IMPERIAL

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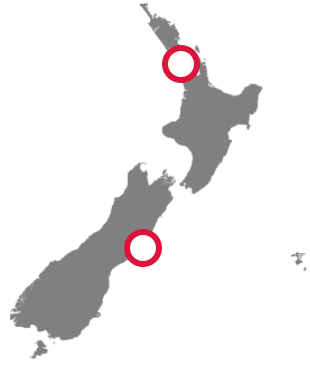# Transition support for underrepresented students

What can we learn from the US and New Zealand?

Alexandra Lyons

24/06/2024

How do universities in other countries approach support for underrepresented groups as they transition into university?

THE PROGRAMMES

Tōia ki Waipapa, University of Auckland
6-week **academic and cultural** residential summer programme for around **30** Māori students before they start university

Takere, University of Canterbury
5-week **academic and cultural** residential summer programme for around **35** Māori and Pacific students before they start university

First year Success Research Institute, CalTech
7-week summer residential **research and academic** programme for around **60** underrepresented incoming students

Living Learning Communities, UCLA
Student residence halls focused on **community building** for groups of **50-100** students, including first gen and minority ethnicities

Summer Bridge, UC Irvine
6-week summer residential **academic** programme for first gen and underrepresented incoming students

First Generation and Low Income Student Mentors, Yale University
Ongoing peer mentorship and support for first generation students focused on **confidence and navigating university**

Camp Yale, Yale University
1 week residential programme for all incoming Yale students with **community building** focus
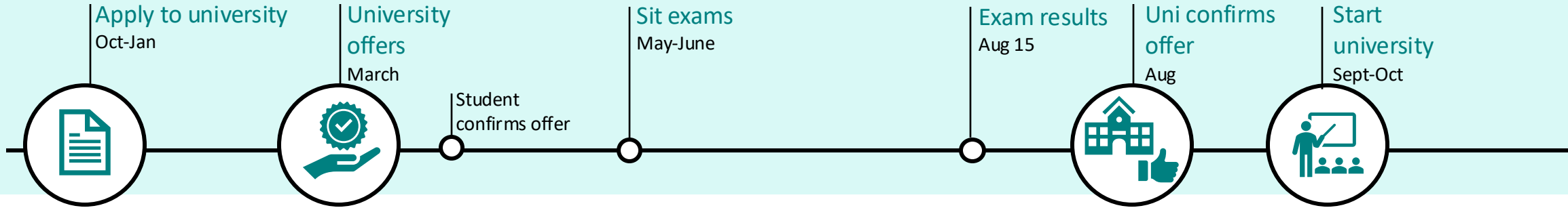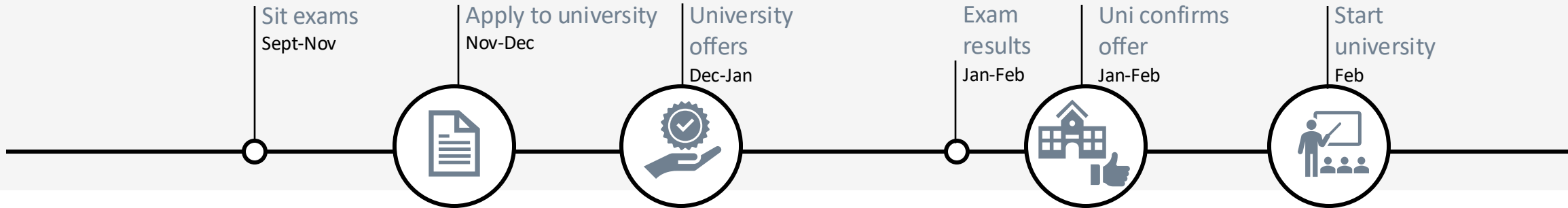
TIMELINE

WINTER   SPRING   SUMMER   AUTUMN

UK
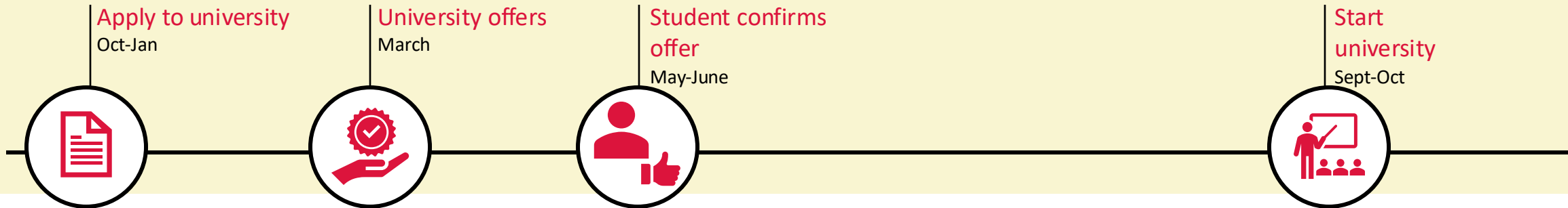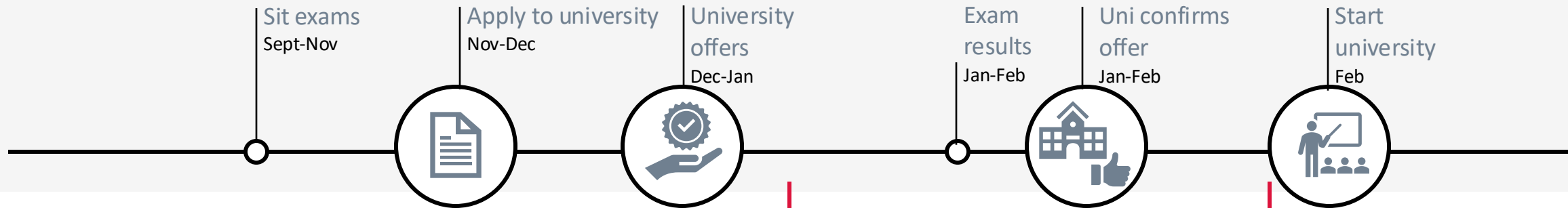
Apply to university
Oct-Jan

University offers
March

Student confirms offer

Sit exams
May-June

Exam results
Aug 15

Uni confirms offer
Aug

Start university
Sept-Oct

NZ

Sit exams
Sept-Nov

Apply to university
Nov-Dec

University offers
Dec-Jan

Exam results
Jan-Feb

Uni confirms offer
Jan-Feb

Start university
Feb

US

Apply to university
Oct-Jan

University offers
March

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TIMELINE

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TIMELINE

Camp Yale, Yale University
1 week residential programme for all incoming Yale students with **community building** focus
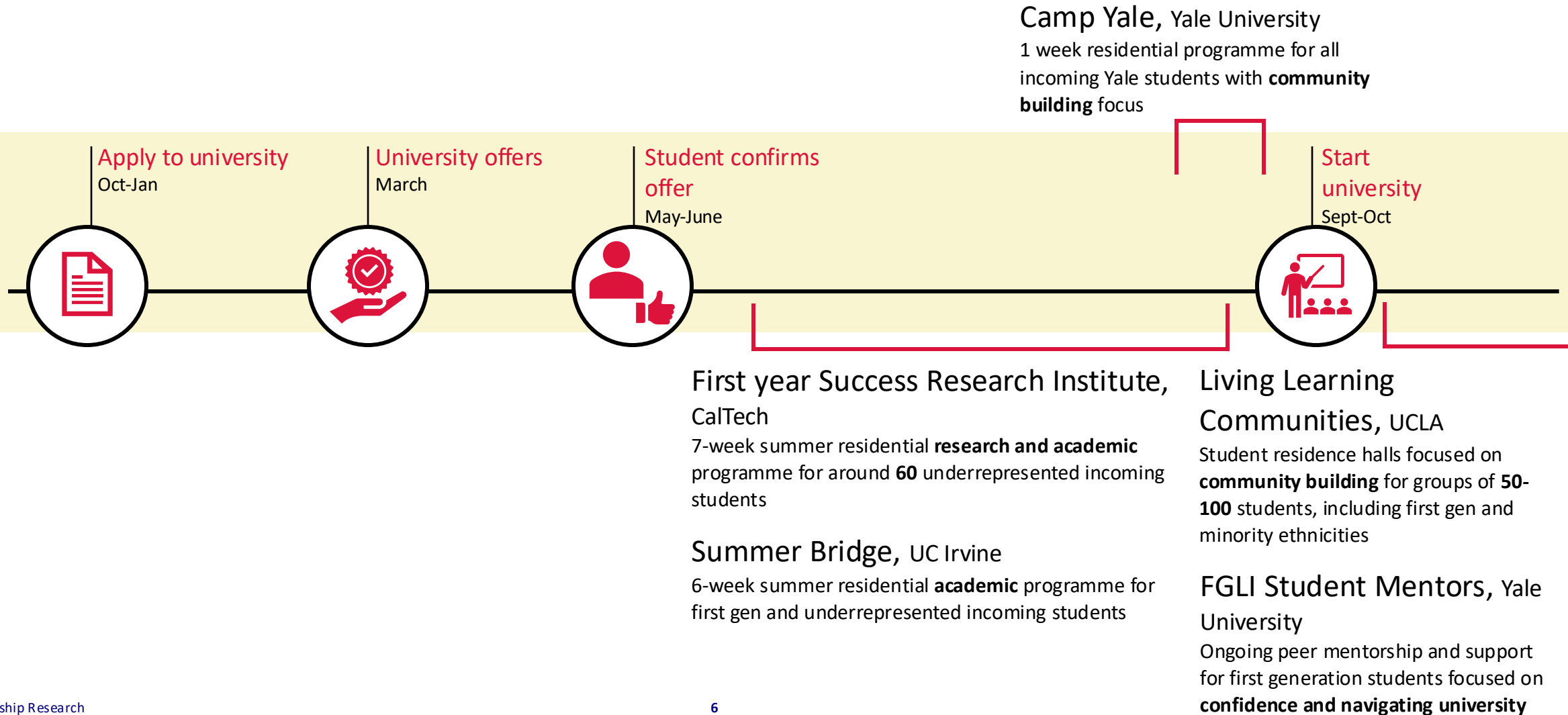
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Apply to university
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University offers
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Start university
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First year Success Research Institute, CalTech
7-week summer residential **research and academic** programme for around **60** underrepresented incoming students

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FGLI Student Mentors, Yale University
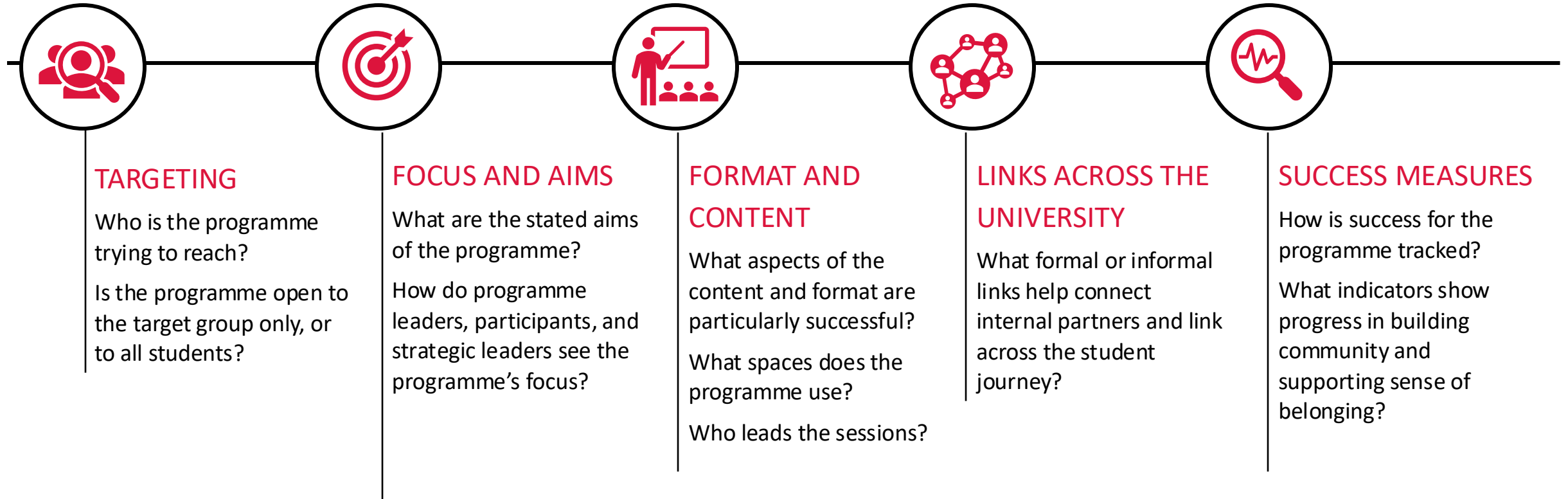Ongoing peer mentorship and support for first generation students focused on **confidence and navigating university**

THE QUESTIONS

What approaches do the target programmes take to eligibility, aims, content, and evaluation?

TARGETING

Who is the programme trying to reach?

Is the programme open to the target group only, or to all students?

FOCUS AND AIMS

What are the stated aims of the programme?

How do programme leaders, participants, and strategic leaders see the programme's focus?

FORMAT AND CONTENT

What aspects of the content and format are particularly successful?

What spaces does the programme use?

Who leads the sessions?

LINKS ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

What formal or informal links help connect internal partners and link across the student journey?

SUCCESS MEASURES

How is success for the programme tracked?

What indicators show progress in building community and supporting sense of belonging?

TARGETING

TARGETED PROGRAMME
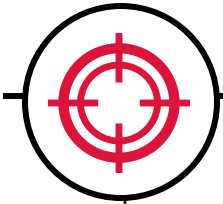Open only to the target group

PRIORITY SELECTION
Selected based on several traits

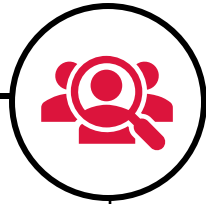## OPT-IN INITATIVES
Open to all with targeted focus
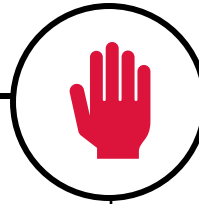
SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS
All students take part

Takere, University of Canterbury
5-week academic and cultural residential
Open to Māori and Pacific students
35 places per year

Tōia ki Waipapa, University of Auckland
6-week academic and cultural residential
Open to Māori students
30 places per year

Summer Bridge, UC Irvine
6-week academic residential
Priority selection for first gen, low income, and other underrepresented groups, including foster children and DACA

First year Success Research Institute, CalTech
7-week research residential
Priority selection for first gen, low income, and other underrepresented groups
60 places per year

FGLI Peer Mentoring, Yale
Ongoing peer mentorship and support for first generation students
Linked to academic strategies workshops open to all students but with targeted focus

Living Learning Communities, UCLA
Opt-in student residence halls focused first gen and minority ethnicities
50-100 students per hall
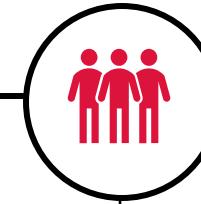
Camp Yale, Yale
1 week residential transition programme
For all 1,600+ incoming Yale students

TARGETING

KEY POINTS

→ Targeted support **brings together students from similar backgrounds**, particularly where target groups are small or not visible, and so community may not build organically.

→ To avoid issues around deficit model, students should be able to **opt-in to targeted support**, with some autonomy and flexibility given to students to determine their **self-identification** with the target group

→ Targeted resources need **input from the students you are trying to support**, to help ensure the content is relevant

→ Support for all students needs to be **accessible financially, culturally and practically** to benefit underrepresented students

→ A useful mid-way point is to allow students to choose a **targeted strand on a wider initative**

"
When you go in a lecture [as a Māori student], it's obvious that you're being underprovided for. Those classes are under-supporting you.
You have to work just as hard if not harder because this content isn't for you.
"

--Programme leader, New Zealand institution

"
That's the good thing about college; you can decide if this is something you want to explore.
"

--Yale undergraduate student and peer mentor

FOCUS SPECTRUM

Approaches to balancing different programme aims

COMMUNITY BUILDING FOCUS

ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOCUS

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FOCUS AND AIMS

KEY POINTS

→ Supporting academic preparation, community building, or navigating a new university environment is most effective when **considered holistically**, rather than by isolating a single outcome.

→ A deliberate focus on **building community and sense of belonging can be a productive "end-goal"**, not just a mid-way point to academic success

→ Orientation to university should be designed with target students in mind, and include formal frameworks and introductions to support as well as links to peer mentors to highlight the less-formal **"hidden curriculum"**

> **"**
> I experienced it as a student. Now as Director of the program I can confidently say **it's about connecting students to each other and to Yale**.
>
> --Timeica Bethel-Macaire, Cultural Connections Program Director, Yale
> **"**

> **"**
> Even though I am theoretically focusing on academics, what I am actually doing is a lot more holistic than that. **Sense of belonging is crucial** to all of this.
>
> --Lynda Paul, Associate Director of Academic Strategies Programmes, Yale
> **"**

FORMAT AND CONTENT

KEY POINTS

➔ **Legitimising** academic preparation helps to avoid a deficit model.

➔ Introducing students to **individuals or specific spaces** that they can access during their degree creates consistency

➔ **Employing current students** supports programme academic and community building aims, and creates consistency across the transition

➔ Student roles are most effective where students have appropriate **pay** and recognition, **training** and ongoing support, significant **autonomy**, and the ability to progress into leadership roles.

> " They've already set us up with all our go-to people at university, so **I already know who to go to** if I need help.
>
> -- Takere participant, University of Canterbury

> " I want students to say, 'That's closer to my pathway. I can see how they made it work.'
>
> -- Current undergraduate student, Yale University

> " Every counsellor is going to bring their own spices and flavours.
>
> -- Joanna Hernandez, Director for Student Success Initiatives, UCI

Importance of Spaces

"

We need places for Māori and Pacific students to just hold space, just to be. They are breathing room. Spaces where they don't need to be 'on', don't need to worry about whether they are laughing too loud.

-- Gemma Skipper, Kaihāpai Tauira, University of Auckland

"

"

Part of it is a space that looks familiar, that it feels like home. But more important is the people who are there.

"

-- Current undergraduate student and past Tōia ki Waipapa participant, University of Auckland

Importance of Spaces

> "
>
> Having it there the same time every week, with food, just means we have our space.
>
> It's important because you feel like you belong.
>
> -- Current Yale undergraduate student and FGLI peer mentor
>
> "

> "
>
> It's not a nice, flash space but it's a space where their people are, it is homely. They know the tikanga.
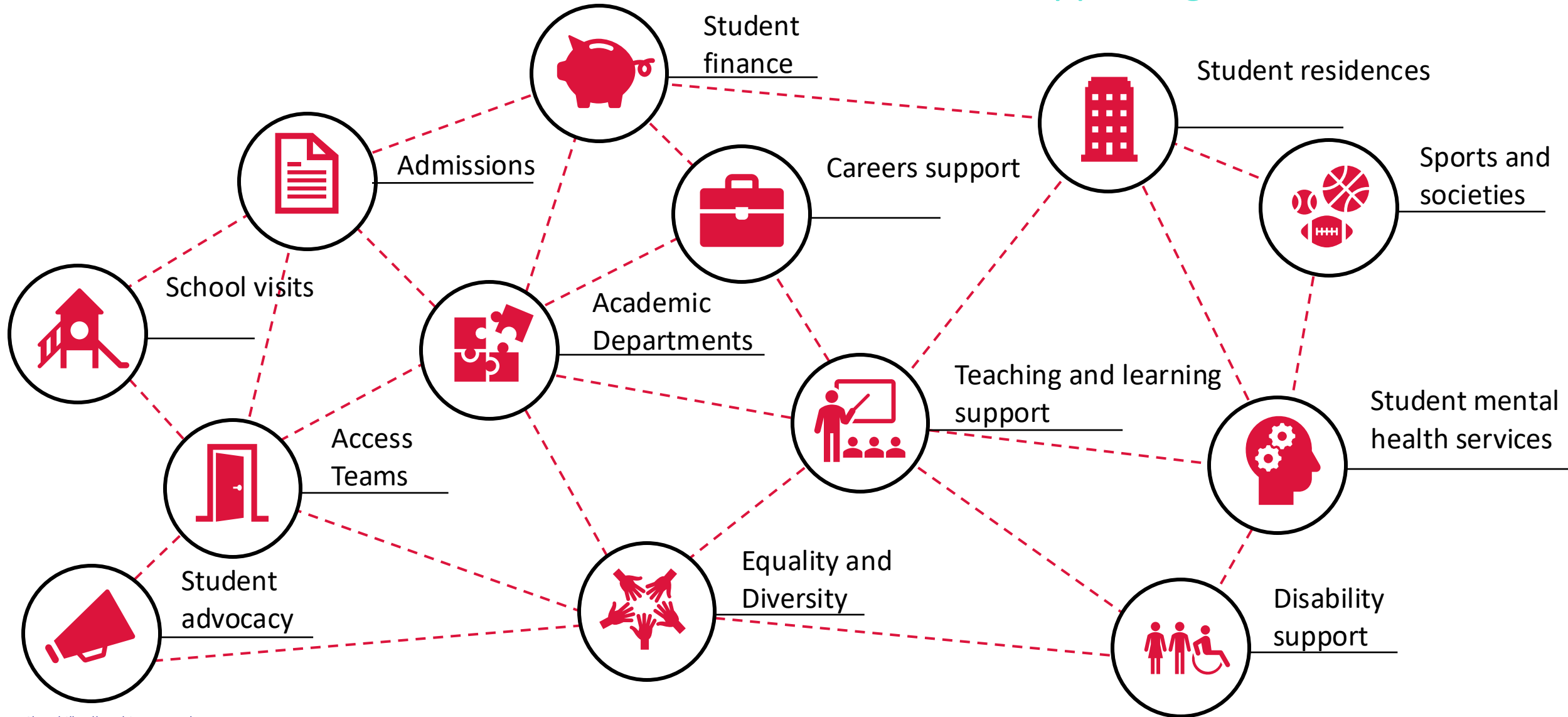>
> --Thomas Hamilton, Kaiurungi Matua, University of Canterbury
>
> "

INTERNAL LINKS

Array of university stakeholders supporting access and success

Student finance

Student residences

Admissions

Careers support

Sports and societies

School visits

Academic Departments

Teaching and learning support

Student mental health services

Access Teams

Equality and Diversity

Disability support

Student advocacy

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INTERNAL LINKS

KEY POINTS

→ Building strong **internal relationships and visibility** and awareness with students takes time.

→ **Create a new network** or **meet people where they are**

→ Consider **what you and your team bring to the table**, including access to student voice or ability to direct students to other services

→ From both the student and staff perspective, there is a fine line between **complementary support** spread across a number of areas and **overwhelming** or duplicative systems that become difficult to navigate

→ Like students from underrepresented groups, staff working for **institutional change** benefit from dedicated spaces to process and work through challenges, recognise successes, and help keep **momentum and enthusiasm**.

> "
> It's so important to be visible; it **builds a trust all its own**.
>
> If students can see you, they are more likely to come to you.
>
> - Programme Leader, US Institution
> "

> "
> 90% of the effort you'll put in is with the people. You can have flash systems, but **none of that is worth it without the people**.
>
> -- Kaylene Sampson, Programme Director for Learner Success, University of Canterbury
> "

"

Sometimes you look at what needs to be done and it feels like a huge hill.

To change a culture is really hard.

"

SUCCESS INDICATORS

KEY POINTS

➔ **Qualitative evidence** is key to understanding success of community building and belonging initiatives. Where aims focus on student experience, subjective views form key evidence that should not be dismissed as "anecdotal"

➔ On a wider scale, understanding the university's progress in supporting underrepresented students requires monitoring **how the university itself is changing** to meet students in the middle

➔ Indicators to understand the wider picture at the university may **already be collected in other areas**, such as EDI work

"

It's not enough, for me, to say that they are getting the full university experience just because they go through to the end.

How do you quantify how one person at the start of your journey changed that? The more you look at it from the numbers side, the less human it gets.

-- Current university of Auckland student and past Toia ki Waipapa participant

"

[Yale's commitment to Cultural Centers] was a big reason why I came to Yale. I like seeing institutional support for student groups.

-- Current FGLI peer mentor and past mentee, Yale University

"

"

The system has been absolutely, perfectly designed to get the outcomes that you are getting.

If you want different outcomes, you need to change the system.

"

TO CONSIDER…

INTERNAL LINKS

- Who are your key allies? What might you have to offer?
- How could you increase visibility?
- Where could you physically introduce a key person or space?

SPACES

- Do you have public-facing spaces?
- If a student came to find you, what would they see?

STUDENT SUPPORTERS

- How do you prepare and reward student supporters?
- What opportunities do you give them to feedback or take ownership of elements?

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Thank you

Alexandra Lyons
24/06/2024