



Davon Hartig is a proud Kabi Kabi and Goreng Goreng man studying a Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)

# On pursuing your passion: a chat with Davon Hartig

By **DARBY JONES**

Davon Hartig is a Kabi Kabi and Goreng Goreng man who, thanks to the generous support of The University of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit (ATSISU) and scholarships, is working towards revolutionising mental healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I had the opportunity to sit down with him for a yarn about his career aspirations, his pathway to UQ, and the integral support he's received along the way.

## Pursuing his passion

For his entire life, Davon Hartig has been passionate about helping others. As a child, he had grand ambitions of becoming an air force pilot. These ambitions changed when, in high school, he was presented with an opportunity to work in IT. While speaking about this experience, Davon admits:

"It wasn't me. It wasn't who I was. I wasn't supporting community or acting in service of other people."

While IT may not have been right for him, Davon's experience provided him with a valuable opportunity to understand not only his core values but his true purpose in life. This inspired him to pursue a Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) at The University of Queensland (UQ).

"I want to be an advocate for mental health. To support our Mob – the community that's been there for me my entire life. That is my life's mission."

Davon is currently in his third and final year of his undergraduate degree. Following an Honours year and postgraduate study, Davon has his sights set on changing the shape of mental healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"I want to blend my clinical knowledge and practices with my cultural knowledge and Aboriginal methodologies. My community has always had my back. Now, I have theirs."

## The power of scholarships

Davon acknowledges that none of this would have been possible without the

generous support of UQ scholarships. He currently holds a UQ Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarship. He is also a proud recipient of the Geoffery Huey Sattler Indigenous Scholarship. This scholarship, established in 2019 by a donation from the Estate of UQ Alumnus Geoffery Huey Sattler, supports First Nations students in their studies at UQ in perpetuity.

"My scholarships have paved my way. They've given me the opportunity to pursue my career and pay it forward to Mob."

## A home away from home

In addition to his scholarships, Davon spoke about the importance of the ATSISU. While facing the many pressures that come with pursuing tertiary education, Davon admits that UQ's ATSISU feels like a home away from home, a place where he and his peers can experience deep cultural connection while safely figuring out who they are, who they want to be, and how to bring about positive change in the world.

It was through the ATSISU that Davon became involved with Career Trackers, a national organisation supporting First Nations university students by facilitating

paid, multi-year internships.

"Career Trackers has completely shifted what I thought was possible. On top of my scholarships, I get paid to work and gain real world experience while also connecting with Mob."

Davon hopes that young First Nations people will realise that through the ATSISU, Career Trackers, and UQ scholarships, they too can pursue their dreams, forging career paths that align with both their values and their passions. Reflecting on the many forms of support he's received on his pathway to success, Davon concluded by stating:

"I have support from my Ancestors, my Elders, my community, UQ's ATSISU, UQ, and my peers to get me to where I want to be – a place where I can be an advocate for my community."

**Darby Jones** is a Kamilaroi writer and editor whose work has been featured in Griffith Review Online, Island Magazine, The Brisbane Times, and various other publications. For more information, visit [darbyjones.au](http://darbyjones.au).