**Tim Fowler – Ōritetanga Learner Success Conference, August 2019**

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Ko wai te maunga e tū mai rārā? ko Tararua, ko Tararua. Ko wai te maunga e tū mai rārā? ko Rangitoto, ko Rangitoto. Nukunuku mai, nekeneke mai. Nukunuku mai, nekeneke mai ki taku aro, kikihi hei! Kikihi. A, tihei mauri ora! Te manu e kai ana i te miro, nāna te ngahere. Te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te ao. Ngā ihi, ngā wehi, Ngāti Whātua, ngā rangatira katoa o te ao mātauranga, tēnā koutou katoa. Ko Tim Fowler tōku ingoa. Ko au te kaiwhakahaere o te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua, ā, nō reira tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. Kia orana koutou katoatoa i te wiki o te reo o te Kuki Airani.

Well, good morning, everybody. Can I, first of all, acknowledge Minister Hipkins Minister, thank you very much for joining us today and supporting our efforts to create a tertiary education system that works for all. Tim [Renick] and Tristan [Denley], welcome.

Can I also acknowledge my colleague, Iona Holsted, the Secretary for Education, members of the TEC Board, and of course, Nigel, the Chair. Can I also acknowledge Te Wananga o Raukawa Wintec, the University of Waikato, MOE, NZQA, Ngāti Whatua, Ōrākei, all the panellists, the student speakers that we're going to utilise over the course of two days, tertiary sector leaders, and of course, all of you for participating. Thank you very much for your contributions for this conference and being here today.

So why are we here? Well, it's because every New Zealander should be able to achieve and to gain the skills which can lead to sustainable employment and fulfilling lives. While this chart shows there has been an increase for all groups of learners over time, the qualification completion rates show a large and consistent and persistent gap between Māori Pasifika learners and non-Māori and non-Pasifika learners. There are many charts, as I'm sure you're aware, that we can show you that show the same story about our system. We know that many Māori and Pasifika learners, learners from challenging socioeconomic backgrounds, and learners with disabilities face barriers that affect their participation and the successful completion rates in tertiary education.

We need to and can do better. It sounds like a big task, and it is. But it is an achievable one. To create a tertiary education system that works for all, we must work together.

The TEC is committed to a goal of achieving participation and completion patterns for Māori and Pasifika learners that are the same as for other New Zealanders within the tertiary education system within five years. Some of you may regard this goal and especially the timeframe as overly ambitious, but from my perspective, it is a symbol of the urgency of now. And it's also a recognition. As you'll see today, there is evidence and experience this goal can be achieved with the commitment of leaders such as yourselves

We are here today to lift the curtain on our Ōritetanga Learner Success work and start a wider discussion with you about how we can achieve learner success. I'm reminded of the whakataukī, tui tui tangata, tui tui korowai. It’s from my hometown of Masterton - Go the Bush. And it suggests an approach that the task of bringing a group of people together with the same level of care you would employ in weaving a beautiful garment. It's clear that New Zealand needs a tertiary education system that works for all, not just some.

New Zealanders need a system where learners have the support and to make good educational choices where communities have a voice in how and where they learn. And we need tertiary education organisations that are focused on and successful in improving learner outcomes. I do want to be clear, though, that this does not ignore the fact that many of your organisations have many initiatives to improve learner outcomes for these groups.

And I'm absolutely certain-- because I know many of them-- that you have staff who care very deeply about their success. What we know, though, is that as a system, there are islands of success but vast deserts of poorer performance. So we need a radical shift across the system with new approaches to ensure learner success, and we need to work together to do that.

The first shift we need to make is to ensure success is building leadership across the sector. So I'm very pleased to be able to welcome two world leaders in this from Georgia here today. Like the ulafala, the chiefly necklace on the screen, leadership is the beginning, the middle, and the end. The TEC [Tertiary Education Commission] is clear that we can play our part, but we know that that's not enough by itself.

As Nigel noted, we were both deeply affected and impressed by our experience when we visited Georgia State University and the University System in Georgia eighteen months ago, and it taught us that the drive from the executive leadership is a key for success. That commitment and collaboration of leadership is important for student success and the clarity of the vision for desired change. A clear and compelling vision for student, community, and industry success should be driven by the CEO, and it should be a demand of and supported by an organisation’s council or board.

I've heard some of Tim Renick's comments made back home in the US when he reflects upon the support of Mark Becker. Mark is the president of Georgia State University and when Tim notes and I quote - He provided the context where we could do things, in many cases, we didn't even think were possible. But Mark thought they were not only possible, but absolutely necessary.

So it's not about changing one part of an organisation. Change at this level cannot be just the domain of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Māori, the DVC Pacific, or second or third-tier managers working as lone voices in the wilderness. That will not achieve system change that we need.

Chief executives, vice chancellors, managing directors, we all need to own this, and we need to be driving in it. So my mantra to you today is leadership, leadership, leadership. Engaged and powerful communities and empowered communities are the second component needed. Harakeke is strong as a single leaf.

But when woven together with other leaves, it becomes even stronger. For any learner success approach to be successful requires that it be owned by the TEO, but and by its community. Success comes when changing the whole pathway for learners from school to employment, and it's about having the capability to work with industry and community.

The determinants of success do not begin and end at the gateway of a tertiary education organisation. We need to do more to ensure that communities, including Iwi, Māori, and Pasifika, have an empowered voice in shaping our system. The recently announced Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) as it now is affectionately (hopefully) known, it gives us further opportunities to enable our communities and employers.

Thirdly, we need to design our system to provide effective support where it is needed based on deeply understanding learners. Many of you tell me that our existing system is based on a student who existed in the 1990s. We know from new analysis that showing how work-life-study balance issues have much more of an impact than it did in previous generations.

In the last decade, the information gathered from data and analytics has allowed the rapid systematisation of things like student enrolment, which allows for better service design and delivery to students. Tim Renick is going to take you through Georgia State University's journey and reveal the impressive results they were able to achieve using predictive analytics to deliver the right sort of support at the right time.

As you know, over the last few years, TEC has released a variety of information products for tertiary education organisations to explore data about tertiary provision and inform the strategic planning. Through our Plan Guidance and Investment Toolkits, these tools enable you to see a consistent picture of what's happening and then agree shifts with us when we work through Investment Plans. Smart use of this data will lead us to the success we envision.

So we need a radical shift to create a tertiary education system that works for everyone. All across the system, there are examples of amazing inspiring stuff that is happening right now for all sorts of learners. But at the moment, for Māori and Pasifika learners, it's not the experience for the majority of them.

In simile, let's be clear that just increasing the number of Māori and Pasifika learners or those from whom they come from disadvantaged backgrounds or students with disabilities. Just increasing the numbers of them in our system is not enough. We should all have an expectation that increasing participation is accompanied by an increase in success.

A situation where less than one and two Māori and Pasifika learners finish their degree is not bad. This conference will emphasise the excellent results achieved at Georgia State University and in the Georgia System generally and how learnings from there could be applied to New Zealand, including showcasing several approaches already used within Aotearoa. Our Ōritetanga Learner Success mahi is not just a one-shot not wonder. And it is not just about this conference. So we all have a role to play here.

So please take part in the discussions over the next two days, learn from the current examples we're piloting in New Zealand, take back your learnings and share them with your colleagues and contemporaries. My leadership team and I will be engaging with you in the journey wherever you are on that path to ensure we're partnering to progress the work we need to. Tui tui tangata, tui tui korowai we should approach this task with the same level of care we employ in weaving a beautiful garment.

It now gives me real pleasure to introduce Tim Renick.

Now with a name like Tim, he has to be a good bloke, doesn't he? You know? But under Tim Renick's leadership, the skite sheet's pretty bloody impressive.

Georgia State University has produced some of the fastest-growing graduation rates in America and has eliminated achievement gaps based on students' race, ethnicity, and income levels. Tim has testified on strategies for helping university students succeed before the US Senate and has twice been invited to speak at the White House. In 2018, Tim was the winner of the McGraw Prize in Education, an award that recognises individuals who dedicate themselves to improving education through innovation.

Just a wee sidebar, that is not just something that's done for somebody who's done something in the last couple of years. This is a lifetime of work, and so Tim was last year, but congratulations, that's a very major achievement. He was also the recipient of the 2015-2016 award for National Leadership and Student Success innovation. His work has been covered by The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, CNN, and cited by President Obama. It gives me a very, very great pleasure to introduce Tim Renick to you. Nau mai haere mai Tim. Can you please join me in welcoming Tim Renick.

[APPLAUSE]