

Triplet sisters lead the way



Jacinta, Roberta and Lauren Ramirez-Smith.

Lauren, Jacinta and Roberta Ramirez-Smith are making strides in achieving their dreams of becoming physiotherapists.

Roberta and her two sisters have successfully completed the first Indigenous Pre-Medicine and Health Sciences Enabling Course at Curtin University. The triplet sisters were in the first cohort of graduates who completed the course, which is aimed at providing a culturally appropriate pathway that is suitable for students who have not completed Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) studies. Roberta says that once she found the Pre-Medicine and Health Science Enabling Course she 'thought of it as a second chance to work even harder to get into physio,' and that is what she did.

'I think this course is important because it prepares you and gives you that experience of what university life is actually like when you start your degree,' Roberta says. The course, run through the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in collaboration with the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Curtin Medical School, opened another door to tertiary education for Roberta and her sisters. Roberta knew

she wanted to study at Curtin University and went searching online for courses. 'The best thing about being in the course was the tutoring I was given for all of my units. My tutors were really good and committed to helping me understand the content and I don't think I could have done it without them,' she says.

Roberta says the course was 'great' and the support she received from everyone overwhelmed her. She says 'it was a good environment of people to be around, and everyone in the course was so kind and motivating.' The course saw Roberta make plenty of new friends, who she remains close with and the tutoring she received helped her succeed.

Roberta's favourite thing to do when she is not studying is to play sport, and she says she has seen team-mates injure themselves quite often and appreciates the work that physiotherapists do to get them back on track. 'I knew that is what I wanted to do—to help those who are in pain and to play a part in someone's recovery journey, to see them come back from their injury bigger and better. It just seemed rewarding,' she says.



Roberta and her sisters are all studying the physiotherapy undergraduate degree together. They have each other to lean on and they are always supportive of one another.

Their commitment to their study shows in their ability to work together. 'We always test one another at home. We teach each other so that if one of us doesn't understand something then the other will help until they do, and at least we know we will never be alone in classes or lectures,' she says.

Roberta is proud to be one of the first groups of graduates to complete the enabling course and that she has helped to build and promote a new pathway for future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. She says that she is gratified that her name is included as one of the first students who started this program. 'It makes me feel empowered, and I hope it inspires other Aboriginal people to feel the same,' she says.

Roberta is looking towards her future, and as a member of the APA, she is looking forward to gaining knowledge and taking advantage of professional development opportunities.

After finishing her undergraduate degree, Roberta wants to become a sports physiotherapist and work with professional athletes or sporting teams. However, she says that if she does not go on to sports physiotherapy she wants to go back home to the country and work there. 'Maybe even one day my sisters and I want to open up our own privately owned practice together.'

Skye Mitchell

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