MESSAGE FROM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, ADVANCEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Alumnus,

Welcome to the tenth issue of the Alumni News for 2018.

In October, 2018, we celebrated two (2) Moments to Shine events, in the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Cook Islands. On 24 October, USP hosted the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at our Laucala Campus as part of the Fiji Chapter of their Commonwealth Country tour. The visit by the Royal Highnesses was a fitting birthday gift for our 50th Anniversary celebrations that was viewed and celebrated across our regional campuses and the world.

As part of the 50th Anniversary, the Alumni Office will be hosting the first “Distinguished Alumni Awards” to be held on 28 November, 2018. Nominations are open for submission, please check our website or contact the Alumni Unit for more information. We are glad to see alumni turning up to these events to make them both memorable and successful.

I invite you, our Alumnus, to be even more involved with USP by taking initiatives in forming networks and giving back to the University. This level of collaboration will strengthen us and will also help boost our corporate and strategic partnerships.

The remaining 50th Anniversary events for the year can be found on our 50th Anniversary website: http://50.usp.ac.fj which also contains a calendar of events.

Jaindra Karan

ALUMNUS GIVES BACK TO HOME COUNTRY

His Excellency (HE), Mr Nikenike Vurobaravo graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and Administration in 1977 from the University of The South Pacific (USP). After USP, HE Nikenike travelled and studied abroad.

HE Nikenike believes that his undergraduate studies at the University more than adequately prepared him for his public policy and diplomatic career.

“I believe the relevancy of my USP programme, and its constituent courses, ensured I graduated with the appropriate level of competency that my home country needed at that point in time,” said HE Nikenike.

At USP, it was taught that it is OK to think critically. “It was quite a re-orientation experience for me after being taught by many learned School of Social and Economic Development (SSED) Professors to always engage in critical analysis, especially during good tutorial class debates on the pros and cons of such sensitive issues.”

As students, he and his peers embraced values and ideas that enabled them to empathise with and support the strengths of colonised Pacific People for self-determination and political independence, such as in the New Hebradies and New Caledonia.

“Selected memories of my student life at USP relate to my personal experiences and perspectives on various aspects of changes enveloping and transforming Pacific islands during the 1970s,” shared HE Nikenike.

Following his studies at USP, he went to Australia for Diplomatic Training, then later studied at the Central London Diplomatic Academy in England. As an enabler, HE Nikenike believes that his multi-ethnic and diverse cultural exposure at USP academic and campus life shaped and matured his outlook and attitudes towards foreigners.

“Tolerating and willingness to understand others is indispensable for developing interpersonal skills one requires to pursue a successful career in the Foreign Service - of any country,” said HE Nikenike.

His most memorable experience while studying at USP was promoting political awareness amongst a handful of New Hebridean students studying in Fiji during the early half of 1970s.

“This involved meeting and socialising with visiting senior nationalist leaders, such as Father Walter Lini and George...
Sokomanu, for briefings and updates on political evolution processes and related issues in the New Hebrides.” While most briefings were informal, these provided opportunities to meet and get acquainted with our leaders, who actively encouraged him to join the “struggle for independence” after finishing his studies at USP.

Apart from politics, HE Nikenike was also passionate about sports, specifically in soccer. Soccer was also a more attractive way of bringing New Hebridean students together regularly. “The Vate Club was established in 1971, and when I became President of the Club, which was one of the top performing teams in the Suva Soccer Association (SSA) First Division. Several members of the Vate Club, including myself, were top scorers in weekly matches and ended up being selected to play for the Suva Selection Squad.”

HE Nikenike said that his involvement in running the Vate Soccer Club provided important opportunities for learning and assuming leadership roles, responsibilities and forging friendships. It would be the relationship between the teams that led to the establishment of the first spirited Wantok Association made up of Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea students at USP in 1977.

This experience would be the foundation for his political and diplomatic career. “Following my recruitment to work in the newly established Office of the New Hebrides Chief Minister in 1979, I attended the Australian PostgraduateForeign Service Training Course in Canberra, Australia.” There he was trained in diplomatic representation work with newly recruited diplomats from Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands and other Commonwealth countries.

After working in the Vanuatu Foreign Service for 14 years, HE Nikenike was awarded a Chevening Scholarship by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office to do a Master Degree in Diplomatic Studies at the London Diplomatic Academy in the University of Westminster, UK. This is where he gained his MA with distinction.

The programme also provided him professional exposure to understanding of State Ceremonial Protocol Principles and Practices, IT and Management of Overseas Missions, Foreign Policy Analysis and Basic Public International Law. It was there that he wrote a Dissertation on Vanuatu’s Non-Alignment Foreign Policy.

Following his retirement, HE Nikenike was called upon to serve his country as the first High Commissioner of the Republic of Vanuatu to the Republic of Fiji in 2014. Retirement can be a restless phase of anyone’s life, but after a full and very successful career in Vanuatu’s Foreign Service since 1980 he was happy to return to do what he was trained for and enjoyed doing in his professional life, representing Vanuatu’s national interests in Fiji and with regional and international organisations set up in Suva.

However, he was quite at home working in Suva, saying “I also grew up in Suva, and working in Suva is like working in my Vanuatu hometowns of Port Vila and Luganville.”

HE Nikenike said that he started and reached the pinnacle of his Foreign Service career during a different era, it is with his experience that he offers three relevant tips to current students and graduates:

Firstly, it is fundamentally important for every student to have dreams of their purpose in life. Having a personal or family dream can drive and motivate anyone to succeed in their chosen study programmes, and provide the rationale for pursuing career pathways. There is nothing worse than being “forced” to study at university because mum or dad wants their child to follow someone else’s dream.

Secondly, one’s dream should ideally be related to what one wants to be and manpower skills Vanuatu requires for advancing its national sustainable development processes. It is also smart to seek advice from those who know about career plans, such as parents or close relative members who have successfully gone through university studies and career learning curves.

Thirdly, it is often a bad idea to choose fields of study or career paths that many boys or girls have commonly chosen, and also latching on to someone else’s dream may not be relevant or inspiring for many reasons. Following a dream may seem hard, but often rewarding at the end.
Dr Ronita Ram graduated in 2004 from The University of the South Pacific (USP) with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Accounting and Information Systems, which she was also a recipient of three (3) Gold medals. She also completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting in 2006 and later her PhD studies from the University of Sydney.

Dr Ram started her career as a tutor at USP’s School of Accounting and Finance (SOAF) and later joined PriceWaterHouseCoopers, Fiji as an auditor.

During Professor Michael White Memorial Lecture, Dr Ram spoke of her experience as a student and also of her time as a tutor at the University. She also worked very closely with her mentor Professor White.

“He probably never knew that my achievements were to some extent driven by the values he had instilled in me and for which I am grateful to this day, and that was a quest for knowledge and a wish to make a difference,” she said.

She also credits her achievements to the USP’s academia, especially Professor White. Dr Ram elaborated that the motivation behind her success was discipline, commitment, determination and setting high expectations.

As a Postgraduate student, Dr Ram was encouraged to be open to myriad possibilities of a situation, be inquisitive and adventurous in her studies and develop critical thinking. It was during this time that sparked her interest in International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) for Small to Medium-sized Entities (SMEs). This interest also inspired Dr Ram to choose her PhD study topic and field of research at the University of Sydney.

“This not only enabled me to start my PhD studies sooner but also created a pathway for other young academics in the department to do the same. Ultimately my journey from USP to the University of Sydney is one that was to some extent influenced by Professor White,” said Dr Ram.

Her PHD thesis titled “Development of international Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) for Small and Medium-Sized Entities” has won the prestigious 2012 Emerald/EFMD Highly Commended Doctoral Research Award for the Interdisciplinary Accounting Research category. Dr Ram was also the 2013 finalist for Rita and John Cornforth Medal, at University of Sydney.

Apart from the prestigious awards, Dr Ram has been recognised as one of the Dean’s Citation award recipient for every semester during her years of teaching at the University of Sydney. She has taught courses on financial accounting at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at University of Sydney. Currently, Dr Ram is a lecturer and module convenor for Introduction to Accounting at Henley Business School.

Her research interest is focused on the area of International Financial Reporting standards, IFRS for SMEs, accounting for developing countries, and compliance issues.

Dr Ram has published and presented her research and has also reviewed papers for a number of international journals and conferences. Later in April 2010, she was awarded ‘Outstanding Author Contribution Award Winner’ at the 2010 Literati Network Awards for Excellence by Emerald for the paper “Corporate Governance and International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS): The Case of Developing Countries” published in Research in Accounting in Emerging Economies, 2008.

Dr Ram has over ten years of teaching experience and is a qualified accountant and member of the Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand.
UPCOMING 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

With just two (2) months remaining in the year to commemorate USP’s 50th Anniversary, the University would like to invite you to the following events in November:

- Pacific Island Transport Forum (PITF) 8 - 10 November;
- Final Research Seminar by Randy Thaman – Please visit our 50th site for more information;
- Tonga Moment To Shine: 2 – 16 November;
- Tuvalu Moment To Shine: 9 – 23 November and

To join the celebrations or to find out more information or to see how you can be more involved in the 50th events, please email: usp50@usp.ac.fj or visit http://50.usp.ac.fj

Distinguished Alumni Awards 2018

Celebrating 50 years of combined success for the University and its Alumni.

The USP Alumni Unit will be hosting the “USP Distinguished Alumni Awards” on 28 November, 2018 at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies Pavilion.

Nominations or applications are now open from the faculties, alumni and members of the public to honour the achievements of some of our distinguished alumni.

The USP Alumni Unit, SPAC in its effort to strengthen Alumni engagement and reinforce partnerships, will be hosting the alumni awards to recognise and celebrate the achievements of its current alumni and their contributions to the university, community, their professions or field of interest.

The awards will be bestowed upon USP’s most illustrious alumni at a ceremony, which is part of the 50th Anniversary celebrations. All nominations received by the Alumni Unit will be facilitated through the respective Faculties and Offices for initial selection before the final assessment by the Honours Committee (selected by the Vice - Chancellor and President) to identify the honourees.

We look forward to your nominations as we celebrate the achievements of our distinguished alumni.

For more information, do not hesitate to contact Ms Michelle Tevita-Singh, Alumni Affairs Coordinator, (michelle.tevitasingh@usp.ac.fj) or Ms Anita Rodgers, Alumni Officer, (anita.rodgers@usp.ac.fj)

Or visit our website: http://alumni.usp.ac.fj for more information
Briefly reflect on your student life at USP. What memories do you have?

USP was once in a lifetime experience and not only had it taught me academically, but also gave me chance to learn other skills to survive day to day life such as Independence – how to take care of yourself and your studies. Also provided me a chance to work and study with students of diverse backgrounds from the Pacific and further. One of the best memories I have from my journalism class is working at night on our student newspaper- Wansolwara, especially the conversations and laughter we had together. As for Sociology, a memory I would have would be travelling to Navala Village in Ba, for a field trip and we took a route from Sigatoka going inland and reaching Ba, I never thought that road existed.

Why did you choose your field of study?

While growing up, I was constantly encouraged by my parents, elder siblings and teachers to get a qualification from USP and I had this goal of reaching USP at the back of my mind. Reaching and graduating from USP was my investment to securing a brighter future. I chose this field of study because I wanted to work in an organisation where I learn new skills. I wanted my work to include a lot of travelling and opportunity to interact with people of different backgrounds, cultures and from different countries and I can also write my own articles, which would get published on websites as well as print media. All these components was available in the Journalism units and through Sociology, I learned about the context, connections and complexities of different environments and situations.

What were some of your achievements as a student?

- Worked at the Counting Center for the 2014 National General Elections as USP Media during my first year of studies.
- Received the Award for the Most Promising First year student at the Wansolwara Awards Night in 2014.
- Appointed Editor of the Wansolwara Newspaper and received the Best Story of the Year Award at the Wansolwara Awards in 2015.
- Recognised as the PASS Leader for PS102 unit.
- Appointed President of the Journalism Students Association and received the Award for Most Outstanding Graduate Award at the Wansolwara Awards in 2016.
- One of three recipients of the Pacific Cooperation Foundation Internship in New Zealand.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it.

I am currently a Communications Assistant at SPC and I do both internal and external communication, e.g. circulating information within SPC as well as sending out press releases to media. I am responsible for updating SPC’s Social media accounts and scripting for the Pacific Way Television Show as well as provide any sort of Communications support to relevant projects. But the thing that I enjoy the most about my job is travelling in the Pacific and documenting what people have to say. Travelling to different Pacific Island Countries in the region and talking to people from different backgrounds was a thrilling adventure for me. So thankful to SPC!

Who/what inspires you?

Personality wise, I was inspired by my maternal Grandparents, Late Mr Najar Singh Aujla and Ms Prakash Kaur Aujla, who had taught me how to live life freely and also to retain my identity as a Sikh in this modern society where erosion of culture is almost eminent. While my parents, Mr Jaiyanti Lal and Mrs Harbindra Kaur Aujla, inspired me through their actions and experiences that no matter how much life and society try to push, just keep your head up, pray and work towards your goals and everything else will just fall in place.

Please share three tips that you think are important for recent graduates that will help them when starting out on their career paths.

- Life really starts after graduation, so buckle up bro!
- Identify what you really love doing and get someone to pay you to do that.
- You are not going to be the boss on the first day of your job, so stop making demands and start meeting them.
Visit by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II to USP in 1971 at the Laucala Campus.

The Royal Charter displayed by the USP's Records Office.

Display by USP's Records Office to mark International Archives Day 2018 at the Library Foyer.
Simione Sefanaia (Tonga)
Graduated in 1972 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Chemistry from USP. He was a Chairman of the Tonga Market Corporation Limited, the former Managing Director at Tonga Development Bank and the Deputy Chair of the Public Service Commission - Tonga.

Beniamino Salacakau (Fiji)
Graduated in 1978 with a Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Certificate in Education in History Politics and Geography from USP. In 2006 he received a Postgraduate Diploma in Development Studies. Mr Salacakau was the former Fiji High Commissioner to Pretoria, South Africa.

Dr Lonise Tanielu (Samoa)
Graduated in 1978 with a Bachelor of Arts in Education and Geography from USP and received her PhD from the University of Auckland in 2004. Dr Tanielu’s thesis was based on research on bridging the knowledge gap and improving the literacy standards of Samoan children. She has also authored books on literacy and classroom teaching concepts.

Dr Melenaite Taumoefolau (Fiji)
Graduated in 1976 with a Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Certificate in Education majoring in Education and Geography from USP. Dr Taumoefolau also holds a Master of Professional Studies and PhD from the University of Auckland, an MA from The University of Wales. She is currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland.

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Netatau (Neta) Pelesikoti (Tonga)
Graduated in 1985 with a Bachelor of Arts and a Graduate Certificate in Education majoring in Geography and Economics from USP. She also received by a Masters in Coastal Management in the Netherlands and a PhD in Australia in coastal monitoring. She began her career as an Environmental Technical Officer in Tonga. In 2012, Pelesikoti became the first Pacific Island woman to be a lead author of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate.

Hannington Alatoa (Vanuatu)
Graduated in 1988 with a Bachelor of Arts in Geography and Sociology from USP. Mr Alatoa is an experienced Community Development Specialist with a demonstrated history of working in the civil engineering industry. He is currently a Consultant at the Quaalo Consulting Limited, Community Development Advisor for the Roughton International Ltd in Port Vila Vanuatu and is also the Vice-President of Vanuatu Red Cross.

Waisale Tuidama (Fiji)
Graduated in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Geography and Administration and later in 2005 with a Master of Business Administration from USP. Mr Tuidama is currently the Programme Manager, Northern Development Programme Labasa - National Centre for Small and Micro Enterprises Development.

Dr Winston Halapua (Fiji)
Graduated in 1987 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Sociology and Education from USP. He later received a Master of Arts in 1993 and in 2002, a Doctor of Sociology. Dr Halapua has studied in Fiji, the United Kingdom, Israel and New Zealand and is a known Oceanic Sociologist and Theologian.

Rigamoto Aisake (Fiji)
Graduated in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Literature & Language and History/Politics from USP. He has also studied at the Aviation Security Training Centres Auckland/Seoul, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore. Rigamoto is currently an Aviation Security & Facilitation Inspector at the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji.

Florrie Alalo (Solomon Islands)
Graduated in 1994 with a Foundation Social Science, then in 1998 with a Bachelor of Laws, and then in 1999 with a Professional Diploma in Legal Practice from USP. Florrie also received her Postgraduate Certificate from The University of Glasgow. She is currently a Legal Advisor Consultant at the Solomon Islands Computers System, Dreamline Car Rentals and Syscom.
Duran Angiki (Solomon Islands)
Graduated in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Journalism and in History/Politics from USP. He also received a Master’s Degree from the University of Technology, Sydney. He is currently a Media Consultant at Pasifik Wantoks International in Brisbane, Australia.

Samisoni Ratubalavu
Waqavakatoga (Fiji)
Graduated in 2004 from USP with Bachelor of Science, majoring in Mathematics and Physics. Samisoni started his career at Westpac Banking Corporation. He pursued a Postgraduate Diploma in Meteorology in 2009 at Bureau of Meteorology Training Centre (Melbourne, Australia). Samisoni is currently the Senior Meteorologist at Fiji Meteorological Service and has worked there for 10 years now.

Sovala Agaiava (Samoa)
Graduated in 2002 with a Postgraduate Diploma in Education, and then in 2010 with a Master of Arts from USP. He also received a Bachelor in Social Science/Bachelor of Education in Geography and Education Studies, from The University of Waikato. Sovala is currently the UNDP CCSDP National Project Coordinator at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in Samoa.

Shalvin Narayan (Fiji)
Graduated in 2013 with a Bachelor of Science majoring in Computing Science and Information Systems, a Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology majoring in Computing Science in 2016, and a Masters in Computing Science and Information Systems in 2017 from USP. He is currently working in Telecom Fiji Limited as Manager IT.

Karthik Chandra (Fiji)
Graduated in 2016 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Law and Journalism, and in 2017 he completed his Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice from USP. He started his career as a Paralegal at Chan Law and later joined the United Nations Human Rights as a Research Assistant. He is currently an Associate for Vasantika Patel Chambers.

Temarama Anguna (Cook Islands)
Graduated from USP in 1989 with a Foundation Social Science, in 1991 with a Diploma in Management Studies and in 2009 with a Master of Business Administration. She is currently the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture in Cook Islands.

Waltersai Ahelmhalahlah (Vanuatu)
Graduated in 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Law in Public Administration and Management from USP. In 2010, he also graduated from USP with a Professional Diploma in Legal Practice. Waltersai worked as a Magistrates Court Judge and Administrator at the Magistrates Court of Vanuatu. He obtained his Masters in Business and Management from University of Waikato and now works at the same university.

Richard Adomana (Solomon Islands)
Graduated from USP in 2001 with a Foundation Social Science, then in 2005 with a Bachelor of Education, majoring in Education and Economics. Richard is currently the Reporting & Monitoring Officer at the Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development in Solomon Islands.

Anastasha Savura (Fiji)
Graduated in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Marine Science from USP. While pursuing her undergraduate studies, Anastasha worked as a Customers and Sales Representatives for Mind Pearl. After graduating, she joined The Crab Company Fiji as an Aquaculture Technician and later joined the Intercontinental Resort and Spa Safari team as a Marine Biologist. She is currently a Divemaster in Training with Coral Coast Divers.
USP cordially invites you to nominate and or apply for the

Distinguished Alumni Awards 2018

Celebrating 50 years of combined success for the University and its Alumni.

EVENT DETAILS
Date: Wednesday, 28 November 2018
Venue: Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture & Pacific Studies
Time: 6pm-9pm

The Distinguished Alumni Awards recognise the achievements of the University’s graduates who have attained notable success in their fields.

We invite nominations from our Alumni, Staff and members of the public.

For information on the criteria and to download the nomination form follow this alumni.usp.ac.fj or email us on alumni@usp.ac.fj

Nominations open: 18 October 2018
Nominations close: 16 November 2018

For more information, contact Michelle Tevita-Singh, Alumni Affairs Coordinator:
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