by leaving our motherland in order for us to live better lives and gain quality education, whilst at the same time doing their best to instill morals and values in the hope that we may grow to become respectable members of our community and contribute to the betterment of society. You may face some difficulties along the way but it is essential to consider what your family went through for you to be where you are now. It is also important to establish and foster good relationships with parents because they are a critical element of your support network. So when you are met with challenges, seek help, search for a solution and keep marching on. I firmly believe that perseverance and self-discipline are two qualities that rarely fail you.

My interests include spending time with my loved ones and close friends. I would love to also travel the world one day Insha’Allah. In saying that, I also see myself going back home to build a small primary school, doing my bit to rebuild our motherland Insha’Allah.
Salma Salat

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1999
High School: Hamilton Girls High School
Programme of study/qualification gained: Bachelor of Nursing
Name of tertiary education institution: WINTEC
Year of graduation: 2015
Place of employment: North Shore Hospital

Educational and career choices
I believe that the thing that got me to this point is the support and love shown to me by my family. This complete support allowed me to believe in myself and keep myself motivated to do my absolute best.

If there’s one piece of advice I would give to the youth it would be to have a goal. Know where you want to end up in life and find out what it’s going to take to get there. Know that the journey is different for everyone and that you will encounter roadblocks along the way. It’s just a matter of picking yourself up and moving on.

One thing I’ve learnt through my journey to getting this degree is that success has a lot of different faces and that success for one person will not be success for me. I’ve gained skills that allow me to be independent but that have also shown me the responsibility I have towards my community and my people.

To all the Somali students thinking about tertiary education, everything you learn isn’t through a classroom. Get out there, volunteer, and get involved in your school community. You’ll gain the type of life experience that will carry you once you are done with school.

I chose to pursue a career in nursing because I wanted to be able to help people. I have aspirations to become a nurse specialist in trauma and emergency care. I hope to one day go to Somalia and be able to help my people with all the skills I have gained. Through my studies I took a particular interest in population health and the impact of policy making on health outcomes, so to have the opportunity to help develop Somalia’s future healthcare system would be a great experience.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2002
High School: Hamilton Girls High School
Programme of study/qualification gained: Diploma in Enrolled Nursing
Name of tertiary education institution: WINTEC
Year of graduation: 2014

Educational and career choices
The reason why I have chosen nursing as my career path is because, when I was younger I used to look up to the people who helped others. Also I have always wanted to help people in need. I was interested in finding out more about the health industry because it opens doors and new opportunities for people. When I first started studying nursing I was not confident and lacked the will to persevere but with skills and strategies we were taught in nursing allowed me to gain control over the aspects I mainly lacked in. The experiences and the opportunities that were given to me in my last year were a major highlight for me. Having to wake up early and coming home late and travelling to my practical placements was a very good experience which allowed me to taste the determination needed for a person to be in this field. The most important aspect of this career for me which I liked the most was getting to surround myself with an environment which allows people to interrelate and work together. My theatre placements working at the Waikato Hospital was a highlight which enabled me to expose myself to the working ethic of a nurse. Dealing with real situations and knowing how you would respond to them effectively and professionally as possible was the aim. With the support of the multidisciplinary team along the way on showing their helping hand, giving me advice, and updating me on anything I needed to know about our clients’ families. The endless support of my family and tutors made this journey a smooth one and I was able to complete my diploma.
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1997
High School: Somalia
Programme of study /qualifications gained:
Postgraduate Diploma – Policy Studies
Bachelor of Social Work (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa)
Diploma community and Social Work (Unitec New Zealand)
Name of tertiary education institution:
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
Unitec New Zealand
Year of graduation: 2014
Place of employment: New South Wales
Family and Community Services – Australia
Position: Care and Protection Caseworker
Previously employed by the Ministry of Social Development (Child Youth and Family) for ten years
Position: Senior Practitioner
Educational and career choices:
My journey to where I am at today is a long one and not an easy one. To begin with I came to New Zealand in 1997 without my family who were in Kenya and Somalia at the time. It was not easy to resettle and adapt to my new home country without a family member around me. After six months of my arrival in New Zealand, I started full-time work at the Pacific Flight Catering as a sealing machine operator at the Auckland Airport. Machine operating was not something that I had done before but new things can be learnt. After that I decided to study further.
In 1999, I enrolled in one-year bilingual tutor training programme at Unitec, and I completed this in 2000. Then I commenced working with West Auckland Home Tutor scheme on a part-time basis which was the beginning of a skill job. Also in 2001, I stared working with the Ministry of Education as liaison person between refugee communities, schools, and the Ministry. I was part of a refugee support team who supported the teachers, students, and parents. Finally, I worked as a bilingual behaviour support worker with Somali students in primary and intermediate schools in Auckland alongside the Resource Teacher and Learning Behavior (RTLB).
In 2001, I enrolled in Bachelor of Social Practice at Unitec New Zealand. The first year of the degree was not easy. However, I decided to study part-time instead of full-time as I was working. In 2004 I exited with a Diploma in Community and Social work before completion of the degree, which was not my aim but I got a job offer. In December 2004, I started working with Child Youth and Family as a care and protection social worker. In 2008, I enrolled in Te Wānanga o Aotearoa to complete my final year of social work degree. It was not easy working full-time and studying full-time, plus family commitments. However, I finally completed Bachelor of Social Work (Biculturalism in Practice).
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2003
High School: Somalia
Programme of study/qualification gained: Diploma Nursing
Name of tertiary education institution: WINTEC
Year of graduation: 2015
Place of employment: Australia

Educational and career choices:
I have chosen nursing as a career path because of the supportive and nurturing aspect to it. It is a discipline that requires a certain type of person. I have always had a passion for caring and helping others. This qualification has further developed and invigorated that sense of helping others in need. I learnt so many valuable lessons and skills during my study.

I would encourage my fellow Somali students to pursue their passion and dreams. You are lucky to be in a country where you can achieve your educational goal if you are prepared to work hard and focus on the big prize ‘QUALIFICATION’.


Advice
I believe our younger generation can achieve their dreams as they have opportunities and facilities to do so. My advice to our younger generation is try hard and be serious in your education. Even if things get hard, do not give up because if you give up nothing will be achieved.

Community involvement
Since I came to New Zealand in 1997, I have been fully involved with the Somali community in Auckland. I have been one of the key advocates for the community to ensure that they settle well in their new home country and their voices be heard and fully participate with the wider New Zealand society and to fulfill their duty, responsibilities, and obligations as new citizens of New Zealand. My interest area in research is community development.
From primary to high school, I remember not being allowed to do mainstream classes. I remember being discouraged from pursuing further tertiary education. When I first started university the road was certainly not smooth. I remember struggling in my first few semesters, but eventually I adapted to the expectations of university studies. I believe that the greatest skill that allowed me to overcome these tough times was based on having resilience. I believe that patience and perseverance combined with resilience and a determination to succeed are vital ingredients to long-term success.

Thinking back on my background and where I have come since then, makes me feel proud of all that I have accomplished. In August 2014, I graduated with a B.A degree in Conflict Resolution and Social Sciences from AUT University. I am also in the process of completing my Master’s degree in Policy Studies whilst working for the Ministry of Social Development and as a Teaching Assistant at AUT University. This is all on top of other volunteering initiatives that I undertake with other various community organisations. I was also honored to be chosen to speak at Government House on 2015 Race Relations Day alongside the Governor-General of New Zealand and Dame Susan Devoy.

I know many people reading this will be going through their own personal difficulties in their educational endeavours or life in general. My advice to you is to keep going,
Kenadid Siyad

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 2001  
**High School:** Somalia  
**Programme of study/qualification gained:** MBA  
**Name of tertiary education institution:** Auckland University of Technology  
**Year of graduation:** 2014  
**Place of employment:** CMee Ltd

**Educational and career choices:**
Education is more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is one of the most important investments made in one's life and future as it is vital to diverse aspects in one's life. My journey through university life has been challenging and yet stimulating. In my view, education develops your perspective on the world around you and pushes you to think both creatively and conceptually about many different subjects. Education is about far more than the marks you receive. It's about understanding right from wrong and having the knowledge you need to stay afloat in today's society. My advice to those who follow is to be strong mentally and dig deep within yourselves to get through the road which is often filled with obstacles, as there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

"Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom." – George Washington Carver

My community involvements are based around providing guidance when needed to the youth.
Ahmed Abdile

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1994

High school attended: Mount Roskill Grammar School, Auckland

Programme of study: Currently I am studying towards a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) at the University of Auckland.

My study:
My family left Mogadishu in late 1990, and following a period spent in a refugee camp in Laboi (Kenya), we relocated to New Zealand in 1994. Being much younger than my older siblings I was insulated from the cultural shock they must have experienced. We benefited from the stability and committed support provided by my mother who raised us. Seeing how much she sacrificed for us motivated me to set high goals.

From a young age I wanted to become a doctor so I could help others. Granted that sounds clichéd, it is the truth. As I have gotten older my reasoning has grown to include: to help others in a way that was rewarding, challenging, and utilises my love for working with people. For those interested in a career in medicine I would add that there is not one particular mould you have to fit to become a doctor. The practice of medicine is so varied that it requires a workforce as diverse and different as the patients we treat.

In my final year of high school I took the following NCEA subjects: Biology, Chemistry, Statistics, Geography, and English. The last two may surprise some, but I recommend gaining a well-rounded education that can broaden your viewpoints and teach you valuable communication skills; which I still use every day. When considering what you want to apply to study at tertiary level, always be prepared. Know what pre-requisites are required. Sometimes the prerequisites have prerequisites of their own, so it pays to think ahead.

After I completed high school I enrolled in a Bachelor of Science (Biomed) degree, one of two pathways to gain entry into medicine in the second year. It was initially a shock, transitioning from high school classes of 20-30 students to large lecture theaters of 500+ pupils. It took time to get adjusted, but once I had found a group of similar-minded friends, whom I could study together with, pray together with, and socialise with, university became far more enjoyable (even more than high school!). University study affords you lots of freedom, but with it comes the responsibility to self-direct your own learning. The process of applying to enter medicine has three parts: grades from first year papers, UMAT exam and an interview. First year is competitive. Of the approximately one thousand applicants, roughly 200 will be offered a place in the second year. This was challenging for me. It required lots of sacrifice, and continuous pressure to do my best in each and every assessment. Allhamdu illah at the end of the first year I was accepted into medicine.

Now I am studying towards a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) at the University of Auckland. The programme is six years in length. The first three years are based on campus; learning the knowledge required for future practice including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and clinical methods. The final three clinical years are spent in hospitals, where medical students rotate between different specialties.
I have recently completed my fifth-year rotations in pediatrics, obstetrics & gynaecology, surgery, general medicine, and general practice. My highlights of the year included helping to deliver a baby, scrubbing into emergency operations, and doing six-week checks-up for newborns in general practice.

Final note:
Stories lead to success. We have a strong connection to our community and feel close to the Somali narrative. Tales of young Somali people excelling feel as though they are our own. Through a historical and cultural bond, we share in each other’s accomplishments. Our collective dreams appear immeasurably more achievable once we have seen people not so dissimilar to us achieve great things. The story of Somalia and the Somali community is largely told by others, often unfavourably. The opportunities to convey our own authentic Somali story are sparse, so whenever we have the opportunity to tell our story it is a blessing.

Interests/hobbies/community involvements:
Reading, writing, teaching Quran, MSA activities, hiking, basketball.
Mona Adam Alsomali

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** 2007  
**High School:** Saudi Arabia  
**Programme of study/qualification gained:** Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery  
**Name of tertiary education institution:** University of Auckland  
**Year of graduation:** 2014  
**Place of employment:** North Shore Hospital  

**Educational and career choices**  
I always wanted to study medicine and to achieve this dream I moved to New Zealand. I did a Bursary equivalent then followed it up with a year of health science. After that I started five years of medical school. I am currently working as a doctor – general surgery in the Auckland region and also I am spending my time with my husband and lovely daughter. For my future career I would like to become a cardiology consultant.

My message to all other students is “you can do what you really want, you just need to stay focused” and I found Medicine is not easy but doable if you have a passion for it.

“I am currently working as a Doctor in general surgery. For my future career I would like to become a cardiology consultant.”
Mohamed Abdulahi

Year of arrival in New Zealand: 2000

Highest qualification: Masters of Engineering – First class honours

What motivated you to choose this particular field? What interested you about it in the first place?
I always liked problem solving in operations and thought engineering was the right degree for me to do.

What subjects did you need to be good at in order to succeed in this field?
I think the following three subjects were key: Mathematics, Physics and English.

Where do you work?
I work for a global management consulting firm with offices around the world.

Why did you choose this particular career?
I have chosen operations management consulting because it enables me to work on some of the most challenging issues facing the blue chip companies.

Tell us more about your current job and how it is related to your qualification.
Within the heavy industry we often come across engineering-related issues and my engineering background enables me to understand the practicalities of various solutions.

Did you encounter any difficulty in getting your current job?
It’s been a while, I didn’t find it difficult – I remember that I applied for a lot of positions and ended up getting a number of interviews and then job offers.

What are some of the exciting things about your job? For example, what makes you want to go to work every day?
I am passionate about my job because it enables me to solve various complex business issues.

Does your job involve a lot of travel away from home and if yes, how frequently does that happen?
My job takes me around the world to countries such as Australia, US, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, Singapore, South Africa, and UAE. I do travel regularly.

Are there any challenges in this job and if yes what are some of those challenges?
Yes – work-life balance is a bit of a challenge because I do spend a lot of time travelling and being away from my wife and lovely daughter.

Who else in your family has achieved a tertiary qualification and what is their qualification?
My wife is a medical doctor – the first Somali trained doctor in New Zealand.

What advice would you give to our Somali students who are thinking of tertiary education?
For new students: Education is important and it opens up options for you. Study what you like and make sure you finish your studies and not get side-tracked. If you are determined you will get there.
For Graduates: a degree is not the end of learning. You need to learn while at work to move forward.

Any other things you would like to share or pass on to our Somali students who are thinking about tertiary education in New Zealand?
Go for it – do what you like!
Year of arrival in New Zealand: 1999

Highest qualification: Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Telecommunications & Networks from the School of Engineering and Advanced Technology at Massey University.

What motivated you to choose this particular field? What interested you about it in the first place?

One word: curiosity. In high school I came across an amazing science book that showed how the world works. It used science and its application to solve real-world problems. I chose engineering because it combines science and maths to solve real problems to improve the world around us.

What subjects did you need to be good at in order to succeed in this field?

Mathematics, science, and coding. Programming skills are becoming ever more important, quickly turning into the core competency for all engineers.

Where do you work?

An enterprise company called Datacol Group Ltd. A fully-owned subsidiary of New Zealand lines company Electra, DataCol has offices throughout New Zealand and Australia.

Why did you choose this particular career?

I researched engineering degrees with the best outlook for the future and found at the time, that there was global shortage of skilled people in information and communications technology. The Internet being an elegant and complex global system that operates without a central governing body was also another factor in helping me choose this particular field.

Tell us more about your current job and how it is related to your qualification.

I work as a Technical and Service Delivery specialist for Datacol Group Ltd.

At Datacol, I worked in the IT team. I have experience in a range of technologies, including those in the fields of hardware, software, telecommunications, and business operations. As member of the IT team I worked for internal staff, national, and international customers of Datacol.

Some of my work at Datacol includes:

- providing onsite and remote technical assistance on Datacol solutions to national and international customers
- managing multiple Service Requests of diverse scope where analysis of data requires evaluation of identifiable factors
- facilitating the design, development, testing, support, and maintenance of innovative software systems in providing data collection, meter reading services, and software solutions both in and outside New Zealand including Africa
• automating business processes that will become part of companies “IT Supported Application”
• carrying out IT infrastructure upgrades.

In this role I have been able to acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge in information systems, hardware, and software. My engineering training background has been very helpful in quickly understanding the matters at hand. The outcome of my career progression has been very positive and rewarding.

Did you encounter any difficulty in getting your current job?

First off, job ads often exaggerate the amount of specialisation required. In the job ad they may put ‘expert required’ on there because, all else being equal, they’d love to get someone who was actually an expert. This has meant early in my career, I did not get the jobs that I actually was qualified to do because I simply did not apply for them. But that still did not stop me from working on interesting small open-source projects online and working for small companies. This is not always a bad thing, because the smaller the company, the more likelihood that you are able to acquire a wide range of skills which could serve you well later on in your career. But if you are narrowly focused on a single field, you should avoid small companies. So don’t worry too much about being an ‘expert’; apply for jobs where your training background can be helpful in quickly understanding the matters at hand.

What are some of the exciting things about your job? For example, what makes you want to go to work every day?

On any given day, you are expected to prevent disasters, keep IT secure, and use modern software tools, or even develop specialised software and put out technology fires left and right. Engineering and technology is not for everyone. But if you do it right you can transform normal day to day work into something new and exciting, which in turn can make you better motivated and ingenious.

Does your job take you to other countries and if yes, what other countries have you been sent to and how frequently does that happen?

No.

Are there any challenges in this job and if yes what are some of those challenges?

This job is fast-paced and a moving target. The challenge is to use your time and skillset wisely. One of the most important factors to consider before acquiring a knowledge and skills of any one particular technology should be your current set of skills and prestige, cold hard economic factors, and technology trends.
What do you hope to achieve next in your career or generally in your life?

*With my current position, I am hoping to grow and take on new challenges over time. Ultimately, I’d like to assume more management responsibilities and become a distinguished engineer.*

What do you do in your spare time/any special interests/hobbies?

*My favorite hobbies are spending time with my family & friends, reading and soccer.*

Family: do you have your own family? Who else in your family has achieved tertiary qualification and what are their qualifications?

*My father was a veterinarian and widely respected in his community for his kindness. He also used to teach science. He has a tertiary education in Medicine. My mother is a good teacher, very wise and always stresses education, ethics, and morals. My younger brother Said has attained a Bachelor Degree in Applied Economics and Post Graduate Diploma in Economics from Massey University. The rest of my younger brothers and sister did not have the same opportunities like us but are currently working hard to achieve a good education. My sister wants to be a nurse and I hope she gets her wish.*

What advice would you give to a Somali student who would like to study your degree? What subjects they need to do well in high school?

*Do a little research about engineering. Do well in math, science and learn to code.*

Any other things you would like to share or pass on to our Somali students who are thinking about tertiary education in New Zealand?

*New Zealand is the most socially advanced country in the world. Among OECD countries New Zealand ranks high on access to basic education. New Zealand has one of the top education systems in the world. My advice to Somali students is to make good use of all the opportunities that New Zealand has to offers. Education never stops. Keep learning, growing and developing. Tertiary education could be an exciting adventure but you have to be prepared. You have to study hard in high school pursue what you are curious, passionate and interested in because you have to be patient and resilient in achieving your goals.*
The 2015 introduction of Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters’ Scholarships Fund was indeed a breakthrough for our refugee background communities in New Zealand. This dedicated fund has been hailed and welcomed as an important step towards recognising the extra challenges faced by our refugees in accessing tertiary education to realize their Kiwi dreams.

One of the lucky recipients of this year’s scholarship among the 12 girls chosen is Nasra Said. Nasra is currently finishing a Bachelor of Health Science specialising in Occupational Therapy at AUT. Nasra and two other Somali candidates impressed the awarding judges with their entry stories.

Nasra’s education success had started at high school where she was a determined and bright student. She did well in all the subjects she took in her NCEA level 1, 2 & 3. At high school she received several awards. For example, she was in the top 10 for biology across the country and got high marks for her NCEA maths and other science subjects. At her first year at University she topped her class.

The Somali community, on behalf of the refugee background communities, sincerely thanks Sir Robert Jones for his funding support for this scholarship scheme to benefit our refugee background girls. It is very much appreciated indeed.
Nasra Said

**Year of arrival in New Zealand:** born in New Zealand

**School attended:** Massey High School

**Current Programme of study:** Bachelor of Health Science majoring in Occupation Therapy

My name is Nasra Said. I was born in New Zealand shortly after my parents arrived from Somalia. My parents always stressed the importance of education and giving back to our community. This inspired me to study something of my interest, which is health – an area where Somalis and other refugee communities were under-represented. I am studying a Bachelor of Health Science majoring in Occupational Therapy and I wish to continue on studying postgraduate studies.

My future aspiration is to open my own health organisation. The aim of this health organisation would be to help children with learning disabilities and autism disorder to succeed in education. I am also passionate about youth and would like to run programmes to empower young men and women to succeed in education and help with employment in their chosen career.

**What this scholarship means to me**
By having this scholarship it takes pressure off me to get a job straight away and gives me the opportunity to achieve my future goals with less worries. It is also an acknowledgement of my determination to succeed in my chosen career path.
The Somali Graduate Journal has been possible only because our community leaders have been very supportive of it. The leaders continue to promote the journal in their local community and help collect the graduate profiles from their region. As the editor I know this is the most challenging part of the journal. So I wholeheartedly salute our community leaders. One such instrumental person is the leader of the Auckland Somali community who has been a real advocate for education achievement among Somali community and refugees in general. He has helped set up a multi-ethnic homework centre that is well attended and effectively run, as he knows only too well that a lot of our refugee background students don’t have the necessary home support to help them achieve their potential. I have interviewed him about the Somali Graduate Journal.

Mahad Warsame

Interview with Mahad Warsame, Somali Community leader by the Editor, Abdirizak Abdi

Why is the Somali Graduate Journal important for Somali Community in NZ?

Firstly, the Somali Graduate Journal has raised a positive profile of all Somalis living in New Zealand within the wider community. Despite the many settlement challenges faced upon arrival in a new country, the perseverance and hard work of the parents has seen the second generation excel with academic achievements contributing to good settlement outcomes and integration into the New Zealand society. The Somali Graduate Journal is the only form of communication from the Somali Community to the wider society.
Secondly the Somali Graduate Journal serves as an inspiration to all Somali students in schools and tertiary studies. To those who intend to or are doing tertiary studies it highlights the importance of studying hard, seeking help and support where necessary, and determination to succeed.

What further improvements can be made to the Somali Graduate Journal?
Continue profiling the graduates featured in previous journals who are now in employment in either Australia or New Zealand or globally. Thank you, you are doing this employment profiling this year. The Somali Community in Australia are requesting that the Journal becomes a combination of Australia and New Zealand graduates.

How can we achieve that? (extending the journal to Australia so that our Somali community over there benefits from it)

Australia is a big country and the Somali community is so dispersed but this journal is already known there. Many of the community leaders over there are interested in joint efforts to make the journal cover Australia graduates as well. You have developed a website and facebook page for the journal and this is helpful in terms of sharing the journal with the Somali communities in other countries.

What help would they need from us?
We can share our New Zealand experience in terms of the process involved in the journal production – six years. This is quite impressive and I know the efforts and determination on your part to have sustained the journal this long. You could use your experience to guide our Australian brothers and sisters. They have a lot of resources and educated people. So it is doable with our help.
SUCCESS IN ALL

While most of us are happy with achieving one area of our many endeavours, some people go the extra mile to succeed in a number of areas. They are considered multitalented. Mohamud is one such person in our Somali community in New Zealand who has been successful not only in his tertiary education pursuit but also in community and business ventures – all at the same time.

Mohamud came to New Zealand 15 years ago concerned to make the most of the situation he then found himself in. As a young man he desired to change the world or at least make a difference in his own small part of it. He identified social work as a useful starting point but realised that he would have to take some initial steps before he could become a professional in that field due to gaps in his previous education. He gained National Certificates in Business Administration (Level 3) and Social Services (Level 4) before embarking on the qualification that would give him possible entry to the industry he had chosen.

He completed a New Zealand Bachelor of Social Work degree (Massey University), receiving a Goal Setter Award along the way, and then began his career as a social worker with Barnados New Zealand in the Hutt Valley which is a part of greater Wellington. The position was that of Community Development Coordinator while his very challenging Key Task was to establish an integrated service delivery hub (a one stop shop in other words) in the Hutt Valley. The Service Centre was given the name of Great Start Taipa which continues to serve that community through the employment of both paid and voluntary staff.

Mohamud’s community service work was not limited to his paid employment. During 2008–2010 he became Chair of the Somali Community of Wellington Region. This organisation not only served the wider Somali community but also developed new initiatives such as Eid Day celebrations, a Homework Centre where students were provided with free food and study assistance from trained voluntary teachers, and Somali National Day celebrations. His background in professional social work enabled him to provide a seamless service to individuals and families which included interpretation in the Health and Justice sectors in addition to general advocacy on behalf of his community.

In recognition of his community work Mohamud was elected as the President of the Multicultural Council of Wellington from 2012–2013. That organisation is an umbrella one for 20 community/ethnic groups in Wellington city. He became more widely known for his work alongside general ethnic communities in both government and NGO circles.

He has made regular presentations in numerous forums and conferences. The most recent of these were the Wellington City Council Ethnic Forum, the Ethnica Conference organised by Ethnic Communities (formerly the Department of Ethnic Affairs), the Muslims at Work in New Zealand Conference organised by the Auckland University of Technology, and he was a panel member and speaker at the National Refugee Resettlement Forum 2015 held at Te Papa Museum in Wellington. Despite his social service background Mohamud is a business-minded individual and he has established two companies here. One is involved in the export sector wherein he works with New Zealand based companies exporting to South East Asia while the other is a consulting business providing services to government agencies and NGOs.
SOMALI PARENTS’ MYTHS AND MISUNDERSTANDING REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH COMPARED TO THE SOMALI LANGUAGE

It is often perceived that language is what holds community together, giving it a sense of identity. Throughout the history of mankind, maintaining the language has been a societal responsibility. This paper addresses the current state of the Somali language in New Zealand and Australia, and presents recommendations for the future sustainability of the Somali language outside Somalia.

It is approximately two and a half decades since the first wave of Somalis arrived in New Zealand and Australia. Despite this short timeframe, there are already emerging trends suggesting that the Somali language is on the brink of becoming extinct in both countries. It is highly likely that a similar situation is prevalent in Somalis in other refugee-receiving countries in the West.

Traditionally, the Somali people attached significant value to their mother tongue, considering it as a key feature of their identity. A testament to this is the Somali proverb ‘summadii awoowiye sinji waa ma guuraan’ which can be literally translated as ‘your ancestry’s identity and heritage are not to vanish’.

As an oral society, traditional Somalis maintained their language and culture by parents and elders transmitting it to their children through oral dissemination methods. Important aspects of these methods included communication in the home and learning through poetry. These approaches still remain popular in the Somali-speaking countries (Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti).

Coming from non-english-speaking backgrounds, many Somali families in New Zealand and Australia struggled to integrate well in their adopted communities upon their resettlement. Empirical evidence attributed their struggle primarily to their limited English and the mismatch between their perceived needs and the responsiveness of the support systems in both countries.

Because English was considered more important than the Somali language for their children to perform well academically, parents placed most of their efforts on accelerating children’s English acquisition. The supremacy accorded to the English language over the Somali language was such that many families formed the perception that speaking Somali at
home delays children's English language acquisition. Such myths have resulted in parents feeling relaxed about their children speaking English at home and denigrating the Somali language.

Consequently there are emerging communication breakdowns between parents and their children. The magnitude of the problem is such that there schools in New Zealand now engaging bilingual support workers to facilitate Somali parents’ communication with their children.

**What does this mean for us as Somalis?**

As Somalis, we should recognise that maintaining the Somali language is critical to preserving the Somali identity. We should comprehend that having a strong foundation in the first (Somali) language helps learners to learn English and other academic subjects. Research confirms that learners who are already familiar with how their first language functions learn faster, as they can make connections between their first and second languages.

Because of the limited resources for nurturing the first language in New Zealand and Australia, the ideal approach is to encourage and engage a whole community to promote the Somali language and culture. A key component of this approach may involve organising essay competitions on selected topics covering the Somali language and the Somali history. Because there may be lack of interest and resistance from young people, the wider community and parents should encourage and give confidence to young people. For example teaching the dhaanto and buranbur may resonate with most young people.

Another strategy may involve remaining connected to our extended families in Somalia. This approach may yield better results in fostering children’s Somali language proficiency if parents can encourage their children to talk to their family members in Somali on regular basis and to write texts and emails in Somali.

Maintaining Somali language ability in the face of living in a dominant western culture is challenging. However, since maintaining the Somali language is central to preserving our identity and cultural heritage, and strengthens our families, we should all treat it as our collective responsibility.

**By Dr Hassan Ibrahim**
As of 2015, there are 95 Somali tertiary students (undergraduates) around New Zealand. They are made up of 46 males and 49 females. The interesting thing is that the number of female students has now overtaken their male counterparts. It is good to see an increased participation of the Somali girls in tertiary education. Although I suspect that this has been the case for sometime but the difficulty in getting information from some of our families might have underestimated the female numbers in previous records.

While the tertiary student lists are updated annually, there are always some students for whom we have no contact or don’t know about their situations. This year it has been difficult to get an updated list from Wellington and I am sure there are new students missing from this region’s list. We will endeavour to update this list in the future publications as we don’t want to leave out any student.

The charts below give information about the number of Somali undergraduates per region in 2015 along with the gender breakdown.
## Somali Tertiary Students in Auckland 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Study Area</th>
<th>Education Provider</th>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed AbdiNuur Abdule</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Auckland University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdulqani Muse (Cadami)</td>
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<td>Liban Abdi Ahmed</td>
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</table>
Firstly I would like to acknowledge the graduates who have submitted their profiles and shared their personal stories with the wider community through this journal. Your individual stories and achievements will, no doubt, inspire your fellow Somalis and be a source of pride for your families and community.

I have enjoyed reading each and everyone’s unique profile. Congratulations for your achievements and I wish you all success in all your future endeavours.

Huge thanks also to everyone who helped in the collection of the graduate profiles from the community or contributed an article or helped in some other way.

Special thanks to the Office of Ethnic Communities for their on-going support with this year’s publication.

Abdirizak Abdi
Editor
nzsomaligraduates@gmail.com

Check out the Somali Graduate Journal website.
www.somaligraduatejournal.org