Mr Charles Goundar

Mr Charles Goundar, the Chief Operating Officer of Telecom Fiji is an alumnus of The University of the South Pacific (USP); where he obtained his Bachelor of Technology Degree in 1998.

Before entering the Telecommunications industry, Mr Goundar began his career as a Physics teacher at Natabua High School, a position he maintained for one academic year. As a Teacher, Mr Goundar learned patience and the value of imparting knowledge. Then in 1999 he joined Telecom Fiji’s Lautoka office as a graduate trainee.

A firm believer in continuous growth and development, Charles applied himself to many technical and non-technical training programmes as well as programmes in leadership, strategy and change management.

In 2003, he moved to Telecom Fiji Suva branch where he gained a tremendous amount of experience taking on various critical roles in technical, commercial, product management and business development, strategic, wholesale and international areas.

He became Group Product Manager after three (3) years and was ultimately rewarded with the role of General Manager for Business, Sales and Retail, a role he made his own for seven years.

After over 20 years of experience in the Telecommunications field, in September 2018, Mr Goundar was appointed CEO of Telecom Fiji.

Being a firm believer of innovation, Charles took on the role at a time when the Telecommunications industry was rapidly changing and the market was focusing more on digital phones and data rather than traditional services like voice based services.

Mr Goundar thought he had left teaching behind when he made the switch from education to the Telecommunications industry but under his leadership, Telecom is collaborating with Fijian tertiary institutions by providing their guidance on industry requirements so that institutions can tailor-make their courses to better suit the industry and arm future employees with the right skills.

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One thing that Mr Goundar has learnt in his career is that in order for any business venture to be successful, the people involved must be adequately trained, developed and invested in.

“Getting people with the right expertise is probably one of the biggest challenge right now,” says Charles.

Giving back to Fiji is one of the core principles that drives Mr Goundar who worked his way up the ranks in Telecom Fiji. “Our telecommunication services allow people in remote areas to connect to Fiji and the rest of the world and this enables students to do research and study. This bridges the digital divide I believe, is the best investment anyone can make,” says Mr Goundar. “They also allow Fijians to do business and remain in contact with loved ones around the world.” This is an example of a successful and innovative local company giving back to the people and an example for many others to follow.
ALUMNI BECOME MAGISTRATES

Three new magistrates, who are USP alumni have been sworn in on Monday, bringing the total number of magistrates in the Solomon Islands to 14.

The three (3) USP alumni are Clifton Meleu Ruele, his wife Amanada Houpea, and Joyceth Paile.

Ruele was sworn in as a principal magistrate while the two colleagues were sworn in as second class magistrates.

Ruele used to work at the Law Reform Commission from 2013 to 2015 as a senior legal officer before joining the Public Solicitor’s Office in 2016, and graduated from Emalus Campus in 2012 and did his Professional Diploma in Legal Practice (PDLP) in Fiji in early 2013.

Ms Houpea first joined Global Lawyers, a private legal firm in early 2017 and left in early 2019 to join the Public Solicitor’s Office, she graduated from USP and did her PDLP in Fiji.

Ms Paile, graduated from Emalus Campus in 2017 and completed her PDLP in 2018 at the University of South Pacific (USP), Solomon Islands campus in Honiara. She then joined the private law firm, Rano & Company before joining the magistracy.

ALUMNUS IS SURVIVOR AND TOP REFEREE

The journey to becoming one of the top female rugby referees in Fiji was not an easy one for Kuini Vuli. She began her refereeing career in 2009 controlling club games in Suva, and the 38-year old has been a player and enjoys the game as much as her older brother Sunia Koto, who was a former Fiji Airways Flying Fijians hooker. In 2016, Vuli was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer, and so she decided to take a break from refereeing.

With the help from her parents, Vuli was able to complete her Bachelor of Arts in 2007, her Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Psychology in 2007 and a Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology in 2009 at The University of the South Pacific.

She is currently pursuing her Master’s Degree in Sociology.

Ms Vuli says, “Being a referee is an awesome venture. If you like to be challenged, give refereeing a shot. It challenges you mentally, physically, tactically and spiritually.”

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www.alumni.usp.ac.fj
**Dr Tamara Osborne-Naikatini  Fiji**
- Lecturer in Biology, The University of the South Pacific

*Bachelor of Environmental Science (Biology emphasis) 2002;*  
*Postgraduate Diploma in Geography 2003;*  
*Master of Science in Biology 2006;*  
*PhD Biology 2015;*  
*Postgraduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching 2017*

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

University life here at USP was everything I had previously imagined it to be and more. I met wonderful and diverse new friends, many of whom I still remain in contact with to this day. There were classes, schedules, assignments, deadlines, fieldtrips, parties and relationships that spanned the three undergraduate years and many more postgraduate years. Events centred at or around my time as a student at USP, took me to places I had never thought I would visit, such as an all sponsored trip to India. Of all the people I met during this time, there were several standouts who inspired me to continue studying and to pursue an academic career. Emeritus Professor Randolph Thaman, whose crab dances across our classroom floor and shining passion for Pacific Island Biodiversity are truly awe-inspiring. Professor Patrick Nunn, whose ideas about the politics of climate change I still espouse and share with my students. Professor Linton Winder, a man of few words but whose actions moved mountains and whose humility underscored his unique aptitude for mentoring Pacific Island postgraduates. Working with such academic giants were the greatest highlights of my student life at USP.

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

I chose USP because I wanted to learn about Pacific Island environments and biodiversity ever since I was in form 5 and developed an ambition to become an environmental scientist. It just did not make sense to apply for an overseas scholarship and learn about the Pacific Islands from afar. I had read the 1993 State of the Environment National Report, authored by locally-based environmental consultant Dr Dick Watling, in form 5 and decided then that was what I wanted to do – become an environmental consultant.

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

The best thing about studying environmental science at USP was the fieldtrips. Trips to Kadavu Lailai Island, the coral coast, the highlands of Naitasiri, Ovalau, and other locations around Fiji were not just a lot of fun, they opened my eyes to the wonders of the natural world and made me want to learn more about it. This desire to learn was due to the interactive mode of teaching my lecturers were using in the classes. I hope that I have used these experiences as a student, to mold the way I now teach in my classroom.

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

I now teach several biology courses and am a lecturer in the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences (SBBCS) at USP. Because of my environmental science background, I have taught Marine Biology, Invertebrate Biology, Conservation Biology in addition to my current allocated courses of General Ecology, Quantitative Biology, Genetics and Evolution, and Molecular Biology. The best aspect of teaching (I never thought I would ever teach when I was in high school!) is knowing that I am helping shape future decision-makers who may one day go on to wield this knowledge gained to make better decisions regarding our Pacific Island biota and natural resources. Learning under the wings of people like Randy Thaman, Patrick Nunn, and Linton Winder made me realise that the privilege of shaping someone’s learning journey is exactly that – a privilege, an honour and I have never forgotten that.

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

Anything that is not considered a social networking site! Stay off Facebook and Instagram because looking at other people’s lives through the small screen of your device, may hold you back from living your own life with satisfaction, gratitude and peace of mind. I’m personally partial to subscribing to various weekly newsletters from media stalwarts such as the New York Times. Reading someone else’s opinions on various subjects such as the ending to Game of Thrones, etc. is not everyone’s cup of tea, but may elicit a chuckle at the end of a hard working day.

**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.**

**Tip 1:** Develop your network whilst you are at University as these friends, will become colleagues later on in your career. One of the members of our undergraduate circle of friends, is now the Director for the National Environment Service in the Cook Islands.

**Tip 2:** Attendance, attendance, attendance! There is no substitute for actually being present to learn something. Hearing it from your friends, reading it on the lecture notes on Moodle, none of these options are better than you being in the class at the time the lecturer is explaining about a concept or example.

**Tip 3:** Don’t leave to do later, something that can be done today. Procrastination doesn’t complete your assignments or earn you a gold medal or a degree. Even if it’s just a read through the guidelines or instructions or a well thought out question for your teacher/supervisor, get it done!
1970 | Helen Chow

Graduation: Bachelor of Science in 1979 from The University of the South Pacific
Country: Fiji
Occupation: Ms Chow was a former Librarian at USP, and now resides in Canada

1970 | Harry Ivaiti

Graduation: Diploma in Education in 1973 from The University of the South Pacific
Country: Cook Islands
Occupation: Former Principal at Tereora College, Cook Islands

1980 | Dr Richard McKenzie

Graduation: Bachelor of Science from The University of Canterbury, New Zealand, a Master of Science, from The University of the South Pacific in 1981, and PhD, University of Oxford, UK
Country: New Zealand
Occupation: Emeritus Atmospheric Research Scientist at NIWA, Lauder (New Zealand)

1980 | Dr Antoine De Ramon Nyeurt

Graduation: Bachelor of Science in 1989, Master of Science in 1994, and a Doctor of Philosophy in 1998 from The University of the South Pacific
Country: Fiji
Occupation: Research Fellow / Chargé de Recherche European Union Global Climate Change Alliance Project (EUGCCA) Pacific Centre for Environment & sustainable development (PACE-SD) in Fiji

1990 | Donna Kalfatak

Graduation: Bachelor of Science in 1993 from The University of the South Pacific
Country: Vanuatu
Occupation: Director of the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation, Vanuatu
Where are they now?

1990 | Filifilia Iosefa

**Graduation:** Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Management in 1994 and a Master in Business Administration in 1998 from The University of the South Pacific  
**Country:** Samoa  
**Occupation:** UN Coordination Specialist with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Samoa

2000 | Carol Aru

**Graduation:** Bachelor of Science from The University of Canterbury, New Zealand, a Master of Science, from The University of the South Pacific in 1981, and PhD, University of Oxford, UK  
**Country:** New Zealand  
**Occupation:** Emeritus Atmospheric Research Scientist at NIWA, Lauder (New Zealand)

2000 | Beney Kelen

**Graduation:** Graduated in 2003 with a Diploma in Early Childhood Education, a Bachelor of Education in 2010 and Master in Education in 2014 from The University of the South Pacific  
**Country:** Marshall Islands  
**Occupation:** Kindergarten specialist, supporting Early Childhood Centres in Majuro, Marshall Islands

2010 | Sania Teisini

**Graduation:** Postgraduate Diploma in Linguistics in 2003, a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching in 2011, and a Master of Arts in Linguistics in 2016 from The University of the South Pacific  
**Country:** Vanuatu  
**Occupation:** Previously Coordinator for Pacific Technical and Further Education, Vanuatu

2010 | Tokobea Naunta

**Graduation:** Bachelor of Arts 2011 from The University of the South Pacific  
**Country:** Kiribati  
**Occupation:** Air Kiribati Ltd, Tarawa, Kiribati
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