It was once said that the prize of a good work is more work. Indeed, effective January 2018 the Head of the School of Agriculture and at the same time the Director of IRETA in USP Alafua Associate Professor Mohammed Umar is also the current Campus Director. His first order of business when he assumed office in January was the creation of an organization structure. This aims to allow ownership, easy management and monitoring and assessment of performance. It also encouraged accountability of every staff in the different offices. Committees were also formed with a corresponding chairman to facilitate a deeper understanding and involvement of every staff in the activities and aspect of the campus operations namely; Orientation, Research, Student Discipline, Staff Housing, Marketing, Open Day and 50th Anniversary, OHS & DMC and the 2018 Graduation Committee. The new organization structure can hopefully generate a speedy but quality services to the students, staff and other stakeholders.

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but building the new” (Socrates)
The Head of School (HOS), Associate Professor Umar and School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) staff were faced with the dilemma in dealing with aging campus facilities, overcrowded classrooms and the need for advances in technology in order to make Alafua campus attractive and conducive to learning. Constructions and repairs of the facilities have been of high priority. In addition were the need to renew and repair student accommodation, staff accommodation and the Clinic.

The construction has commenced at the end of December 2017. To date, the post graduate and soil science lab are looking good, well furnished, retiled, repainted and equipped with new equipment as well as the installation of air conditions, and LED lights while construction of other laboratories in GTZ building is still on-going but should be completed soon.

The benefit of these renovation is that it has provided more space for students in classrooms and labs. The Upgraded facilities and equipment for students as well as lecturers to feel more inspired to keep up to date with their studies. The lecturers now have all the tools they need to provide a strong learning and teaching and research environment at the School.

The student accommodations were in dire need of improvement, SWO Ronna Lee and her team of 6 cleaners collaborated with the maintenance team to have 10 of the 14 Houses painted, cleaned and ready for students before the Semester I began. In addition they had a volunteer from Rotary Club of Apia to assist them for which they are very grateful. The maintenance’s work is continuing until it is completed for students arriving early at the end of January.

Throughout these renovations a lot of patience as well as team work was needed to get all the classrooms, labs and offices ready for the start of classes in the beginning of February.
On the 24th of January a meeting/discussion with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Consultant, Dr Anne Woodfine was held at the University of the South Pacific (USP), Alafua Campus to discuss new regional project proposal under the Green Climate Fund. Given that the University’s School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) plays a significant role in offering and providing the Region in areas of Climate Change adaptation and Climate Smart Agriculture, our technical assistance as well as information to such project formulation was invaluable and required.

Dr Woodfine has been contracted by FAO-SAP to draft based on desk research and advice, receive comments and prepare Concept Note (CN), Feasibility Studies and Project Preparation Funding (PPF) applications for a regional adaptation program to climate related trans-boundary plant pests, animal diseases and invasive alien aquatic species for Pacific Island countries.

This project aims to empower and enable countries as well as strengthen Pacific regional alliances in the fight against trans-boundary plant pests, animal pests and diseases and invasive alien aquatic species related to climate change factors through adaptation measures.

SAFT and IRETA BID FAREWELL DR. JOHN BOSCO

A former student of SAFT, a staff of the Institute for Research, Extension And Training in Agriculture (IRETA), and a friend to many of the University’s students left for home in Solomon Is. He has been offered a lecturer position at SINU. John has been at USP since his U/G days and made good use of the opportunity given to him through scholarships. His PhD was funded by ACIAR. On the 19th of January some of USP-SAFT and IRETA staff bid farewell to Dr. Bosco. The Secretary of the SAFT, Mrs. Mausali Laumoli and Senior Central Laboratory Technicians, Mr. Hewage Perera presented him with a gift to thank him for his time and service at USP. In response, Dr Bosco thanked the SAFT and IRETA Staff for all the good times and the memories at USP Alafua. The evening ended with great company and fine dining at the Seafood Gourmet Restaurant. USP– Alafua wishes John all the best in future.
The first International Conference on Challenges for Future Agriculture that was held at the Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh from 27 - 28th of January 2018 was attended by two School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) Staff members, Dr. Md Abdul Kader and Dr. Nandakumar Desai. Dr. Kader contributed an oral presentation entitled, “Electrochemical properties and pore water nutrient contents of organic amended submerged sub-tropical soils” in addition to other four oral presentations he co-authored and presented a poster. Dr Desai also contributed an oral presentation entitled “Economics of Biomass Briquettes as fuel sources”. They both were in the organizing committee of this conference. Dr. Kader also co-chaired a session on Climate Change and Environment.

Throughout the two day conference there were oral presentations and a poster presentation. The oral presentations consisted of 8 sessions:

i. Challenges in Animal Disease diagnosis in the 21st century
ii. Crop improvement and food security
iii. Prospects and challenges in future fisheries
iv. Animal husbandry in nutritional security and safety
v. Agricultural Technology and Food Processing for sustainable Agriculture
vi. Technology adoption and change in livelihood
vii. Climate change and environment
viii. Horticulture and crop protection

Most of keynote speakers were Professors of different universities of home and abroad particularly Asia and Pacific region.

To view and read about these research papers, visit website: [www.iccfa2018.bau.edu.bd](http://www.iccfa2018.bau.edu.bd)

At the beginning of this year, second and third year students either started or almost completed their AG384 vocational practical experience. They were rotated between the Institute of Research, Extension and Training in Agriculture (IRETA) Farm and the different sections of the School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) activities. They found it very challenging, fun, useful especially gaining more knowledge and skills about how things are in the real world and how they will face it. It is a great chance for them to experience what they have been taught in the classrooms and read in books.

AG384 course is a practical-oriented and designed to match the theory and practical class that are covered in the other prescribed courses for the Bachelor of Agriculture degree. The students are required to achieve an accumulated period of 20 weeks of practical skills in the recognized agricultural enterprises at the Alafua Campus IRETA Farm as well as the SAFT.
It has been a tradition in USP to welcome the students through an Orientation Program. **In the Alafua Campus**, the program took place on February 6, 2018. It was a one-day activity started with the traditional Samoan Kava Ceremony then followed by a short program with the invited guest speaker former Vice Chancellor of the University Afioga Mulitalo Aliumamua Esekaia Solofa, sharing his experiences and views on the relevance and development of USP for the past 50 years in the Pacific Island Countries and in the world. In the program also, Prof. Umar delivered his inspiring talk and encouraged the students to do good because “No good things come easy”. The short program was followed by a short break, then Campus tour followed. In the afternoon, SAFT Staff spearheaded by Prof. Umar facilitated the orientation to SAFT students particularly on their respective programs.
**USP 2018 ORIENTATION**

In the satellite Savaii Center, the orientation was postponed from its original schedule on February 9, 2018 to February 16, 2018 due to the cyclone Gita. Nevertheless, the orientation was a success. Attended by SAFT Staff headed by Prof. Umar, he highlighted the importance of science and nature in the quest of protecting the environment and the role and sacrifices of the parents to the success of their children.
An increase in agriculture student numbers was seen for 2018 School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) orientation on the 6th of February for students studying agriculture. Master of Ceremony, Mr. Ioane Malaki welcomed new students and also continuing students of agriculture.

The program started with opening remarks from the Head of School, Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar, followed by other academics, who spoke and made Power Point presentations informing them of various academic issues and work of the SAFT, IRETA, Farm, Scholarships, Pathways to various study streams, Student Learning Outcomes, Research Activities, compulsory attendance in Lectures, Labs, Tutorials, Seminars, Inter-school Debates and about functioning of Moodle system, SLS services, student research and vocational training at Alafua Campus, Registration and Enrolment system at Alafua campus, University’s Strategic Plan, Policies, the 50th year celebrations, and more.

The Orientation was a big success as it helped both new and continuing students of the SAFT.

**MEDICAL CLINIC**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Namulauulu Dr Nuualofa Potoi</td>
<td>10.00am – 1.00pm</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Dr SilauleleiAsaua</td>
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<td>Lemamea Dr Limbo Fiu</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Dr Potoi/Dr Asaua (alternate)</td>
<td>10.00am – 1.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Dr Limbo Fiu</td>
<td>10.00am – 1.00pm</td>
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Note: There are one male and two female doctors.

Registered Nurse: Ms Nanise Simanu 9.30am – 1.30pm (Monday – Friday)
THE WORLD OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY!

To boost students learning agriculture particularly by distance mode, two classrooms (C2 and C3) with Lecture Capturing Systems are fully implemented and ready for 2018 live recordings. To guarantee minimum disruptions to live recordings, an uninterrupted power supply (UPS) was also installed to service these lecture capture systems. New Personal Computers (PC) were installed for SAFT - 24 in total, 14 for staff and 10 for students. Also the computer laboratory and REACT venues are ready for Semester 1 of 2018. CISCO program has recorded a total of 26 students for 2018.

In the previous month, the IT Staff were busy making sure the internet connection and systems such as Moodle are ready and working for the students and staff to use. In addition, Mr. Alfram Nukuro conducted a one day training on the Use of Audio Visual (AV) equipment available in C2 and C3 Lecture rooms. The training was important to guarantee familiarity in the use of the Lecture capture system. They were also given additional task fixing the interruptions in internet connection caused by the Tropical Cyclone Gita.

LIBRARY CORNER

The Alafua Library presented its 2018 Annual Plan to Lauala Library Management and Seniors via teleconferencing. During the presentation it is clear that there are a lot of things to be done in Alafua Library this year including the new Integrated Library System which primarily uses Athena. During the 2018 Orientation, the Library conducted an orientation program for new students at the campus to familiarize them with the library and its system.

In addition, on the 14th of February, the Alafua Library attended the 1st Satellite meeting organized by the Regional Libraries at the Lauala Campus Library whereby the newly appointed University Librarian, Elizabeth Fong, briefed about the regional libraries plans and issues. Starting this semester, the library hours is extended until 6:30 p.m. on weekdays.
New year new semester and this means a lot of preparations for the Student Learning Support (SLS) Hub. From completion of the semester calendar to the creation of more study guides for the free use of students to being involved in the University of the South Pacific (USP), Alafua Campus 2018 Orientation preparation. SLS specialist Ms. Niseta Batava presented a Time management and Knowing your course materials presentations during the Orientation Day.

SLS brings us Global Communication (GC), it aims to brings together students who are native speakers of English, with whom you will engage in conversations or talanoa sessions for a whole hour.

And on January 24-26, 2018, the university organized a workshop for all the SLS Specialist in Laucala Campus, Fiji to ensure uniformity of services and support resources across USP and to educate all Specialists of the English language.

The Student Welfare Officer (SWO), Ms. Ronna Lee was involved in the preparation of the 2018 Alafua Campus Orientation. In addition, as a member of the Rotary Club of Apia, the SWO, Ms. Ronna Lee continues to partner with the organization in its annual fundraising activity for the foundation’s sponsorships. The funds from such activity enabled at least 13 under privilege students to complete their Foundation Certificates at the USP Alafua. This is the 3rd year which the Rotary club of Apia is committed to funding Higher Education Fees for Foundation Students at the University of the South Pacific. Every year, Rotary fundraises through a Melbourne Cup Extravaganza Event to raise funds for their Education and Health Projects. In 2017, funds from Rotary enabled 14 students to complete their Preliminary and Foundation studies, bridging them to their undergraduate studies. Four students from the USP Savai’i Centre and 7 students from the Alafua Campus will benefit from this generous sponsorship.

SWO distributed the care packages for all residential students during Cyclone Gita with the assistance of the USP Security. All student accommodations were secure and safe.
WHERE TO GET HELP—STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

At both orientations (Alafua Campus and Savai'i center) the Student Administrative Services (SAS) head of section Ms. Seulgee Samelu has played a big role in getting things up and going. The SAS earlier this year has been given the responsibility to administer matters relating to the Alafua Campus outreach Programmes including the Local School Tutorials so they have inherited an additional staff – Ms. Nelle Faimalo. These local school tutorials are now under way and offers tutorials for Year 12 and Year 13 students for nine subject areas to deliver the National Curriculum. The New Coordinator for PacTAFE at Alafua Campus has been announced to join in March, 2018.

After two months of enrollment campaign through a 30-second Television advertisement, 10-second electronic billboards in town, 30-second at the movie theaters and newspaper advertisement, enrollment went smoothly at the Alafua Campus. The SAS also encountered a few snags relating to Online registration due to slow internet connection nonetheless SAS has been able to quickly respond to these.

FINANCE MATTERS!

The staff of the Finance Unit of Alafua Campus has dedicated their effort in the preparation and finalization of the 2017 Financial Report. Also all students (private and sponsored) invoices were generated on time and distributed to students and sponsors. Since beginning of January the Finance section has been able to adjust on the changes that followed after the change in management of Alafua campus. By Prof. Umar’s leadership, the Finance Section is now under a new structure as well as responsibilities including supply of cleaning and toiletry resources, the Bookshop, Course Material Room, Fixed Assets, and the upgrading and road maintenance of the campus.

On the second week we experienced our first Tropical Cyclone for 2018 with least damage cost to the campus. Finance is part of the Disaster Management Committee to help with preparation, supplying much needed items by each sections on Alafua campus to assist with during emergencies. In addition, they also together with our maintenance teams worked to ensure timber, nails and all supplies needed for safeguard of University assets are supplied.

During the 2018 Alafua Campus Orientation, the Finance team also took part. They explained in details to students the different services they offer on campus, such as the bookshop, course materials room and many more.
STAFF UPDATE

The campus administration is trying to make university life for the students as much comfortable as possible especially to female student’s populations. Thus, starting this Semester I of 2018 two newly hired staff are women, Dr. Leslie Ubaub, Lecturer in Plant Protection and Ms. Mafo’e Alice Williams appointed as Student Officer. The Campus administration is hopeing that in the addition of female staff, the students will find it easier to reach out and confine their problems which will consequently improve their scholastic performance, as mentioned during the SAFT orientation day.

A good news for the SAFT Staff, Dr. Siaka Diarra was promoted to Associate Professor.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The School of International Training (SIT) is a program which encourages study abroad students from Universities mainly from the United State of America to explore processes of change in Samoa and other Pacific Communities through interdisciplinary coursework, field study and independent research. This year USP Alafua campus welcomes the 17 student-participants of the School of International Training Program.

While in Samoa, they are encouraged to interact with local and regional students and participate in various activities inside the campus for cultural exchange. This year also Jackie Faasisila who has been the Academic Director for more than 20 years retired at the end of February and we welcome Roland Pritchett as the Interim Academic Director for this semester.

During the orientation program for the new students of the campus, the 17 SIT students were also in attendance. The SIT program provides income for the Campus for the use of its facilities.
Tropical Cyclone Gita!

A day before the dreaded day, emails on updates of the cyclone were sent to the staff and students constantly to keep the community informed. On Friday night, February 9 Gita slowly started to gain its strength and by early hours of the morning it was really strong. Tropical Cyclone Gita brought category 1 wind strength of 39-54 miles per hour with gusty winds up to 72 miles per hour specifically to the northern part of Samoa. The highest rainfall recorded was at the Apia station which reached 141 millilitres per day.

On Saturday, Apia suffered from great black out followed by flooding of some low parts of the town. Luckily, being situated in the elevated area of Apia, USP Alafua campus was spared with flooding and there was no report of casualty. The USP Alafua campus security and maintenance team headed by Mr. Le Mamea Sia Matalavea, checked and evaluated the campus for any damages and began clearing operation of fallen trees as well as restoring the damages for instance, the internet connection and electricity disruption.

After a week of Gita’s visit all systems were restored.

Bananas in the campus fell down due to strong winds brought by the Tropical Cyclone Gita

Unfortunately outside USP, agriculture in Samoa is defenseless to the hostile effects of climate change with more recurrent and high intensity rainfall events, longer dryer spells and drought events, rising sea levels, extreme winds, and high air and water temperatures. The aftermath of Gita had a significant socioeconomic impact on livestock and crops. Farmers now have to recover and replant crops such as taro and bananas damaged by the strong winds. In the coming months, there will be some shortage of banana, taro and even breadfruit in Upolu. The shortage of taro will be due to the limited supply of bananas and breadfruit where in taro is the best substitute. Also, households that have faced large crop losses, mainly in the hard-hit areas, possibly will change their diet to bread and rice. Unfortunately, the most affected people are the subsistence farmers because they depend on their banana, breadfruit, coconut, and taro crops for their food and income.

New Imported Pigs!

It’s been ten years since the last shipment of imported pigs to Samoa from New Zealand. And on the 22nd of February, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) Animal Production and Health Division (APHD) received 23 pigs, 8 boars and 15 weaned gilts imported from Hamilton, New Zealand. According to the Animal Health Principal Veterinarian Dr. Renee Orange these new breeds are for breeding program and are to be bred in a controlled environment with following aims:

i. to produce breeding stock for distribution to farmers and

ii. to maintain their superior genetics so that their progeny will continue giving APHD pigs for many years to come, and

iii. to attempt crossing them with breeds that exist in Samoa to find the pig that is most suited to the Samoan environment while retaining the desirable growth and carcass genetics of the new pigs.

Dr. Renee Orange also added that these imported pigs will undergo 28 days of post entry quarantine under the observant eyes of Animal Health and Animal Research Section staff. She indicated that the quarantine period will allow the animals to readjust and settle in well to their new environment. In addition, it will give the Animal Health Section some time to examine and assess if the pigs are disease free before being distributed to pig farmers. The pigs that will be distributed to farmers will boost the genes of the local pigs as well as provide pigs that produce more meat and more piglets at a more efficient feed conversion ratio.
Being situated in the Tropics, Palms such as Coconuts are thriving in the Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Coconut production has been a vital export product and a dollar earner of many PICs including Samoa. As humans enjoy the sweet and refreshing taste of coconut water and the delicious and creamy meat of the fruit another organism is also enjoying the different part of the coconut plant, the Rhinoceros Beetle. This black-shiny creature is popularly known as the “Barber” since the infested Coconut appeared to receive a new “hair-cut” the moment the younger leaves unfurl (a). This damage interrupts the full potential of the leaves to produce sufficient nutrients to produce the nuts and ultimately, decreasing the yield.

The adult stage (b) is the damaging life stage while the larvae (c) stays in decaying woods and other plant parts which serves as their breeding sites. The frequent occurrence of typhoon and cyclone in the Pacific has aggravated the problem with the presence of damage vegetation creating more breeding sites for the beetles for instance, in Guam, few months after the typhoon Dolphin massive numbers of adults emerged from the breeding sites and severely attacking palms which started to die (Moore, 2018). In most instances even the simple clearing of area to have more space in our yard could mean cutting trees and often times forget to clean the debris that has fallen or just piling the debris on the side without really disposing them properly is potential breeding sites of the adult.

Several methods were designed to manage this insect pest such as the use of Bio-pesticides and Pheromone trap. Bio-pesticides that intend to kill pest however, unlike synthetic pesticides contain microorganisms or parts of the microorganisms and entity which are parasitic to target insect pests. For instance, the Green Muscardine Fungus (d), it is a fungus that infect the larvae and eventually killing it preventing from becoming adult. The method of application is very easy and does not need expensive apparatus all you need to do is find the breeding sites or create one to lure the adults to deposit their eggs then put the GMF in the breeding site (e). Another bio-pesticide is the Oryctes Nudivirus (OrNV), it is a virus and similar to GMF that infects the larvae. These bio-pesticides are safe to use and are available in government institutions of many countries for distribution and use. Another means is the use of Pheromone trap (f), Simme Darby developed and commercially distributed the trap. It is installed in the field and adult beetles will be attracted to the pheromone thus become trapped in the container.

Photos Sources:
(d-e) Philippine Coconut Authority; (f) Pheromone trap, field trial of Dr. Leslie T. Ubaub in the Philippines
A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE: USP IN THE 90’S
SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

1st Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops – Pacific Branch (ISTRC-PB)

Theme; “Improving Root and Tuber Crops in the South Pacific Region”
24-27 April 2018 at the Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi, Fiji

The Registration fee will be FJ$400 which will cover the partial cost of the venue, symposium bag, 4 lunch, 4 morning teas, 3 afternoon teas and other Symposium costs. The registration fee can be paid in cash in FJD on arrival at the venue to the ISTRC Secretariat.

Key Themes and Speakers

Several key themes in root and tuber crops in the South Pacific Island Countries will be covered in the Symposium including aspects of:

I. Agronomy
II. Production
III. Plant Protection
IV. Value Chains
V. Food Technology
VI. New technologies
VII. Marketing including Export, Economics and Future Challenges

Papers for oral presentation and poster presentation will be organized under appropriate headings after the Registration process is complete. Several internationally recognized and highly skilled root and tuber crops scientists will give keynote addresses on their current work and future challenges.

For more information, please contact the Secretariat of the ISTRC-PB by sending an email to Dr. Nandakumar Desai (nandakumar.desai@usp.ac.fj) or Ms. Senira Su’a (sua_s@samoa.usp.ac.fj).