USP alumnus, Honourable Kausea Natano is the thirteenth (13th) Prime Minister of Tuvalu and was voted into Prime Ministership on 19 September, 2019 by ten (10) of the country’s 16 Members of Parliament to form a new government. He also serves as a Member of Parliament for Funafuti, the capital Tuvalu.

Prime Minister Kausea Natano is a prestigious alumnus of The University of the South Pacific (USP); where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Management in 1999.

Before entering politics, Natano was Director of Customs and also served as Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and has been a high-profile champion for action on climate change, co-chairing the United Nations climate change summit in 2014 and has vowed to continue the country’s climate change advocacy. He said his government will carry on Tuvalu’s leadership in the climate arena.

“Tuvalu is in the frontline of the climate fight, and as a country we have contributed the least to global emissions, but we still do our part to implement Paris Agreement and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels,” Prime Minister Natano said.

In the current government, Climate Change is allocated under the Ministry of Finance in order to better drive capacity building activities, and to focus on adaptation and mitigation from the effects of Climate Change. Climate Change, and sea water level rise in particular is a serious issue for Tuvalu as the highest point of elevation on Tuvalu is just 4.50 metres, and the average elevation is just 1.80 metres above sea level. This makes Tuvalu vulnerable to rising sea levels.

“As we have said often, if we save Tuvalu, we save the world,” said Pacific Islands Forum Chair, Prime Minister Natano.

Prime Minister Natano is also Tuvalu’s longest-serving Member of Parliament, who also has previously held ministerial appointments in Communications, Transport, and Public Utilities. He has also served as the country’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Communications in former Prime Minister Willy Telavi’s Cabinet.
On behalf of The University of the South Pacific, I wish you and your families a wonderful Christmas, a Happy New year and a very successful 2020.

The end of the year gives us time to pause and reflect on our many achievements of our students, staff and alumni at The University of the South Pacific this year.

This year, we launched a new three-year strategic plan which focuses on the core areas of the University, which are education, research and innovation and Regional Campuses to continue to strengthen academic excellence in the region.

We are proud to have educated, trained and supported many distinguished Pacific Islanders, who have become leaders of their respective countries and communities. Many have become highly successful in their careers, businesses and professions within the region and internationally.

Our University is ranked by uniRank amongst the top 50 universities in the Oceania region, our future aspirations are to become better and to build on our reputation to be amongst the best universities in the world. Our Executive MBA was ranked among the top 5 in Oceania by ED Universal in Paris.

The University has a lot to be proud of and we extend warm wishes and thanks to our extended University family; to our education partners, regional member countries, development partners, industry stakeholders, staff and students who make up a significant part of our University family.

We are fortunate to have a large and thriving USP alumni family and I wish to warmly thank each one of you for your support throughout the year. I would like to encourage your further participation, engagement and input into USP’s upcoming events and initiatives in 2020 and beyond.

In the New Year, we will continue to invest in our efforts to enhance our relationships to create more enriching experiences to enable you to contribute towards new ideas and values which will help find smart solutions to our regional and global issues.

Best wishes for the festive season and I wish you the best for the new year.

Vice-Chancellor & President
Prof. Pal Ahluwalia
The Solomon Islands High Commissioner to the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency William Soaki, presented his credentials to the Fiji President His Excellency Major General (retired) Jioji Konusi Konrote in December 2018.

During the ceremony, High Commissioner Soaki congratulated Fiji on its recent successful national elections and internationally on its election to the UN Human Rights Council. He further acknowledged Fiji’s outstanding role as Chair during COP23.

H.E Soaki is also Solomon Islands designate Permanent Representative to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

H.E Soaki served as Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade (MFAET), from March 2015 until his appointment as High Commissioner and has 14 years experience in foreign affairs. He has held various key positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, as Desk Officer, Senior Desk Officer, Chief Desk Officer and Assistant Secretary. He was also appointed as Minister Counsellor/Deputy High Commissioner at the Solomon Islands High Commission office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea between 2011 and 2015.

Vanuatu Government Funds 24 IT Alumni

Twenty four (24) alumni graduated as part of the first batch of students graduating with Diploma in Information Technology (Level 5) from The University of the South Pacific (USP), Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) Emalus Campus, Vanuatu on 29 November 2019.

The 24 alumni were Government sponsored to pursue the Skills International New Zealand, Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF) and Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS) recognised qualification.

Dr. Hasmukh Lal, is Chief Executive Officer, USP Pacific TAFE said it was a great achievement for Pacific TAFE to be able to deliver recognised programmes to students in the Pacific region.

“I would like to acknowledge and thank the Vanuatu Government for their sponsorship,” he said.

Brownly Suvwa, alumnus and Campus Coordinator of Pacific TAFE Regional & Learning Support, Vanuatu said the programme had gained recognition through the workplace attachment course and students had performed to the standard.

“IT is a gain to all industries and government institutions” he said. “Moving into digital space requires more knowledge in information Technology which Pacific TAFE provides via Certificate IV (Support) and Diploma (Level 5) in Information Technology. We appreciate the effort and trust from the Government of Vanuatu through the Ministry of Education to provide sponsorship for this programme in 2018 – 2019.”
We would like to share a beautiful story from a brave alumnus, Telesia Kobiti about her journey to success at a young age and how she turned negativity into her strength. Ms Kobiti completed a Bachelor of Arts in 2015, a Post Graduate Diploma in Diplomacy & International Affairs in 2016 and a Masters in Diplomacy & International Affairs in 2019 from The University of the South Pacific.

During her journey he endured harsh criticism very early in life, at a stage where students need to be nurtured. But instead of giving up, she learnt that the power was in her own hands and she chose not to let negativity affect her and instead tried her best and continued her journey towards excelling. In fact, she used the negativity and criticism as strength to propel her.

“Growing up, I was labelled as a “Slow Learner”, a failure and a not so bright student. I bear no shame of those labels, instead I used those words of discouragement to be stepping stones to all that I have accomplished today.”


Ms Kobiti said there were times, when she did not think she would make it through her journey, as things were incrementally increasing in difficulty, and it was the encouraging words from her family, and peers that kept her pushing forward. Her peers were made of mothers and career women, which provided her with the confidence and encouragement she needed.

Ms Telesia shared at an interview during her graduation that her journey was challenging as she saw her friends earning and supporting their families, which made her question her decision in completing her masters. She added that she realised that everyone’s journey is different.

“Work hard, give your utmost best in whatever task you’re given and most importantly, never lose faith in God, for He can make the impossible, possible.” She advised youths never to doubt or limit themselves and their capabilities and keep moving forward.

Ms Telesia is currently working at the Pacific Disability Forum as a Research Officer, by making a difference in her community, society, nation and region.

We hope this story inspires you. If you have a similar story or experience to share, please email us: alumni@usp.ac.fj
What memories do you have of your University student life and what inspired you during your studies at USP?

My University Life was mostly involved with friends that made memories and studies fun in USP. The stone tables and Media Building are some of the best places to hang out besides the Orange Lounge. These are very fond memories and I can remember escaping from the realities of assignments and course work.

Just looking back at how the situation of being unemployed, studying full time whilst having a young family to raise was a blessing on its own. And that is something I’m always thankful to God.

My Parent’s Christian teachings inspired me to strive spiritually to handle the workload and my wife’s support gave me the courage and strength to endure the 3 years without losing hope. My university friends and family made those years seem like a walk in the park.

Why did you choose USP and your field of study?

I chose USP because it was and is still considered as the top tertiary institution in the country. I remember being excited by just receiving my offer letter.

I was initially pursuing a Bachelor of Science (Biology/Chemistry) when my father outlined his plans to build a resort in our village. He requested and I obeyed the request to pursue a degree in Tourism and Hospitality.

How did USP prepare you in your career?

USP provided the opportunity to improve most of my report writing skills to include being a confident public speaker.

The courses offered through the School of Tourism & Hospitality Management not only pushes your limits but also assists in preparing you for the reality of working in various fields apart from Tourism and Hospitality.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it?

Being an Environment Officer for Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) has presented a lot of opportunities to learn and upgrade my individual skills.

Not only do I get to see and visit places I haven’t been to in Fiji, I get opportunities to hear and learn about the community’s views on having new roads for the first time. It’s a blessing in itself to learn how the older generation have been waiting all these years to see the construction of a road reaching their villages. These villages sit in the remote highlands only accessible by either boat or horseback for example when travelling to Nawaisomo Village in the interior Naitasiri Province.

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

I personally recommend browsing SPREP’s online publications for regional Environmental Information as well as the United Nations Environment Programme website for latest publications on Environmental Books, Reports, Discussion Paper to name a few that would assist:

www.sprep.org/publications
www.unenvironment.org/knowledge-repository

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

I was involved in the School of Tourism & Hospitality Management Alumni formed back in 2012. I haven’t been active lately but somehow looking forward to any opportunities to assist our fellow alumni and recent graduates.
What memories do you have of your University student life and what inspired you during your studies at USP?

The University of the South Pacific Laucala Campus is a very unique and beautiful campus with so much nature around, and that made it enjoyable to study outdoors on the lawns (on dry days).

I also made life-long friends during my studies at USP and fondly remember the U8 locker area as our “meeting spot” and the “white tables” were for lunches and exchanging study notes.

The courses I enrolled during my undergraduate and postgraduate years were enjoyable, and I especially remember the physical geography field trips that provided me with the ability to explore some of the most beautiful areas of Fiji and learn about the physical and natural environment of our beautiful island nation.

I transformed my passion of learning about the physical environment into teaching in 2011 and have fond memories of Lower Campus where I worked as a Teaching Assistant in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Science.

Why did you choose USP and your field of study?

USP is one of the most prominent universities in the region. I chose to study Environmental Sciences as I am very passionate about the environment and wanted to make a difference in the real world. My PhD thesis is also focussed on the environmental issues.

How did USP prepare you in your career?

Being a student and an academic at USP inspired me to continue my career in environmental sciences and I moved to Australia to do my PhD in coastal wetland ecology in 2014.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it.

I recently completed my PhD in Environmental Science where I looked at how coastal wetland vegetation such as mangroves respond to sea-level change over different timescales. This research has important implications for the future response of mangroves to accelerating sea-level rise. The issue of climate change and sea-level rise is prominent in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Pacific. I enjoyed travelling and collecting data from four sites, which were along the coastal wetlands of Southeast Australia. The locations were low traffic areas, where I had setup sensitive equipment to record and measure differences in the surface and sub-surface dynamics, and used this data in my paper.

Send your story and profile: alumni@usp.ac.fj
### 1970 | S. Joan Yee

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in Geography and History in 1973 from USP  
**Currently:** Local Director of the Confucius Institute at USP’s Laucala campus in Fiji  
**Previously:** Former University Librarian (The University of the South Pacific)  
**Country:** Fiji

### 1980 | Tevita Lavemaau

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Economics in 1983 from USP  
**Currently:** Independent Accounting Professional  
**Previously:** Former Minister of Finance and National Planning of Tonga  
**Country:** Tonga

### 1990 | Elizabeth Erasito

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in Biology and Geography in 1992  
**Currently:** Director at National Trust of Fiji  
**Previously:** Regional Deputy Vice Chair for Oceania for IUCN’s World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)  
**Country:** Fiji

### 2000 | Siaosi Sovaleni

**Education:** Post Graduate Diploma in Advanced Analytical Skills 2008 and Master of Business Administration in 2009 from USP  
**Currently:** Member of Parliament (Representative of part of Maufang and Kolofou and the following villages: Ngeleia, Pahu, Mataika, Halaleva, Fasi, Amaile) in Tonga  
**Previously:** Minister of Meteorology, Environment, Information, Disaster Management, Energy, Climate Change and Communication (MEIDEC).  
**Country:** Tonga

### 2010 | Tikuanana Tekeaa

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Cert in Education in 2015 from USP  
**Currently:** Lecturer at the Kiribati Teachers College - Kiribati  
**Previously:** Primary School Teacher, Ministry of Education of Kiribati  
**Country:** Kiribati
One Ocean Hub launch - February 2019

Weeklong Global Navigation Satellite System workshop (GNSS) - June 2019

HRH Haakon Magnus visits USP Laucala Campus - April 2019

Honourable Rosy Akbar Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts delivering her keynote address at USP Open Day - July 2019

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

Team Fiji wins 5 matches at FIRST Robotics Challenge in Dubai - November 2019

News @USP: www.usp.ac.fj/news
Happy Christmas & A Prosperous New Year

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