

Media Release

**18 April 2002
Attention: Education and
Political reporters
For Immediate Release**

Pacific Students Deepest in Debt

New figures released today by the New Zealand University Students' Association (NZUSA) show the average annual borrowing of full time, full year Pacific Island university students is higher than any other ethnic group and points towards actual graduate debts being much higher than previously thought.

The average annual amount borrowed by Pacific Island students is \$7,575.46 compared to \$6848.16 by Maori and \$7042.88 by Pakeha students.

"It's clear that Pacific students are doubly disadvantaged by the loans scheme. They borrow more than their classmates, and then go on to earn less income and so take longer to repay," said NZUSA Co-President Andrew Campbell.

"This effect is compounded for female Pacific graduates, who will take even longer to repay their debts because of the time they take out of the workforce to have and care for children and other family members."

"These figures show the ethnic inequities inherent in the student loan scheme. How can we accept a scheme that has such vastly different outcomes for people from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds?" said Campbell. "Pacific people are a growing group of our population, and their debts will be a massive social problem in years to come."

"The figures indicate that the average debt for a bachelors degree would be over \$20,000 dollars. This is much higher than the average student debt of around \$12,000 promoted by the Inland Revenue Department. The public is being duped about the real costs associated with getting an education," said Campbell.

"The government needs to recommit to tertiary education and back that commitment with cash. If it doesn't the \$5 billion worth of student debt will grow to be an even bigger millstone around the neck of a whole nation," said Campbell.

ENDS

**For further information please contact
NZUSA Co-President Andrew Campbell
Ph: 04 498 2500 Cell: 0274 86 86 77**