Alumnus challenges graduates to make tough decisions

The University of the South Pacific’s and also a Graduate School of Business (GSB) alumnus, Ariff Ali reminded the 2018 Master of Business Administration graduates of their responsibilities during the MBA Alumni Evening.

“It is a calling for us to make a difference for our people, our responsibility is great,” said Mr. Ariff Ali, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji (RBF).

The Graduate School of Business celebrated another milestone as fifty (50) MBA students graduated earlier this year, in March.

With three (3) graduates, Moreen Monika Nanad, Krishneel Ravinesh Readdy and Almageer Shar being awarded gold medals for attaining the highest GPA.

“Over the past two decades, GSB has firmly established itself as one of the finest business schools in the South Pacific Region. It has produced 1700 bright graduates and this includes outstanding senior managers, CEOs, high ranking civil servants and leaders”, said the Head of School, Professor Gurmeet Singh.

Guest speaker, Ariff Ali completed his Masters in Business Administration (MBA) in 2010 after graduating with a Bachelor of Economics from the International Islamic University, Malaysia.

Mr Ali who has experience working in Economics, Financial Markets and Financial Institutions, joined the RBF’s Research Department in 1992 and was appointed Governor in September 2017.

Leadership requires making tough decisions, it is a deep challenge – its goal is diversity in counsel; unity of command.”
Mr Ariff Ali, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji.

He is also a member of the Council of the Fiji Institute of Bankers, the National Anti-Money Laundering Council, the Chairperson of the Government Tender Board, the Fiji Cane Growers Fund, the Accident Compensation Commission Fiji and is also a board member of the Fiji Sugar Corporation Limited.

He shared a few fond memories of his time at USP with the class of 2018 graduates.

“This room brings lots of fond memories as I was also a student here. I made a lot of new friends, learned a lot not only from our lecturers but my fellow colleagues,” said Ariff Ali.

He gave credit to the University’s MBA programme for new friends and for shaping his future.

“I must give credit to USP’s MBA programme as what I learnt in this room has helped me in shaping my destiny and future, especially what I have achieved in the past 10 years,” said Mr Ali.

Mr Ali congratulated the graduates for successfully completing the MBA programme and complimented them for their hard work and dedication.

“You have put the hard yards; some of you may have literally burned the candle well past mid-night. You need to pat your own selves for your achievements,” says Mr Ali.

He further stressed that “leadership requires making tough decisions, it is a deep challenge – its goal is diversity in counsel; unity of command.”

Furthermore, Mr. Ali reiterated the importance of passion for work; teamwork; leadership with fervor; working smarter and raising analytical competence; effective communication and building for the future.

The event was part of the GSB’s new initiative where successful alumni are invited to talk to new graduates every year.

I must give credit to USP’s MBA programme as what I learnt in this room has helped me in shaping my destiny and future, especially what I have achieved in the past 10 years.”
Graduates of The University of the South Pacific’s (USP) Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE) were encouraged to be motivational ambassadors for the University.

Speaking on their behalf, PhD graduate Victor Alasa said that in itself will be one of the most important contributions that they can make to their Alma Mater – “to be impressive citizens where we end up in the world.”

“Congratulations, Class of 2019! We made it to the Academic Shore finally! I count it a great privilege to be given the honour to deliver this Graduation Speech on behalf of this special Class of 2019,” he said.

From the small village of Ososo in Edo State, Nigeria, Victor stated that the graduation is very special in many ways.

“We all have our individual stories which are a combination of mixed experiences of many sleepless nights studying for exams, writing academic papers, reading endless books and journal articles, eating noodles, sharing stories, laughter and tears,” he stated.

“There have been many life experiences - births, deaths, engagements, weddings and so on. However we managed to journey through them all to get this far. We each made a choice between the pain of regret and the pain of discipline,” he commented.

“Like me, and all of us graduating today, we made a choice for the pain of discipline as soon as we boarded this “vaka” when we enrolled at USP. That choice we made, as difficult as it may have been for some of us, has culminated in this wonderful and victorious event,” he added.

Victor admitted the fact that, “the sail was not entirely smooth.”

“But, I have made up my mind not to bore you with the challenges and obstacles we faced and conquered or mountains we had to climb, or the valleys we had to navigate to arrive at what my supervisor refers to as, “the other brighter side of life.” Through it all, one thing kept us going: the potency of the “community spirit”, which our Vice-Chancellor captured in the values embedded in the University’s Strategic Plan,” he said.

Victor thanked the Supervisors, Lecturers, Tutors, Markers, and the administrative staff from the gate house through the international office, SAS, ICT, the library, our faculty and school offices, Campus Life, to the halls of residence office.

“Vinaka for your tireless and unending pouring of yourselves into us - intellectually, administratively, socially, morally and spiritually. Your efforts have made us better people than when we first boarded this vaka” he said.

He urged his fellow graduates to continue to graduate to a better version of themselves in their daily lives.

“Do not ever stop learning, for it is said that when a man or woman stops learning, he or she starts dying. Remember, good fortune comes to those who persevere in spite of the challenges along the journey.”

“No matter what our futures hold, there will be times that self-doubt will step in and stand in the way between you and an open door. I hope that this victory today has shown you that you can achieve success. You just have to remember this milestone and step through the many open doors that you will encounter in your lives,” he said.

He also encouraged the graduates to take what they have learnt on this vaka and go into the world with a passion.

“Be determined to use your knowledge and your skills to make a difference to the lives of others with whom you interact. Be the light and the change that you would like to see in the world,” he added.
Loss turned into Inspiration

In May, 2017 Unita Ramswarup lost her husband to kidney failure. The mother of four was soon forced into a dark world without her soul partner and could not imagine how she would survive.

Unita graduated with Professional Diploma in Business Management (PDBM) from the Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) in March, this year.

“In life each one of us goes through our own unique journey, but I would like to touch on what inspired me to pursue further studies,” she said.

“A few months after his passing, my best friend, who was enrolled at Pacific TAFE, encouraged me to enrol in PDBM.”

“My lecturers namely Jawal Mangal, Dr. Subhash Appana and Riad Khan not only taught me but really inspired me,” Ramswarup added.

“What should have been a dreadful task at 5pm going to lectures was instead something I looked forward to attending. Due to the wonderful experience I had while pursing my Diploma in Business Management, I am this year on my journey to pursue my Masters in Business Administration (MBA).”

She encourages people to stop lamenting on their losses, challenges and difficulties that they face and rekindle their education journey.

Unita Ramswarup had a message to share with Alumni as well.

“As we continue on in our life’s journey, let us take each new problem on with confidence, knowing that we have achieved great heights and are equipped with the necessary tools to tackle our future,” she said.

Best decision was going back to School

For alumnus, Michelle Muavesi coming back to further her studies at University after 20 years was a tough decision to make. However, it proved to be one of the best decisions she had made after she graduated in Professional Diploma in Business Management.

The mother of four, Muavesi graduated from the Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE), at The University of the South Pacific (USP) graduation ceremony on 21 March 2019 at the FMF Gymnasium in Suva.

“At first it was bit challenging for me but the lecturers, facilitators and coordinators at Pacific TAFE made life easy,” she said. “The lecturers at Pacific TAFE were so accommodative and understanding of our age group and everything was just made so conducive.”

She said the workforce and labor demand required her to upskill her qualification and knowledge, which was one of the main reasons she decided to further her academic journey.

“At the moment I work in a school. I am a school administrator, and the work that I do is continuously evolving therefore I needed to get a formal education and have an opportunity to further grow in my career,” Muavesi said.

“I had an amazing experience at USP’s Pacific TAFE. I would say it is the best academic institution if you are thinking of going back to school after a lengthy break. They identify and understand student’s need and place them as their priority to be able to deliver a programme that suits your needs,” she added.
What memories do you have of your University student life and what inspired you during your studies at USP?

Some of the fond memories, I had at USP are; the University atmosphere, the group meetings and the various activities I was involved in during my time at the University.

I was motivated to achieve good grades and partake in all the University’s extra activities which have strengthened my experience and knowledge and also prepared me for the career that I have chosen.

Why did you choose USP and your field of study?

USP has always been the University of choice that provides education with its set-up facilities and experienced lecturers.

My choice of the field of study came about with the work I did prior to going to the University for full time studies.

How did USP prepare you in your career?

USP has prepared me well. It has facilities like the student help desk and different mentors in each programme to help prepare me for my career.

Personally, I am a fast learner with the passion for business excellence and am also ambitious.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it.

I am currently working as a Manager for Public Relations in a reputable corporate organisation, Vodafone Fiji.

My job is an adrenaline-charged one so never have I had a dull day at work.

It is exciting because it is a job with full on involvement in activities and meeting different people from various industries.

What literature or subscriptions would you recommend for graduates (books/blogs/magazines)?

I would recommend that they sign up for industry related newsletters, check online blogs, such as Time, Forbes, BBC, CNN and watch documentaries. Numerous links, webs, blogs and journals are available and onus is on students to make good use of resources available.

Where do you see yourself in five (5) years (career and or personal goals)?

I worked towards transitioning from the tourism industry to academic, to NGO and am currently at a corporate organisation.

Going forward, I see myself furthering my education and exploring other sides of the corporate sector. I also take an interest in volunteer work and participating in creative activities.

Please share three tips that you think would be important for current students and recent graduates that will help them start out on their career paths.

Do the best you can until you know better, then when you know better, Do better!

- Maya Angelou.
  a. Research
  b. Read and make notes
  c. Prepare and Ask for assistance

What has your involvement been with the University since you graduated? (Or how would you like to be involved?)

I have been involved through my employer but little on my own. I would like to be involved more from this year.

Contact us to share your stories and profile:

alumni@usp.ac.fj
What memories do you have of your University student life and what inspired you during your studies at USP?

The learning environment was excellent. I would also like to share my experience as part of the JENESYS 2016 (Tokyo-Japan). My experience to Japan was one of its kind. I made friends from different parts of the Pacific and gained immense knowledge about frequent earthquakes in Japan.

We were further explained on the Action Plan strategies to combat natural disaster. The advancement and technologies used in Japan reduces the manual labour force. I have also visited Shabuya Road, an ideal location for Hollywood movie scenes example Fast & Furious and Godzilla. I also stayed over at elderly couples residence (Home-Stay) which was part of my trip the great Japanese delicacy was something that I tried for the first time and till date I still miss beautiful moments of Japan and its clean city.

Why did you choose USP and your field of study?

USP has high quality of resources to suffice my field of study.

How did USP prepare you in your career?

USP has furnished me with relevant analytical approach to solve legal issues more practically.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it.

My current job mostly encompasses wide areas of Civil Procedure Law and I have a special interest in Personal Injury Claims.

What literature or subscriptions would you recommend for graduates (books/blogs/magazines)?

I would encourage aspiring professionals to read the magazine – “Entrepreneur”

Where do you see yourself in five (5) years (career and or personal goals)?

I see myself as a well-established Lawyer in 5 years time and running my own law firm as I always dreamt about it.

Please share three tips that you think would be important for current students and recent graduates that will help them start out on their career paths.

My first tip: Your past does not define your entire future.

My second tip: Failure is just an indicator to prepare well for future.

My third tip: Prepare well & work hard.

What has your involvement been with the University since you graduated? (Or how would you like to be involved?)

I wish to be given an opportunity to teach, or volunteer by any means that can contribute towards USP.

I would also like to share my experience when I represented Fiji on the 48th Know India Programme 2018 (Delhi, Manipur & Mizoram)

One month in India flew by within a blink of an eye. Each day I tried different food and visited many historical places. Taj Mahal and Agra Fort was one of the finest wonder of ancient craftsmanship. I was dissolved in the ancient history of mother India. The Taj Mahal is one of the seven wonders of the world and this pristine beauty is filled with tourists from all over the world.

The monument itself shows a portal of love and sacrifice which Shah Jahan endured for his beloved wife Mumtaz.
**1970**

**Maya Chand**

**Education:** Graduated with a Diploma in Education (Maths/Science) in 1978 and a Bachelor of Education in 1999.

**Currently:** Teaching Mathematics at Birrong Boys High School.

**Country:** Fiji. Currently working and residing in Australia.

---

**1980**

**Jone Usamate**

**Education:** 1987 Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Administration.

**Currently:** Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services.

**Previously:** Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

**Country:** Fiji

---

**1990**

**Lilomaiava Filifilia Iosefa**

**Education:** 1993, Bachelor of Arts in Economics & Management and Public Administration.

1998, Master of Business Administration.

**Currently:** UNDP GEF-SGP Sub Regional Coordinator.

**Previously:** United Nations Coordination Specialist.

**Country:** Samoa

---

**2000**

**Melefue Puloka**

**Education:** Diploma in Management Studies in 2008 and Bachelor of Commerce in 2013.

**Currently:** Human Resource Officer, USP Tonga Campus.

**Country:** Tonga

---

**2010**

**Ratu Tevita Rarokolutu**

**Education:** 2018, Bachelor of Arts and Graduate Certificate in Education.

**Currently:** Pursuing his Masters Degree under a full scholarship by The University of the South Pacific.

**Previously:** Faculty of Arts, Law and Education Student Liaison Committee.

**Country:** Fiji
USP’s high achievers after being awarded at the Laucala Campus - March 2019.

The prize winners of the iHack Challenge with Mr. Avi Raju, Director of Big Ocean Technologies (first from left) - March 2019.

Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor and President of USP (second from left) with some of the graduates after the Laucala Campus graduation - April 2019.


Youth Co-Lab Conference - April 2019.
Stay Connected to USP, your Alma Mater!

Our professional network provides opportunities to make new business contacts, obtain referrals, view professional profiles of other alumni and inform other USP alumni of your professional endeavours.

Register Online: www.usp.ac.fj/alumni

Follow us on:
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/USPAlumniNetwork
- Twitter: twitter.com/USPAlumni
- LinkedIn: www.usp.ac.fj/alumnalinkedin
- Instagram: www.instagram.com/unisouthpacific

Contact Details
- T: +679 3232914
- E: alumni@usp.ac.fj

News @USP: www.usp.ac.fj/news