

USP Beat

VOLUME 20 | ISSUE 02 | FEBRUARY 2021 | www.usp.ac.fj/uspbeat



Acting Vice-Chancellor and President, Dr Giulio Masasso Paunga with some of the USP Laucala Campus based authors

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC DEMONSTRATES RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN THE OCEAN

The University of the South Pacific (USP) has made an outstanding contribution to a new Special Issue focussing on Pacific marine science. The Special Issue entitled *"Ecosystem resilience and human impact in the Pacific Oceanscape: current status and future directions"* is published in an eminent journal called Marine Pollution Bulletin.

The Special Issue includes 40 research papers which explore the pressures on the resilience, health and survival of Pacific ecosystems. Thirty members of USP are authors in the Special Issue, contributing to seventeen papers. Eight of these papers are led by USP authors and

include topics such as pollution, ecotoxicology, microplastics, water quality, human health and ecosystem services. The broad contribution to this Special Issue shows the significant research capacity in USP across many of the disciplines associated with the Ocean.

The USP Co-Editor of the Special Issue, Professor Jeremy Hills said, *"The Special Issue shows not only the depth of research expertise in the Ocean in our University, but also the increasing importance of regional and international collaboration and partnership in understanding more about our Ocean."* The Lead Editor, Dr Michelle

Devlin (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, UK) said that the genesis of the Special Issue came from work under the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme (CME, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK Government) of which USP was a valuable partner.

The research strength of USP mobilises international collaboration supporting sustainable and inclusive Ocean development. For example, USP is partner in the One Ocean Hub (OOH), a FJD \$62 million international collaboration funded under the Global Challenges Research Fund

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(UK government) and led by the University of the Strathclyde (UK). The focus is the application of research to overcoming intractable Ocean development challenges in target counties, including Fiji and the Solomon Islands. Recent achievements of OOH include research inputs into the first ever National Ocean Policy of Fiji (Ministry of Economy) and the Blue Pacific Ocean Report (Pacific Ocean Commissioner).

Ms Payal Maharaj, a USP Project Officer and Early Career Researcher for OOH, said that “Working with an international research team focussing on developmental challenges for the region has been hugely generative for my future research and career trajectory”. Professor Hills indicated that research which supports smart

and sustainable development in our region, and is catalysed by international collaboration, is an imperative for USP and our region’s future.

Links:

[Marine Pollution Bulletin](#)

[Special issue: Ecosystem resilience and human impact in the Pacific Oceanscape: current status and future directions](#)

[Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme, CME](#)

[Blue Pacific Ocean Report 2021](#)

[Fiji National Ocean Policy](#)

Following is a list of the 30 authors who are staff and students of USP.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Arsita Pratap | 11. Jeremy Hills | 21. Gilianne Brodie |
| 2. Francis S. Mani | 12. Jameel Thompson | 22. Elisabeth Holland |
| 3. Surendra Prasad | 13. Andrew Paris | 23. Antoine De Ramon N'Yeurt |
| 4. Joachim E. Arikibe | 14. David Rohindra | 24. Krishna Kotra |
| 5. M. Maata | 15. Ciro Rico | 25. Michael Maniel |
| 6. M. Peter | 16. Dawn Gibson | 26. Dickson Boboria |
| 7. T. Otiawa | 17. Cherie W. Morris | 27. Leo X. C. Dutra |
| 8. Rufino Varea | 18. K Soapi | 28. Joeli Veitayaki |
| 9. Susanna Piovano | 19. Jasha Dehm | 29. Stuart Kininmonth |
| 10. Marta Ferreira | 20. Shubha Singh | 30. Cherrie W. Morris |

USP RECORDS INCREASE IN ITS STUDENT NUMBERS AS IT ENTERS ITS ORIENTATION WEEK

For Semester 1, 2021 The University of the South Pacific had already reached 95.4% of its registration target, excluding Pacific TAFE by 22 February 2021, the day USP’s Orientation Week commenced.

Overall, new Students admissions (those that will be studying at USP for the first time) had increased by 30%. New Students at Pacific TAFE had increased by 129%.

Admissions for resuming students had increased by 21%. Resuming students include those that have returned to studies after 3 years or are moving to a higher programme.

The student numbers are expected to increase further as we get close to the beginning of Semester 1, which begins on 1 March.

Acting Vice-Chancellor and President, Dr Giulio Masasso Paunga referred to some of these figures when he officially opened the First Year Students Orientation Programme for the 6

Schools and 2 Academic Units.

USP welcomed over 700 students each day in a jam-packed Australia-Pacific Lecture Theatre at Laucala Campus from February 22-26.

Dr Paunga said the students should be confident that they have made the right decision to study at USP, a regional and internationally recognised University. He added that USP’s aim is to ensure every student succeeds when embarking on the most exciting journey of their life at the University.

He said that the University has some of the best students from

around the Pacific who have moved on to become great leaders and positive contributors to their communities in the region.

Dr Paunga emphasised that independence and self-discipline is mandatory for students to be able to reach their goals at the University.

He said USP students are set above the rest as they not only have amazing facilities to use, but have high calibre of academic staff to support them in their academic journey to be successful.

Semester 1 begins on 1 March, 2021.



Acting Vice-Chancellor and President, Dr Giulio Masasso Paunga (third from left), with staff and students



USP ENROLMENT FAIR

The University of the South Pacific (USP) Enrolment Fair 2021 was held from 5 - 17 February and attracted a large crowd as new and continuing students made their way to the University's Laucala Campus to get enrolled.

The Fair, held at the USP Laucala Campus student carpark, was an Information Space serviced by staff from all academic units to assist students aspiring to enrol for Semester 1, beginning 1 March, 2021.

The School of Accounting, Finance and Economics (SAFE); School of Agriculture, Geography,

Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences (SAGEONS); School of Business and Management (SBM); School of Information Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Physics (STEMP); School of Law and Social Sciences (SoLaSS); School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE); Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) and Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD) offered students academic advice and provided information on the various programmes and courses offered by the University.



Staff and students at the Enrolment Fair 2021

ENROLMENT ROADSHOW

The USP Enrolment Roadshow ended on a high note. Students received their offer letters and academic counselling on-site despite Tropical Cyclone Ana.

Within two days, the Roadshow team in the West had processed more than 200 offer letters.

This excludes the high number of students who visited the booths for academic counselling and general enquiries.

The team received positive responses from parents who otherwise would have had to travel to the USP Campuses to get their children enrolled for the semester.

The Roadshow was an inexpensive option for parents in the Western and Northern divisions as USP brought its service to their doorsteps.

Enrolment staff in the Northern division reported that students, despite TC Ana, made time to visit the enrolment booths for academic counselling and enquire about programmes on offer at USP. Students were pleased to have been provided with the services they needed in their hometowns by USP staff.



USP Enrolment Staff with students

FIJI'S FORESTS IN 3D

In collaboration with The University of the South Pacific, a research team led by the University of Goettingen (Germany) has analysed the complexity of forest structure in Fiji, and around the world

An international research team led by the University of Goettingen has investigated the variety of structures that can be found in the world's forests, as well as the factors that explain this diversity. The results have recently been published in Nature Communications, a top-ranking scientific journal.

Professor Hans Juergen Boehmer, former Head of School of USP's School of Geography, Earth Science & Environment and co-author of the study, explains that understanding the three-dimensional structure of forests is important because it influences processes of gas and energy exchange with the atmosphere, whilst also providing habitats for numerous species.

"As primeval forests were in the focus of this research, we used forest stands in Savura that appear to have a structure relatively unchanged by human impact." Primeval forests are of

great importance for biodiversity and global carbon and water cycling.

Professor Boehmer was USP's co-ordinator of the exchange program with the University of Goettingen's Section for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture and Forestry (SeTSAF) which started in 2014 and was funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). In the following 5 years, several researchers from both universities participated in the program, establishing a fruitful collaboration between the institutions.

The researchers investigated the structure of primeval forests in different climate zones. To achieve this, the team spent two years travelling to remote primeval forest areas around the world to record the structure of the forests with the help of 3D laser scanners (see photo 1). A laser scanner captures the environment with the help of a laser beam and thus builds a 3D representation of the forest. This allows important metrics to be calculated to describe the structure.

They found that the global variability of forest structures can be explained to a large extent by

the amount of precipitation and thus by the availability of water in the different ecosystems. Based on these findings and with the help of climate data, they were able to create maps of the world's forests showing the global variability of structural complexity.

"A long-term goal of our research is to better understand how human influence and climate change affect the forest, its structure and the processes linked to it. The structure of primeval forests is an important reference point for this," says first author Dr Martin Ehbrecht from the University of Goettingen.

A particular focus here is the question of how changes in precipitation patterns due to climate change affect the structure of forests. "The importance of water for the formation of complex forest structures can be explained by various interacting mechanisms," says Ehbrecht. "The availability of water is an important driver of the diversity of tree species. The more tree species a forest holds, the more pronounced is the coexistence of different crown shapes and sizes of trees. This means that the space available for the crowns of trees can often be utilised more efficiently in species-rich forests, which makes the forest structure more complex.

There is more related research going on in Fiji's forests, Professor Boehmer says. "We have applied the 3D laser scanner for quantifying the impact of invasive alien ivory cane palm (*Pinanga coronata*) in forests throughout Colo-i-Suva and Savura (see photo 2), and to get a clearer picture to what extent this dangerous invader is changing forest structure in native and planted forests in the area. We hope to see the results of this research published in the course of 2021."



3D laser scanner in a tropical forest in Uganda; photo courtesy of Martin Ehbrecht, University of Goettingen



USP SAMOA CAMPUS PARTNERS WITH VODAFONE SAMOA TO HOLD ITS ENROLMENT FAIR AND ORIENTATION

The University of the South Pacific (USP) Samoa Campus partnered with Vodafone Samoa to hold its 2021 Enrolment Fair and Orientation at its main Campus and at the Savaii Centre.

The Enrolment Fair was held from 17-19 February and Orientation was on 25 and 26 February. The Enrolment Fair was held for new and continuing students to provide them support and advice to help them choose their programme of study and courses.

Vodafone Samoa had exclusive sponsorship and provided products and services valued at \$14550 Tala including \$3000 Tala cash assistance during the Enrolment Fair and Orientation.

The partnership provided incoming students an opportunity to get to know their Campus through fun activities and chances to win big prizes with Vodafone. Sim cards were sold at discounted prices that gave students 26GB of data to access online courses and do their research.

Nofoasaefa Satish Sharma, CEO of Vodafone Samoa said, "We're grateful to Acting Campus

Director, Dr. Joeli Veitayaki and his team at USP Samoa Campus for providing us a platform to continue to provide assistance to the students of Samoa. We believe education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital.

Therefore, in staying true to our *More for All* campaign and reiterating our continuous support towards the education sector, we have made internet connectivity easily accessible by upgrading and installing 100 4G mobile sites across Samoa. This makes Vodafone Samoa by far the leading telecommunications provider in network coverage. More importantly, we have made internet access more affordable for students by revamping our Student Sim, now called the Campus Sim – suitable not just for Students but for Campus Teachers/ Lecturers too."

This partnership between USP Samoa Campus and Vodafone Samoa also provided students free Campus Sims. The Campus Sim was free to Students &

Teachers.

Mr Sharma thanked the USP Samoa Campus and said, "Faafetai tele lava to USP Samoa Campus for partnering with us to help improve the quality of student lives, because in return it leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. I encourage students and faculty members to take advantage of Vodafone's Campus Sim and enjoy the services we have available – The Future truly is Exciting with Vodafone Samoa."

The Campus name was changed from Alafua to Samoa Campus earlier this year. Samoa Campus currently offers a broad selection of programmes at pre degree, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

It aims to promote as much of the University's learning, research, innovation and initiatives as possible for the enhancement of students, staff, researchers and the communities in Samoa. It also aims to facilitate the development of local Pacific Island solutions to the global challenges that are currently faced in our region.



Vodafone CEO, Nofoasaefa Satish Sharma (left) and Acting Campus Director, Dr. Joeli Veitayaki (extreme right) with USP Samoa Campus Staff

USP PARTNERS WITH ITAUKEI TRUST FUND BOARD TO OFFER FIRST FIJIAN LANGUAGE POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN THE REGION



SPACE staff with some of the newly enrolled students for the USP Post Graduate Diploma in Fijian Language Programme

For the first time, 22 students will be pursuing their Post-Graduate Diploma in Fijian Language Studies at The University of the South Pacific (USP) after the iTaukei Trust Fund Board agreed to fund the post-graduate programme.

The Fijian Language Programme is offered by the School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE), Laucala Campus.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2009 between the University and TTFB to support the Fijian language programme.

The iTaukei Trust Fund Board has been funding the Bachelor of Arts in Pacific Vernacular - Fijian, and the Diploma in Pacific Vernacular - Fijian for the last 11 years under the MOU. This financial support from TTFB has enabled the University to now develop the Fijian language studies into a Postgraduate Diploma.

During a special orientation programme yesterday, Professor Sudesh Mishra, Head of School

of the School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE) confirmed that once these students complete their Post-Graduate Diploma, they would also be able to continue with their Masters and eventually Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

“This is a great achievement and a breakthrough for the University and for Fijian Language Studies. A culmination of the efforts that were made in the past towards developing Fijian language courses,” he added.

Professor Mishra highlighted that the University is working towards developing USP to become a global Centre for Fijian Language Studies. He hopes to see the establishment of a Fijian Studies Institute within the University.

Senior Lecturer in Fijian Studies, Dr Apolonia Tamata, said the Postgraduate Diploma in Fijian Studies will further the study of the Fijian language and orature studies into the myriad of ways they interrelate as culture and heritage in the indigenous Fijian world.

“The fundamental understanding

of where one hails from provides the optimum support system of where one intends to journey towards in any career path just like the *vara* breaking through the soil to grow into a robust coconut tree,” she added.

Dr Akanisi Kedrayate, former Dean of the then Faculty of Arts, Law, and Education (FALE) at USP commended TTFB for the funding support towards the Fijian Studies programme.

“This year marks a milestone in the programme, as the first cohort of 22 students will start their Post Graduate Diploma leading to Masters and Doctorate in Fijian Studies.

“We hope that more Fijians, particularly those working in various government ministries, will enrol in the Post Graduate programme,” she added.

USP also offers programmes in other Pacific Language Studies and Vernacular Language Programmes including Hindi and Cook Islands Maori.



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT (SBM)



Head of School: Professor Gurmeet Singh

BCom MCom MPhil PhD J&K

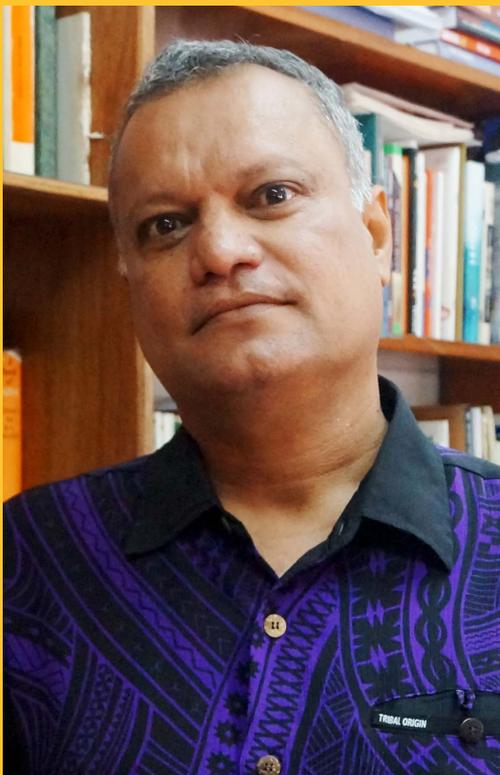
Career with The University of the South Pacific, Suva – Fiji

Professor Gurmeet has over 21 years of experience in teaching, research, consultancy and executive training for industries. He held teaching and research assignments at various universities in India and Africa. He has a wide range of teaching and research experience and has not only taught but developed various courses in the area of marketing and management both at graduate and undergraduate levels.

He has contributed more than 100 articles in leading International journals and International conferences including more than 50 articles in ABDC and other ranked international journals. Dr. Singh was editor of Journal of Pacific Studies (2010-2017) an ABDC ranked Journal.

Presently he is an associate editor for ABDC ranked Journal of Global Marketing (Taylor Francis) and section edition editor for Australasian Journal of Information Systems a journal ranked A by ABDC. He is also a member of Editorial Review Board for Journal of Business Research, a top tier (A ranked) Journal published by Elsevier. He is the recipient of 2008 'Japan's outstanding research on development Award' and 2016 'Amity Global Academic Excellence Award'.

PACIFIC ARTS, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION (SPACE)



Head of School: Professor Sudesh Mishra

BA (Hons) *W'gong*, PhD *Flin*.

Born in Suva, Fiji, Sudesh Mishra is Head of School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE) and also Professor in Literature at The University of the South Pacific (USP).

Career with The University of the South Pacific, Suva – Fiji

Professor Mishra has previously worked at universities in Australia (Flinders University, Deakin University) and Britain (University of Stirling). He has been the recipient of an Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship, the Harri Jones Memorial Prize for Poetry, an Asialink Residency in India, the Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara Fellowship (Otago University) and an Erskine Canterbury Fellowship (Canterbury University).

He is the author of five books of poems. Professor Sudesh has also co-edited *Trapped*, an anthology of writing from Fiji. His research papers have appeared in many top-tier journals, including *New Literary History*, *Meanjin*, *Subaltern Studies*, *Australian Humanities Review*, *Continuum*, *Social Text*, *Borderlands*, *Emergences*, *Oxford Literary Review*, *Symploke*, *The Contemporary Pacific* and *The Journal of Pacific History*. He was commissioned to write a long entry on *Diaspora Criticism* for the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford UP, 2014).

He has also contributed book chapters to *The Global South and Literature* (Cambridge UP, 2018) and *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Volume 10* (Oxford UP, 2019). In 2020, his work featured in *New Oceania: Modernisms and Modernities in the Pacific* (Routledge) and *Indian Film Stars: New Critical Perspectives* (British Film Institute/Bloomsbury).



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MARK THE DATE! MARCH 2021

- 1 Mar:** Lectures commence
- 8-12 Mar:** Entrepreneurial Fair
- 12 Mar:** Deadline for late registration
- 29 Mar:** PDL lectures commence

USP BEAT MAGAZINE

USP Beat is published by the Strategic Partnerships, Advancement & Communications Office, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

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MARCH 2021



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