Erica's scholarship helps her inspire young learners
Before receiving a Second Chance Scholarship, Erica’s dream of becoming a teacher had been put on hold. Now, the La Trobe teaching student is helping young learners succeed.

In life, you’re guaranteed to experience setbacks. But what do you do when they all come at once – right when you’re meant to be finishing high school?

For La Trobe student Erica Reid, a sequence of health crises led to a situation of significant financial stress. And despite her ambition, she was forced to put her education on hold.

‘I’d always wanted to teach, it was my passion. But when I was 17, my kidney failed. At the time, I was probably going to be dux of my school, but I had to withdraw from school immediately to get a kidney transplant,’ Erica says.

‘Straight after my transplant, my mum had a stroke and I became her full-time carer. Caring for mum meant less income, even when I was working full-time. I needed to be able to pay not only for my bills, but someone else’s. So my education was paused – until, at 27, I applied for a Second Chance Scholarship at La Trobe.’

La Trobe’s Second Chance Scholarships support 20- to 30-year-olds to start their undergraduate studies, who haven’t previously been able to undertake study because of financial hardship.
Erica says she was thrilled to receive the scholarship. Having someone invest in her education not only reduced her financial stress, but helped her believe in her ability as a student.

‘The financial component is fantastic – it’s alleviated pressure and allowed me to buy a laptop and textbooks I would’ve overlooked otherwise. But moreover, it’s given me a boost in self-esteem. Not finishing high school became a burden to my sense of self. The Second Chance Scholarship has helped me enjoy the pathway of study, and I feel I’ve succeeded.’

Erica’s now studying a Bachelor of Teaching at our Melbourne campus, with a focus on community education and outreach. Her dream is to help other young students who’ve dropped out of school reengage with learning. Along the way, she’s seizing opportunities to put her skills into practice through La Trobe’s equity and diversity programs.

‘The scholarship has opened up a lot of doors within La Trobe for me. I’ve been able to work with the school partnerships program and align myself with the Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research (CHEEDR). The CHEEDR staff got me involved with the Pavilion School; presenting at a conference; and working with Berry Street, where I’m engaging students in flexible learning schools to come back into mainstream schools and into higher education, too. It’s super awesome.’

Having someone else invest in her education through a Second Chance Scholarship has been a big motivator for Erica.

‘I’ve got the expectation of others on me, which really works for me. I didn’t really have my parents guiding me in that through high school. Now, I can get this assignment done, knowing that a good grade not only means something to me, but to the people who donated to this scholarship,’ she says.

To this end, Erica wants prospective donors to know that their gift can have an impact beyond financial support.

‘It’s a fantastic thing to do. To someone who maybe doesn’t have a great sense of self-worth, or an understanding of their capacity to achieve, your donation is kind of like a stamp of approval. It shows that someone else believes in your success, in how you feel and what you can achieve. That’s far more valuable than you might perceive.’

Students like Erica are waiting for your help to start university. Donate to a Second Chance Scholarship today, to give someone the gift of higher education in 2019.