

Reihana Paewai, a graduate of Te Kōhanga Reo, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Wharekura, headed back to the United States of America last night to continue his studies at an American College.

Paewai, Rangitane, Ngati Pikiao, is in the middle of his 4-year course of study at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa.

The 21-year-old was home for Christmas.

“I received a scholarship to attend United World College about five years ago and I did my two years in Singapore, kind of an extension of high school, and the scholarship that I received from Luther College is an extension for UWC students and that’s how I’ve ended up so far away,” says Paewai.

He says his scholarship covers 90 percent of his study and he will not have to worry about any student debt once he finishes.

“Once I graduate from college, unlike most students in New Zealand, I’m not in debt.”

Paewai says that, while the experience has been great, he still misses Aotearoa.

“The biggest challenge of living overseas is getting homesick, missing whānau and friends.

“I’m probably not as fluent in Māori as I used to be but I still listen to waiata a lot and think of home. But in terms of Māori culture, there’s not a lot.”

Despite this, he says he definitely recommends people to get out and see the world while they still can.

“Anyone who’s serious about learning and wants to travel and wants to see the world from a different perspective and learn as much as they can from other cultures- the scholarships are obviously rare but for anyone who wants to be a part of that I certainly recommend trying at least.”

He’s leaving excited about his upcoming year. As a student majoring in Political Science and Economics this year’s course work could include an internship in Washington DC, the seat of American politics.