Tongan Prime Minister is USP Alumnus

USP alumnus, Honourable Dr Pohiva Tu’ionetoa; Seventeenth (17th) Prime Minister of Tonga, was appointed by His Majesty, King Tupou VI on Tuesday, October 8, 2019. He also serves as the Minister responsible for Public Enterprises.

Prime Minister Dr Tu’ionetoa is a prestigious alumnus of The University of the South Pacific (USP); where he attained his certificate of Civil Law in 1997.

Further to this qualification, he studied Accounting at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand (CA) in 1982, he became an associate of the Institute of Internal Auditor (AIIA), U.S.A in 1986 then earned a Graduate Diploma in Financial Management from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia in 1993, and went on to graduate with a Master of Business Accounting (MBA) from the same University in 1994.

Prime Minister Tu’ionetoa received his Fellow Chartered Accountant (FCA) from the Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand in 1999 and is a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) from the Institute of Certified Management Accountants in Australia. He is a Doctor of Christian Ministry, from the Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Tacoma, Washington, USA since 2000.

Prime Minister Tu’ionetoa’s journey into Tonga’s Civil Service began in January 1979 where he took up a role as the Official Liquidator at the Department of Justice, Commercial Division in Hamilton, New Zealand. He then served as Tonga’s Auditor General (AG) from 1983-2014 before he was first elected to parliament in the 2014 General Election as People’s Representative for Tongatapu Constituency No. 10. He was also a Private Secretary to His Majesty from 1987-1988, and a clerk to the Privy Council during the same period.

Prior to his new appointment as Prime Minister, he was a former Minister for Finance, Minister for the then Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industries, and the Minister of Police, Prisons and Fire Services. He was also the Minister of Revenue and Customs until September 2017, before being appointed as Minister of Finance and National Planning in January 2018.

Internationally, Prime Minister Tu’ionetoa was a member and representative at the International Congresses of International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI); elected member of the Governing Board of INTOSAI for six years in 1992, and was re-elected in 1998 for another six years until 2004. He was also Secretary-General of SPA-SAI for 10 years from 1985-1994. He is currently one of the Governors of the World Bank – International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Serving as a new Prime Minister, he is confident that his government would build the nation under the leadership of a diverse cabinet which include Members of Parliament from the nobility, independents and Democrats.

In Tongan, “Lau e ua ko e taha”, means to regard two people with different views as one and treat them the same way “Counting two as one”, the slogan of his People’s Party.

He said this was a time for “reconciliation” and uniting the country which has been long-divided by political rivalries and disputes and it would not be possible to build the nation if it was divided. He added that the king, the nobles and the people must be in unity for this change to happen.

Driving towards efficiency and effectiveness with the two-year time frame, two of the priority areas Prime Minister Tu’ionetoa’s government is focussing on are sealing all public roads and ensuring proper access roads that lead up to plantations and the second important focus is the e-government project.

He said his government will continue improving and making positive changes to education, local marketing and health sectors.
Alumnus is CEO of Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The University of the South Pacific (USP) wishes to congratulate USP alumnus Ms Atenasi Ata who assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI). She is a passionate leader who wants to see people in the Solomon Islands informed, engaged and invested in the future of the nation’s development with dignity and a high quality of life.

She is from West Kwara’ae, Malaita Province and Kiribati resettled in Komaleai Village, Shortland Islands, Western Province.

Atenasi started with SICCI as the CEO in September 2018 and sees the private sector and SICCI as having a significant role to play in enabling the change that directly impacts people’s lives.

Prior to joining the Chamber, Atenasi worked with the Solomon Islands National Parliament Secretariat, Australian Aid Programme office, and United Nations - Equality and the Empowerment of Women. She also worked as a Coordinator, Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Services for Survivors of Violence in UN Women.

Atenasi has worked in the region for 14 years. She has spent over a decade dedicating her skills in Solomon Islands and Kiribati.

Atenasi received her Bachelor’s in Marine Studies from USP, Fiji in 2005 and a Master in Law and Development from Melbourne Law School, University of Melbourne, Australia in 2018.

“Women in Solomon Islands are determined and focused on improving the lives of their immediate family, they get on with it, they are hardworking, they are all about bettering their family’s lives.”

During the 2019 International Women’s Day with the theme ‘Balance for Better’ Friday March, Atenasi spoke about determination and focus, “Women in Solomon Islands are determined and focused on improving the lives of their immediate family, they get on with it, they are hardworking, they are all about bettering their family’s lives.”

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ALUMNI SUCCESS STORY

Mr Joachim Emeka Arikibe who is from Nigeria graduated with a Master of Science in Chemistry at the USP graduation ceremony on September 19, 2019 where he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship for his Master studies at USP.

“It’s a great feeling of fulfilment and accomplishment. Looking at yourself and saying I made it and being convinced that those moments of hard work paid off. I would become an authority and global leader. Of course, besides my love for science, I have great love for politics. Although most of my friends find it weird when I tell them I would someday become both a political and scientific leader. I want to connect the two since virtually everything revolves around the two” said Mr Joachim.

Mr Arikibe gave his gratitude to God almighty the giver of life and knowledge, family and his amiable and dynamic supervisor and leader, Dr. David Rohindra and his lab group members.

Mr Arikibe has also received a Second Best Paper Award at an International Conference on Material Engineering & Application (ICMEA) 2019 in Malaysia. The ICMEA 2019 Conference was organised by Malaysia’s Curtin University with Incheon National University from 23-25 August 2019.

Overall, this research provides encouragement to the people of the Pacific Islands on how to maximise the use of coconut resources to turn this resource into a billion-dollar industry knowing the abundance of coconut in the Pacific.

He mentioned that it has been awesome studying at USP and that the University has provided him with many opportunities that he is grateful for.

Young Alumni Leaders take stage at UNGA

USP alumni, and three of Fiji’s young climate champions participated at the 74th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA74) which took place at the UN Headquarters, New York from 17 – 30 September.

The alumni were Ms Komal Karishma Kumar, who is a USP Staff and represented the youth-led Alliance for Future Generations - Fiji; Ms. Elisha Bano, who is The Founder and Coordinator of the ACT It Network, and Ms Genevieve Jiva, who is a Coordinator at the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network.

These youth represented Fiji at the UNGA74 with other leaders, including Fiji’s Prime Minister, Hon. Frank Bainimarama who had a powerful message to share, “Your voices and your leadership as young people are some of the most powerful forces we wield in demanding action from the rest of the world. The struggle for decisive climate action will last for generations, and it is the sake of your future we give our energy to this fight. I see your passion and I share your purpose. Vinaka for speaking truth to your beliefs. I thank God that Fiji’s future is in such good hands,” said the Prime Minister.

The work that these young climate champions are doing is commendable. If you have any similar stories that you would like to share with the network, please do get in touch with us: alumni@usp.ac.fj
Two prominent USP alumni entrepreneurs presented at a Talanoa session on Entrepreneurship and Innovation for The University of the South Pacific’s (USP) Master of Business Administration (MBA) students, which was held at the Statham Campus on October 3, 2019.

The two local alumni entrepreneurs were Dr Mere Samisoni, Chairperson of the Hot Bread Kitchen (HBK) and Mr. Liga Gukisuva, CEO, IC0N Sporting Apparel.

The MBA students were taken through engaging and inspiring journeys outlining the struggles, the passion, commitment and hard work along with some sneak previews on how to identify the numerous business opportunities available to the students.

Dr Samisoni, highlighted some typical problems faced by businesses in Fiji but in her case, the main issue is getting the right rental space to start new outlets.

Mr. Gukisuva’s business card prominently displays the words: “Think, Believe and Become”. In his passionate and motivational address to MBA students, he stated that “we think outside the square, Believe in our product and what we do and strive to become the best we can”.

Ms Zena Sherani who is the Coordinator for Sociology received the Vice-Chancellor’s (VC) Prize and the Teaching Excellence Award during The University Forum on Learning & Teaching on August 29, 2019.

Ms Sherani was elated to receive the award and thanked Pacific TAFE Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and staff for the continued support and guidance throughout the year.

“I am delighted to have won the overall 2019 VC’s Prize and the Teaching Excellence Award. I would like to thank the following people; Dr Hasmukh Lal, Susan Sela, Maria Muliaina, Liviana Tabalala (former CAH head) and Yoko Kanemasu from the Faculty of Arts Law and Education, Sociology discipline and Mohammed Hussein from Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL) for their continuous support and guidance throughout the years,” she said.

She also humbly thanked the following departments of the University: Administration, Marketing, Finance, Quality office, Dispatch and the four colleges who she said have been equally responsible for her win.

Ms Sherani earned her Foundation in Social Science in 1998, a Postgraduate Diploma in Sociology in 2005, a Master of Arts in 2009, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching 2015 from The University of the South Pacific.
What memories do you have of your University student life and what inspired you during your studies at USP?

I enjoyed the three years of studies when I was pursuing my Bachelors Degree. I was a scholarship student, and this was the first time I travelled outside of the Solomon Islands.

Why did you choose USP and your field of study?

USP is a strong educational brand in the Solomon Islands and is reputable. Also since I was awarded a scholarship from the Solomon Islands Government, it was an easy selection to study at a university that is partially owned by the Government.

I had initially decided to study Law, however, I completed my studies in Political Affairs, which I am quite passionate about.

How did USP prepare you in your career?

For many, a Degree is sufficient, however in order to remain competitive and to reach higher in your career or field of study, I believe you need to make a commitment towards further studies.

If you wish to advance in your career and pursue higher education, it is vital to pursue knowledge at institutions that are recognised internationally. I applied for further studies at The University of Manchester in the United Kingdom for my Masters and was accepted without any issues as my USP qualification was recognised by them. I believe that USP prepared me well in this regards.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it.

I am currently pursuing my PhD from The University of the South Pacific as a full-time student. I have taken leave without pay from the Performance Management with the Ministry of Public Service in the Solomon Islands, where I worked as the Assistant Secretary.

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

For my field, I would encourage students and graduates to find out more about Governance. And to pay particular attention to literature authored by writers from your countries and or region. I believe that this will give you a focussed perspective and will be more relevant. While studying a larger emphasis is placed on international authors, however, if you want to make a difference in your home countries, it would be prudent to read and understand from authors and educators from the region.

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

After I complete my PhD, I believe that I will be able to contribute more if I am associated with an Academic Institution. I wish to share and develop research, knowledge sharing and become an Academic.

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

I see young graduates pursuing their studies quite passionately. They are determined and have their minds made up with the type of organisation and the type of career they want to pursue, however, I also see so many graduates who are disappointed with the job market, as it is not as they had imagined it to be. I would like to tell graduates to be flexible. Sometimes, you may get lucky and end up with your dream job, but if you are unable to find that as a fresh graduate, I would like to encourage you to be patient and to grab an opportunity that isn’t 100% to what you had imagined.

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

I am currently the Chairperson of the Student Association (SA), and as such, I dedicate my time and skills towards strengthening the functions of the SA by developing strategies and stronger bonds via networking. Being in this position is a demanding role, and there’s a lot of practical learnings from it. One of the skills this role has strengthened is time management skills.

Any other information you would like to share e.g. community work you are involved in

I have a couple of projects that I do with the community, apart from the work I do with the Student Association. The two that I want to share are the capacity building and development work I do with the youth from my mother’s village in Isabel Province, Solomon Islands, and the other is working with other USP alumni to form the Fiji Isabel Advisory Committee. In this committee, we work with new students to teach them about managing their scholarship funds, and also help work on CV writing with those ready to join the workforce.
**ALUMNI PROFILE - Q&A**

**What memories do you have of your University student life and what inspired you during your studies at USP?**

The best memories of USP is to meet new people and make friends, build my self-esteem and work on strengthening my social skills as well as sharing my own knowledge and interacting with more people.

**Why did you choose USP and your field of study?**

I chose to pursue my studies at USP, as it is one of the best institutions with modern facilities, is internationally recognised and also teaches the field of study that I am interested in.

I selected my field of study to be Accounting as I have previous knowledge in this field, and studying it at a professional institution helps me enhance my skills and knowledge in the discipline. Accounting knowledge is a core part of the work that I do at Tavua Primary.

**How did USP prepare you in your career?**

USP has prepared me for my current career in many ways. It has given me vast knowledge on Customer Service, sound knowledge in theory and practical work and the much needed Information Technology (IT) knowledge. I use Information Technology skills in my everyday work, where I need to deal with it in my everyday work.

I believe that it is the IT skills that has made me the best person for my current job role.

I have previously been employed at Renewable Energy Services Limited, and Sugar Cane Growers Council.

**Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it.**

Currently, I work as an Administration Officer at Tavua Primary School and I also oversee the school’s overall accounts. I enjoy my work as I have gained knowledge in the Information Technology and Accounting field, and these knowledge areas have helped me immensely in my current field of work.

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

It all depends on their professional interest, and the field or career they would like to pursue. Personally, I prefer blogs where articles are written on working process improvement and efficiency. Literature on things done at a faster pace.

Along with this, I also like to provide feedback and read comments from other like-minded people in blogs and online forums.

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

In the next five (5) years, I would like to see myself graduate with a Bachelor’s degree from The University of the South Pacific and work towards building a career as an auditor for a large business firm in Fiji or abroad. While I enjoy teaching, would like to align my studies towards working as an auditor.

**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.**

There are many tips, but I would like to share the following three. These tips will help with new graduates and is also useful for anyone to remain purposeful and for those who want to continue to grow:

Be positive in everything you do. This will enable you to have a better perspective on life, and will create a favourable atmosphere around you.

Believe in yourself, keep learning. Life is all about continued learning and self-improvement. Learning does not stop.

Love and have passion in whatever you do. This will help you to reach greater heights in your personal and professional lives.

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

In order to keep in touch with the industry, I have decided to continue with my studies, to pursue my Degree. Whatever I learn, I share with my colleagues. I believe in knowledge and information sharing, as it helps everyone progress.

Also while I am continuing my studies, I am also encouraging my colleagues and friends to also continue with further studies.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

1970 | Jesoni Vitusagavulu
Education: Bachelor of Arts in 1979 from USP, his Master’s degree in development studies from Sussex University UK in 1986
Currently: President and CEO of Vitulink Inc, USA
Previously: Fiji’s Ambassador to Washington DC from 2005 - 2007
Country: Fiji

1980 | Uraia Goneyali
Education: Foundation Science from USP in 1989 and a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Chemistry from USP in 1999
Currently: Manager Technology & Innovation at Fiji National Provident
Country: Fiji

1990 | Usaia Tunaulu
Education: Bachelor of Arts in Business Studies
Currently: Manager Corporate Affairs at Home Finance Company Bank, Fiji
Previously: Manager Government, Diplomatic Missions and NGO Business - Westpac
Country: Fiji

2000 | Dahlia Loibl
Education: Cert in Management Studies 2005, Bachelor of Commerce 2011
Currently employed as: Senior Operations Assistant at Asian Development Bank (ADB), Samoa
Previously employed as: Programme Assistant at the World Bank Group
Country: Samoa

2010 | Ashley Vasula
Education: Bachelor of Arts 2010, PGCert in Business Admin 2015, PGDip in Business Admin 2016, Master of Business Admin 2017, PGD in Forensic Acc & Fraud In 2019
Currently: Waste Handling Officer (Honiara) at Korea Protection & Indemnity (KP&I) Club, Solomon Islands
Previously: Enumerator (Pre-Crisis Market Analysis (PCMA)) at Oxfam
Country: Solomon Islands
USP and Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (L-R) H.E Amena Yauvoli, Director General of MSG with Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor & President of USP at a MOU signing - October 2019

The University of the South Pacific Economics Students Association (USP ESA) at “YEP! – it’s Young Economics Professionals!” on the 20th of September from 11am to 1pm at the FBE postgraduate lecture theatre - September 2019

USP Hosts The 16th Pacific Rim International Conference on Artificial Intelligence - September 2019

The Regional Early Childhood Education and Care in the Pasifika Talanoa Symposium jointly hosted by The University of the South Pacific (USP) and Monash University was opened by Honourable Rosy Akbar, Fiji’s Minister for Education, Heritage & Arts. Photo: Participants of the Regional ECEC in the Pasifika Talanoa Symposium at the Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi - October 2019

The University of the South Pacific’s (USP) Graduate School of Business (GSB) welcomed MBA students from the Federated Business School (FBS), Federation University, Australia - September 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

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