True to its mission, SAFT is determined to meet the agricultural and related needs, and improving the welfare and livelihood of the communities of the member countries of the University of the South Pacific by providing agricultural education, developing and adapting new technologies to improve food production, and dissemination information throughout the region.

The year 2017 marks another milestone in the history of SAFT in its enrollment under the leadership Associate Prof. Mohammed Umar. After five years in his office, SAFT recorded the highest number of students enrolled with a total of 563 in various programs namely Undergraduate Program with 523 students and Postgraduate Program with 40 students. This record has been far better than in 2012 when he assumed office with only 335 students enrolled. The figure has since increased. This 59.0% increase has been attributed to the support and dedication of SAFT’s 24 staff, armed with improved facilities and better services, there is no other direction the School of Agriculture and Food Technology but going up.

It is interesting to note that students graduated from SAFT are now pursuing their higher education also in SAFT namely Ms. Ashika Devi presently a PhD student and Ms. Selina Oikali now pursuing her Masters, both were awarded as Most Outstanding Students in their respective degrees in 2016. This is a manifestation of the caliber of the school and its staff in motivating students in continuing education.

Meanwhile, the Flexi School scheme of the university has been showing a very encouraging number of students as well in its recently completed 2017 Winter Flexi Schools. There were 54 students enrolled for AG351 at Laucala Campus, 46 for AG384 and 14 in AG401.

Ms. Selina Oikali now a Masters student, receiving her medal for Most Outstanding Student from the Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon Tui'capa Sailele Malielegaoi
The Missing Link in SAFT is Food Technology...

It took many years for SAFT to be able to complete its acronym. It is undebatable that the Agriculture program has been soaring high since the establishment of the school in the Alafua campus however to fully realize the mandate of the school the other half of Agriculture must also be established. Alas! In 2017, Food Technology in Alafua Campus has finally started its activities to offer Food Technology product development Program with the assistance of Prof. Lutgarda S. Palomar as consultant in Food Technology from the Philippines. Prof. Palomar was a retired Professor from the Visayas State University in the Philippines and has been active in product development using Root crops and other tropical crops. This effort has been under the leadership of Associate Prof. Umar, Head of SAFT. To date, the presence of Food Technology is very palpable as part of SAFT. The laboratory is now operational with basic food processing and sensory evaluation equipment and tools. One of the objectives of the laboratory is to develop products produced from local ingredients. These equipment and tools were put into test in the first screening and sensory evaluation conducted by the students of Prof. L. Palomar in April 19, 2017.

The product evaluated was a Marmalade made from a ripe breadfruit. The product was an output of the research done by three (3) AG383 students under Prof. L. Palomar’s guidance. The laboratory has been open to visitors and students alike since its operation. It is one of the highlights during the 2017 Open Day event wherein visitors from FAO, private companies, local media, SAFT staff and students from several participating schools were given opportunity to look and taste products from cassava and Quench, the 3-in-1 juice made from local ingredients. On December 7, 2017, Pro-Chancellor Mr. Winston Thompson visited SAFT for the Alafua Campus graduation ceremony. During this occasion he had the chance to visit the SAFT’s Food Technology laboratory wherein Prof. L. Palomar and her team presented their five major products such as the 3-in-1 Green Tea, Breadfruit-cassava Chips, Juice, Pancake Ready-mix and Breadfruit Flour. With the product presented, Mr. Thompson was nonetheless surprised to say the least and become an instant believer that the Food Technology in the campus would be great help to the agriculture sector of Samoa and the other Pacific Islands.

SAFT Reaching Out...

Making sure that SAFT programs are well-received by its stakeholders in the Pacific Islands, efforts on dialogue and promotion were conducted. Associate Prof. Umar visited the Fiji National University (FNU) and Tonga Institute of Higher Education (TIHE) to see facilities and discuss the possibility to cross credit courses with SAFT. Also Prof. Umar and Dr. Poasa Tabuaciri visited several secondary schools in Fiji early in 2017 to clarify SAFT program requirements, student career paths after graduation and the employment opportunities for agriculture graduates in PICs. A total of 2,031 students from 27 secondary schools in Fiji were the recipients of their talk. With the same purpose, Associate Prof. Umar also visited Savaii together with Ioane Malaki, Lemamea Sia Matalavea, Seulgee Samuelu, Niseta Buatava and talked to mostly year 12 and 13 students. The visit in Savaii was timed with the culmination of the USP Savaii Centre Open Day which was held on July 21, 2017. The event was attended by approximately 200 students from five (5) different schools, invited government and NGO representatives of the private sector in Savaii, and development partners. Meanwhile, it was on July 28, 2017, when SAFT Alafua Campus opened its doors to high school and college students and the general public for Open Day. It was attended by more than 800 students from different schools in Samoa. The event although scholastic in nature, the festivity brought by various exhibits made it fun and exciting. The different units of SAFT namely Plant Protection, Crop Production...
tion, Food Technology, Agribusiness, Agricultural Engineering, Soil Science, Tissue Culture and Animal Science showcased exhibits and other activities that were inviting and interesting to the potential SAFT students. The activity was made possible by the joint efforts of SAFT staff and students.

**LEARNING IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS...**

Over the past years, SAFT supported capability development for its staff by organizing trainings and inviting resource persons. In 2017 alone, five (5) activities were conducted for this purpose. In March 31, 2017, Ms. Dorothy Spiller visited the Alafua campus to provide support to teaching staff in SAFT. Ms. Spiller facilitated a workshop on Peer Observation. The aim of the workshop was to provide guidelines for staff when observing colleagues for the purposes of performance review. A separate activity to discuss course outlines and other teaching and learning matters was conducted in a 3-day individual consultation meeting from April 3-5, 2017. The said activities were fruitful and useful for all SAFT-Alafua Academic Staff.

Two experts namely Ms. Alanieta Lesuma-Fatiaki, an Instructional Designer and Mr. Majito Jione, an Education Technologist of the USP Centre for Flexible Learning Department visited SAFT Alafua Campus twice in 2017 to assist SAFT Course Coordinators who are working on conversion courses to online.

Another immense effort to capacitate the Laboratory Technicians in SAFT was done. Mr. Ian Faleono, a former Crop Technician of USP, Alafua Campus, in coordination with Mr. Daya Pererra, the Senior Technician of SAFT, the school held a 5-day training from March 27-31, 2017 on Microscope Maintenance and Calibration this includes dismantling, replacing, cleaning, reassembling, checking and labeling of all microscopes available at the university. Certificates were awarded to the participants on the last day of the training.

In 2017, the installation of Lecturer Capture System was completed and in order for the academic staff and Alafua IT team to familiarize with the operation of the new equipment when lectures are delivered, a brief training session was initiated by one of the IT staff from the main Campus in Fiji. Lecture capturing is a new initiative by the university to assist students with their studies.

And lastly, Dr. Elena Martin Avila, a volunteer guest from the Ministry of Agriculture at Nuu, conducted a two-day training for two Laboratory Technicians namely Michael Sefiliano and Kennedy Enefatu. The training program includes the preparation of different kinds of media required for different plant species, handling of different kinds of materials, the use of Laminar flow, types of instrument, collection, sub-culture propagation and maintenance of many plant species including decontamination and maintenance of the laboratory facilities.

**ACHIEVEMENT IS A WAY OF LIFE IN SAFT!**

What’s better way to teach is in doing by example. The year 2017 was SAFT academic staffs’ harvest year. Two of the faculty of SAFT bagged the most coveted Research Excellence Award given by the USP Research Office. Dr. Siaka Diarra and Mr. Falaniko Amosa were awarded for their 2016 contributions to research in the university.

SAFT’s very own Dr. Jagdish Bhati together with Prof. Surendra Prasad of SBCS-FSTE won the research grant amounting to FJD 46,700.00. It was an open competition in 2017 awarded by the USP Research Office under the USP’s Strategic Research Theme of Sustainable Development. Their winning project proposal entitled “Assessing Techno-Economic Feasibility of Local Crop Products of the South Pacific as Ingredients for the Poultry Feeds”.

Another notable achievement was received by not one but two Prof. Palomars, when they tied at third prize award for the University’s Call for Visions 2024 competition. The award comes with a cash prize of FJD 1,000.00 and a certification that were given on November 23, 2017 in Fiji.
“To promote awareness and tolerance towards other cultures around the world”

LEARNING AWAY FROM SCHOOL...

In order to provide a more extensive learning experience and promote awareness and tolerance towards other cultures around the world, the university supports activities outside the campus through study tour here and abroad. In January 17-27, 2017, three (3) students attended the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths or JENESYS 2016 Study Tour Program in Japan. The participants were Charlie Suruban, Fuatino Aquinas Afato Fatiaki and Jamal Letoa Dillon Tamasese. The theme of the study tour was “Environment and Energy”. The program aims to enlighten the Pacific Island Countries students in different disciplines, share cultures, experience and interact with other Pacific Island people, experience the Japanese daily life style and climatic condition of Japan, and observe how the Japanese people preserve and look after their environment and utilize their energy in all possible ways they can.

Another group of students taking AG363 (Pest and Disease Management) under the supervision of Prof. Manuel K. Palomar went on field trip on October 6, 2017 to not as far as Japan but equally interesting and fruitful visit nonetheless to the Quarantine Office in Apia and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) – Nuu Research Station. The aim of the visit to MAF was for the students to have first-hand knowledge on how MAF help farmers and stakeholders control pest and diseases of crops in Samoa while their visit to the Quarantine Office was for the students to learn about the ways of preventing the entry of exotic pests into Samoa and how the office also prevents the introduction of potential pest problems from Samoa to the other countries.

On the same date, Mr. Ioane Malaki and all students of the AG134 (Agricultural Engineering) class went to Mr. Ricky Westerlund’s Farm at Tapatapao, Samoa. The visit aims for students to experience the farm and machinery used for farming as well as the use of these implements. While Dr. Siaka Diarra and his students in AG273 and AG471 went to Ah-Liki Pig and Poultry Farm at Tanumapua on September 25, 2017 to enhance the students’ learning through field exposure.

SAFT HOSTED SEMINAR SERIES

To promote scientific discourse among staff and students in SAFT, the school organized a seminar series wherein high caliber international scientists, SAFT senior staff, students and successful alumni were invited to talk on various relevant topics concerning latest innovations in agriculture in the Pacific and other parts of the world.

In addition, five special seminars for AG383 students were scheduled. Four were held at Alafua campus from March 2017 while one at the Laucala campus later last year. Likewise, students in Master’s (5) and PhD (2) programs have presented their research proposals during the SAFT Postgraduate Seminars. Two PhD and two Master’s students will be working on a project related to poultry, another two Master’s students will be working on the improvement of two leafy vegetables and one will focused on the cocoa.

On May 4, 2017, Dr. Abdul Kader presented a topic on “Predicting Nitrogen Mineralization in Soils: Successes and Challenges” this is based on his achievements and challenges encountered in this research area.

While a lecturer in Nutrition and Dietetics, Dr. Sarah Burkhart of the University of the Sunshine Coast, presented a very informative seminar on “Understanding the Human Experience: Principles of Qualitative Experience” on September 28, 2017 in USP. In her talk, she emphasizes the importance of qualitative data in research and its difference with quantitative data. She included methods to which qualitative data can be used such as in exploring phenomena with flexible and semi-structured methods. The presentation was concluded with a discussion on strategies for ensuring credible research which included achieving saturation of data, self-reflection and peer-review.
SAFT ACADEMIC STAFF OUTSIDE THE CAMPUS

To remain valuable and relevant institution in the Pacific regions SAFT has actively participated in various significant events in the region. The Head of School, Associate Prof. Mohammed Umar attended several official functions and meeting as follows; On August 28 to September 1, 2017 he attended the Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (PIRAS) meeting at Novotel in Nadi, Fiji as one of the Board Member. On October 16 -17, 2017 he also attended the Strategic Plan Workshop at Lau-cala, Fiji. He was invited to participate in the 3rd Steering Committee Workshop for the Darwin Coconut Initiative Project at the Tanoa Tusitala Hotel. He was also invited and attended along with other SAFT staff to the 2017 Samoa “Home of the Ma’afala” Pacific and Global Breadfruit Summit on October 10-12, 2017 in Apia, Samoa wherein he presented a paper on the “Role of Breadfruit on Health, Diabetes and Obesity”.

On October 2, 2017, he was invited to be in the panel for the Associate Professor Position interview of the National University of Samoa (NUS). He was also invited to attend the official launching of the Poultry Chicken Breeding facilities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Samoa on October 11, 2017.

In order to continually be updated and visible to the scientific community around the world, SAFT staff have participated in various international and local workshops and conferences in 2017. Mr. Falaniko Amosa attended the two-week training on Postharvest Technology at the University of California from June 19-30, 2017. Dr. Sonny Lameta attended the joint APEN and GFRAS meeting on September 8-15, 2017 in Ingham and Townsville, Australia. While Dr. Siaka Diarra attended and presented a paper at the International Tropical Conference (TROPAG) 2017. Also, Dr. Md Abdul Kader attended the Inception Meeting and Workshop on the new ACIAR-funded Research Project in Nadi, Fiji from November 13-16, 2017.

THE 2017 HARVEST

The Alafua Campus Graduation Ceremony was held at the Mulinuu EFKS Hall in Samoa on December 8, 2017. The occasion was attended by special guests from USP Administration and the government of Samoa, the graduates, church leaders, families and friends. A total of 141 graduated from different schools of USP at Alafua Campus. Among the graduates were from 11 countries outside the Pacific Islands. Fifty-eight percent of the graduates were women.

One of the highlights of the graduation ceremony was the number of graduates in Postgraduate program wherein one (1) out of four (4) PhD students graduated, eight (8) out of 13 Masters students graduated and 10 students enrolled in Postgraduate Diploma graduated. Compared to the past years, the number of graduates in Postgraduate program is nothing but an achievement and the beginning of more harvest in the years to come. Mr. Shawn Rusa from Solomon Is., an Animal Husbandry student won the Top Student Award in Agriculture.

The USP hosted an official dinner at the Sheraton Hotel for the invitees to the USP graduation. Among the invitees were the Head of State and Masiofo, Ministers, CEOs and Staff of USP. Mr. Winston Thomson, Pro Chancellor of USP, welcomed everyone and thanked the Government of Samoa, the regional institutions and all stakeholders who continue to support USP in various ways.
**USP PROVIDES STUDENT LEARNING SUPPORT**

With the goal to help enhance student achievement, starting September 2, 2017 the Student Learning Support (SLS) is serving the students of the university in Alafua Campus by offering free services, organizing programs and activities for the students. Some of the SLS highlights in 2017 were the conduct of a workshop series on topics such as ‘Preparing for Examinations’ and ‘Taking Examinations’ facilitated by the Student Learning Specialist, Ms. Niseta Buatava on October 20, 2017. The aim of these workshops were to help the students prepare well for their final examinations.

Early in 2017, Ms. Roshila Singh of the Faculty of Business and Economics’ Student Learning Support conducted an outreach visit to the Alafua Campus from April 3-7, 2017. This four-day visit was to make students aware of the services and provide them with a chance to participate in the academic skills workshops. Topics such as Time Management, Goal Setting, Study Strategies, Reading Skills, Argument Development and Referencing.

Another student activity in 2017 of which SAFT has participated was the debate competition. The SAFT Debate Team squared off with the one from the School of Land Management and Development (SLMD) on April 10, 2017 via the university’s satellite system (REACT). The topic of the debate was on the issue of “Marijuana should be legalized in Pacific Island Countries”, the team took the negative side and lost by a narrow margin. The team was composed of Anarosa Latulipe, Ravineel Chand, Kajal Kapur and Maika Va-katawabai and coached by Mr. Ioane Malaki.

At SAFT students’ welfare is one of the primary concern thus, the Head of School together with the staff organized an orientation before the regular classes start every semester to help the students familiarized with the system, pathways, scholarships and other policies concerning their studies in the university. A meeting was also conducted with the Postgraduate students on June 9, 2017 to have a better understanding on several issues and in a way the staff and students can relate with each other and ultimately improve the performance of the students as well.

**IRETA AND THE FARMS**

With 13 Staff, IRETA has played a very important role in delivering quality education to the students of SAFT. With its vision which is to strengthen the livelihood of the Pacific community through sustainable agricultural development programs in the year 2017 the center has yet again delivered.

IRETA runs the farm of both the livestock and crops. The poultry unit has an estimated 9,484 layers and 3,000 growers. While approximately 516 old layers are for sale. In addition, there were two houses which accommodate 1,390 layers and another four houses are for free-range chicken. The egg production in 2017 was variable due to the changes in weather conditions throughout the year. On the other hand, the Piggery unit has performed very well in terms of numbers of pig and sales due to the high demand of pork products in Samoa. While the farm had to sell cattle from the month of May to June due to the increasing number of stocks and not enough paddocks for the cattle to graze, measures were already in place to improve the paddocks through pasture management such as removing the weeds and planting grasses in the area. As for the number of goat and sheep which are kept primarily for research support and student practical training also increased.

The Crop section of the farm was revived. In August to November, 2017 the unit started selling vegetables, root crops and fruits such as Chinese and Head Cabbage, cucumbers, eggplants, tomatoes, papaya, water melon, sweet potato, cassava, yams and banana. Most of these crops were grown for the Food Technology laboratory to be processed and for livestock feed. In 2017, water system was installed to poultry houses for efficient operation while fences were constructed around field crops experimental plots and new green house was built for vegetable and fruit nursery. For 11 months in 2017, the farm earned an estimated WST 679,771.12 from livestock, livestock by-products and crop produced.
PRACTICAL TRAINING PROVIDED BY IRETA

In its quest to reach the whole Pacific Islands, IRETA continues to publish materials such as the South Pacific Agricultural Newsletter (SPAN) and the Journal of South Pacific Agriculture (JOSPA) to keep the global agriculture sector informed of the latest agriculture updates from research results and technology development in the Region. In 2017 alone, 11 issues of the regional newsletter (SPAN) were produced and distributed covering the latest developments, technologies and information on agriculture at all levels while for JOSPA the volume 9 of the journal is available online to reach a wider audience.

Likewise, the center is striving to be better in providing support to its stakeholders by establishing linkages abroad. This effort to strengthen the capability of the center and likewise the staff, proposals of possible linkages and attendance to training abroad were made. In 2017 Associate Prof. Umar had a meeting with the CEO of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr. Tilafofo David Hunter for a possible partnership with the government of Israel to get experts on Food Security for training programs at USP Alafua Campus. The proposal has been sent to the Israel Embassy in Wellington. The

SAFT's students in-action doing farm activities as part of their training in IRETA

Masters and PhD students who were enrolled in AG383 conducted their research projects at IRETA Farm. The students put into practice the theories in both livestock and crop production that were taught in the classrooms. In IRETA, students were exposed in fence construction, pasture maintenance, identify weeds in the paddocks, supervised to carry out practical disease prevention and different castration methods, ear tagging, and dehorning of cattle, sheep and goats. Also at the piggery, students were trained in detecting heat sign on sow, castration and teeth clipping of piglets, identify different type of feeds and mixing of different feed ingredients and record keeping especially in pig breeding. They were also exposed to setting up brooding houses for chicks, collection, cleaning and grading of eggs as well as feeding and health management of chicken.

Aside from animal husbandry, students were also trained in crop production. They assisted the building of small nursery houses, performed soil sterilization, mixing, then transferring soil to the seedling tray and sowing seed using the dot and line methods. They were also trained on the different methods of propagation, laying out experimental plots, land selection, methods in measuring plots and allocation of treatments and replications. They also participated in planting of vegetable crops, root crops and fruit trees. Another valuable activity the students have experienced were the field management of crops. SAFT and IRETA strongly believe that a strong instruction coupled with on-site training will leave a lasting impression to the students that will enabled them to excel in the field of agriculture. Also, IRETA provided farm sites for staff and students to conduct their research endeavors in exploring possible solutions to problems related to agriculture in the Pacific. In 2017 alone, seven (7) AG383 students under the supervision of Dr. Diarra conducted their research related to animal production in IRETA. While Mr. Falaniko Amosa assisted three (3) crop research projects together with the Farm Manager and AG383 students.

SAFT student practical learning in Crop Production took place in IRETA Farm

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

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HOS also attended the PIRAS-SPC Annual Board Meeting in Nadi, Fiji on August 28-31, 2017.

Mr. Uga Luaupu, the Farm Supervisor, was sent to Chengdu China to attend the training course on Biogas Technology in the Treatment and Utilization of Agricultural Waste for Developing Countries from 4 August to 28 September, 2017. The said training was funded by the Biogas Institute of Ministry of Agriculture (BIOMA), China which aimed to provide, equip and promote the implementation of of Biogas in developing countries.

Linkages within the country has also been one of the priorities of IRETA. To date, fresh eggs bearing the seal of USP which are produced in the egg production facility in USP is now available at Frankie Supermarket and Wholesale. One of the highlights to every visitors visiting SAFT is the IRETA Livestock and Crop farms. In 2017 the center was visited by several groups from American...
Knowledge Dissemination …continue from page 7

Samoa Community College, FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for the Pacific Islands, Dr. Eriko Hibi and her team, Year 1 and 2 students and teachers from Sauniata Primary School, students from the United States of America under the Student International Training (SIT) program, and students from Magiagi Preschool. During the Open Day, IRETA livestock and crop farms were the major attraction of the event. The center also put together informative displays in both Alafua and Savaii Open Day. It has also participated in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) 2017 Agriculture Show.

WHAT’S NEW AND UP-COMING IN SAFT

In 2017 Food Technology laboratory was established but wait there’s more! The Laboratories were improved to cater analysis on soil, plant and animal feed samples from external clients such as MAF, MNRE, SPC, Ah-Liki, Blue Bird Lumber and farmers. In addition, the partnership between SAFT and MAF has continued with its use of the school’s Plant Tissue Culture Laboratory while the renovation and upgrading of MAF’s Laboratory is on-going. The Pest Museum was also established at the GTZ Building with the assistance of Plant Protection consultant Prof. Manuel K. Palomar. The museum houses several pinned, dried and preserved specimens of insects both pests and beneficial, weeds, diseased plants and vertebrate pests. Postgraduate Laboratory has been upgraded and starting this year the rooms will be used by the students.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY GOT UPGRADED

The ICT Unit of the Alafua Campus headed by the IT Manager, Le Mamea Sia Matalavea has been busy with the upgrading of the network infrastructure of the campus at the beginning of the year. With better wireless solutions and wider coverage within the campus it is expected that the students can easily access their course material online using mobile devices such as tablets, iPads and laptops. In addition, new file servers were installed together with new uninterrupted power supplies (UPS) to ensure that servers are up and running 24/7. Along with better internet connection, installation of Lecture Capturing System has been done to further assist students with their studies.

Seventeen new personal computers were purchased and installed inside the students’ main computer laboratory in May 2017 and another 10 arrived and installed in October 2017 for SAFT staff. There is an on-going renovation of the Crops Laboratory in GTZ Building to provide better services and learning experience to the students.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PEST MUSEUM

It has been established that pests and diseases management is one of the most important component in agriculture. History can tell how pests and diseases changed the course of human history thus, SAFT launched in 2017 the Pest Museum in the GTZ Building. The museum is a repository of various preserved specimens of insects, diseases, weeds, vertebrate and other pests found in Samoa. It serves as learning tool for students taking crop protection course and other related courses. Also farmers and other stakeholders can access the collections for their reference in identification of pests and diseases of crops. The project was spearheaded by Prof. Manuel K. Palomar, the Plant Protection consultant from the Visayas State University, Philippines with the support and encouragement of Associate Prof. Mohammed Umar. The project aims to collect and preserve crop pests found in all the Pacific Island countries. To date, on-going renovation has been taking place to improve and make the museum bigger to accommodate the collections and visitors.
REVIVING TISSUE CULTURE LABORATORY

While the Tissue Culture laboratory in SAFT located in the same building has been inactive in the past, in August, 2017, a memorandum of Understanding was developed between SAFT and the University of Queensland to explore the possibility of the two universities working together to strengthen tissue culture services in the Pacific region. Included in the talk were research and P/G scholarships for interested Pacific Island nationals to study tissue culture as there are only a handful of qualified people in this area. Meanwhile, as part of the renovation projects of all SAFT laboratory rooms, the tissue culture laboratory has been improved and ready for operation. It also houses the cultures from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as the institution’s laboratory is under renovation as well.

SAFT STAYING CONNECTED

The 2017 Commonwealth Broadband Pacific Forum was held in Apia, Samoa from July 25-27 wherein SAFT’s IT Manager, Le Mamea Sia Matalavea attended. The forum was organized by the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization and it was the first regional forum held in the Pacific. The three-day event examined the development of national broadband strategies and relevant technologies being used in the Pacific and also on application and date. Among the participants were the Vice Chancellor and President of the USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, leaders and ICT stakeholders of the Pacific.

Also in 2017, the new submarine fiber known as Tui-Samoa Cable has finally arrived in Samoa. USP Alafua Campus will be one of the institutions which will benefit from the technology. The cable will offer a span more than 1,470 km. connecting Samoa and Fiji with branching units to Wallis and Futuna, and Vanua Levu in Fiji. This enhanced internet services across the region making it fast, reliable and affordable.

Aside from Agriculture program USP Alafua campus also houses the USP-Samoa CISCO Academy. The academy is an accredited CISCO Networking Academy, a globally recognized professional certification programme for network professionals who want to gain CCNA qualifications leading to full CCNA Certification. 75 students enrolled in Cisco courses in 2017.

Together with Mr. Matalavea in the IT Unit keeping the Alafua Campus connected are Alfram Nukuro and Noel Tiitia, the Computer Technicians and two IT Assistants, Nai Malo and Ernest Cesar Amosa.

STUDENT ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

In order to reach a wider coverage of services in Samoa, USP revived the Savaii Centre in 2017. The revival was spearheaded by the Student Administrative Services (SAS) through cleaning and preparing the Resource Room from MESC for Examination and Teaching purposes. SAS also facilitated the Savaii Centre Expo 2017 also the unit was involved in the completion of the Certificate in Law (Civil) for the members of the Parliament of Samoa. In 2017 which was funded by the UNDP. It was also in 2017 when the first batch of students taking Foundation courses (PACTAFE) graduated. The unit also handled scholarship programs. In 2017, the government of New Zealand have extended their scholarship offers to USP Foundation students beginning 2018. This continuing partnership with the New Zealand government showed the quality of USP courses and it’s also validated the accreditation level of USP.

SAS is operated by four (4) staff headed by the Coordinator Ms. Seulgee Samuelu with Ms. Sia Seuoti assigned as the Student Data Officer, Ms. Roberta Pesamino as the Student Officer for Administration and Ms. Paula Ioane in the Front Desk.
THE FINANCE MATTERS

To be able to operate efficiently, USP must have a strong support from its Finance section. This section is run by eight (8) staff headed by the Accountant, Desmond Tauati. They are responsible for assisting all students, staff and stakeholders regarding all financial matters. The 2017, they have achieved majority of their set targets and goals for the year such as timely submission of month end report, timely response to queries from main finance office in Laucala campus, spending within set budget and minimize complaints from students and staff etc. In terms of spending, from January to November 78% of the total budget has been utilized.

The section also handled matters on accommodation, lease of the kitchen facilities and the continuing education program which consists of CISCO and High School evening class. The record showed a surplus. As a result of the improvement of the IT network connection in the whole campus, daily posting and month end report has been faster.

MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY FIRST IN ALAFUA CAMPUS

One of the best attribute of the USP Alafua campus is the sense of security everyone feels the moment you enter the campus. This is made possible by the friendly and dependable security guards. Security section consist of eight security officers include the Chief Security Officer, Mr. Vae-savali Falaniko however, in 2017 two positions remained vacant. Part of their job is to conduct a regular surveillance around the campus to protect all the properties such as computer labs, staff office, library, staff and students living on campus and many more especially during night time when everyone is away and asleep.

On the other hand, the Maintenance section, kept all the university properties functioning and as much as possible in good condition even though the facilities are relatively old. Their role includes maintenance and repair of students’ residential accommodation, staff housing and Campus offices and facilities. In 2017, the section consisted of the Maintenance Supervisor, Mr. Eddie Tolovae and five skilled staff except for the position of Leading Hand Electrician and Plumber which remains vacant. To date, the management through the HR are actively looking for a suitable candidates for the vacant positions.

THE HEART OF THE ALAFUA CAMPUS

Charles William Eliot once said that “The Library is the heart of the University”, in 2017 USP Alafua Campus was very healthy indeed with an operational budget of FJD 71, 311.24. The budget was allocated for the acquisition of monographs worth FJD 27, 641 and for the database subscription worth FJD 26, 700 as of December 2017 both allocations were fully committed. A total of 85 agriculture related titles were acquired. The Regional Libraries (Laucala) provided 98 titles to Alafua Library this year comprising of course texts, in support of DFL courses, and general reading. While subscriptions were continued for the local newspapers and three agricultural online databases - The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL), CAB Full Text, and ProQuest Agricultural Journals.

Alafua Library continues to be supported by Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), and other organisations who donate their publications free of charge. From January to December, a total of 3,642 book loans was recorded this implied an active involvement and visit of students to the Library which is also reflected in the total number of visitors which was 60, 271 in 2017 alone. There were two Information Research Skills workshop conducted for students in AG134 and Postgraduate students and the rest were able to do a one on one mini tutorials on information searching and referencing. In July of 2017, the Library received five (5) laptops from ITS for student’s use and in October, the Library got a new modem to access internet via an external internet service provider during times when USP network is down or slow. Alafua Library databases page was updated to reflect the changes in the database URLs.
ALAFUA CAMPUS, A HOME AWAY FROM HOME!

In our efforts to make the students’ life in the campus not only academically fruitful and interesting but also comfortable and feels like home, the Student Welfare Office (SWO) organized activities to cater for the needs of the students from accommodation, health, transportation among others. The office facilitated the Family Fun Day on October 21, 2017 in the campus to bring together the staff, students and their family in a fun-filled one-day event. The activities include face and hand painting, coloring, twister corner, water balloon games, water slides and bouncy castles. In cooperation with Rotary Club of Apia, the SWO distributed several books from the Rotary booth.

On that day, voluntarisms among USP students were evident. A number of Rotary Scholars, Foundation and Preliminary students devoted their time to assist SWO with setting up, cleaning, food preparation and serving. In the spirit of team work and working collaboratively, they gave their time to assist in whatever capacity was needed and due to their service above self, no extra staff was needed on the day.

Another group helped the Family Fun Day 2017 was the Project Abroad Volunteers together with Mr. and Mrs. Bruce and Julie Steenson. Julie joined the USP Alafua team as a volunteer to assist Pacific TAFE students with Exam preparations. The PAV Director of Samoa Temukisa Godinet also joined her team and took charge of the face and hand painting, twister and the coloring stations.
FIRST SYMPOSIUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR TROPICAL ROOT CROPS—PACIFIC BRANCH (ISTRC-PB)

Theme: “Improving Root and Tuber Crops in the South Pacific Region”
First Announcement 23rd January, 2018

Invitation: The President of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops – Pacific Branch (ISTRC-PB), Associate Professor Mohammed Umar and Professor Satish Chandra, Councillor South Pacific, ISTRC invite members of the ISTRC-PB and other interested persons to participate in this Symposium.

Dates for the Symposium: The Symposium will be held over 3.5 days starting at 8:30am on Tuesday 24th April and finishing at midday on Friday 27th April, 2018.

Registration: To participate in this Symposium you must register with the Secretariat of the ISTRC-PB by sending an email to Dr Nandakumar Desai (nandakumar.desai@usp.ac.fj) and Ms Senira Su’a (sua.su@samoa.usp.ac.fj). The Registration fee will be FJ$400 which will cover the partial cost of the venue, Symposium bag, 4 lunches, 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: Several key themes in root and tuber crops in the South Pacific Island Countries will be covered in the Symposium including aspects of: agronomy, production, plant protection, value chains, food technology, new technologies, marketing, export, economics and future challenges. Papers for oral presentation and poster presentation will be organised under appropriate headings after the Registration process is complete.

Keynote Speakers: Several internationally recognised and highly skilled root and tuber crops scientists will give keynote addresses on their current work and future challenges.

Venue: The venue for the Symposium will be the Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi, Fiji. This Hotel is about 3 km from the Nadi International Airport. It is recommended that the participants stay at this Hotel to reduce logistical costs.

Organisation: The Symposium will be organised by the Secretariat of ISTRC-PB, located at the School of Agriculture and Food Technology, at the University of the South Pacific (USP), Alafua, Samoa.

Paying Your Own Cost: Participants are encouraged to seek funding from their own employers/institutions to support their attendance at the Symposium and pay their own costs such as airfares, airport transfers, accommodation, additional meals, etc. Some partial assistance will be provided in special cases to attend the Symposium but this will be very limited and will be determined by the Secretariat of the ISTRC-PB.

Proceedings: Proceedings of the Symposium will be published electronically on the University of the South Pacific (USP) website. No hard copy will be produced. The Chief Editor of the Proceedings will be a participant at the Symposium and will be available to assist in the compilation of the Proceedings. The Proceedings can therefore be regarded as a published work by the authors.

Guidelines for the Presentation Paper and Poster: Presenters of oral Papers and Posters will need to meet strict guidelines on quality and length. The Chief Editor will reject any Paper or Poster, which in his opinion, does not meet the following guidelines:

Presentation Paper
1. Font type: Calibri
2. Font size: 11
3. After the heading of the Paper and Poster include the name of the main author and additional authors up to a maximum of 3
4. Abstract limit of 100 words maximum
5. At the end of the Abstract Include maximum of 5 keywords or groups of keywords that describe your Paper or Poster
6. The Paper should have suitable headings such as: Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusions, References
7. Limit the Paper to 6 pages maximum, including any tables, graphs, photos, key references, etc.
8. After your Paper presentation make any necessary amendments to your Paper based on any discussion/comment during the presentation and then immediately after provide a copy on an USB to the Chief Editor. The USB will be returned to you after the Chief Editor has loaded your paper material on to his computer.
9. For the oral presentation of your paper use PowerPoint. PowerPoint version will not be published in the Proceedings – only your written Paper will be published
10. For most Presentation Paper you will have 20 minutes for presentation and have another 10 minutes for discussion/comment from the audience
11. Invited international keynote speakers will have 30 minutes for presentation and 15 minutes for discussion/comment
12. Each session will have a chairperson who will introduce the presenter and assist in the discussion/comment

Poster
1. Use a large enough Calibri font size so that the reader can see your information from a distance of 1.2 metres
2. Limit the size of the Poster to 80cm X 80cm
3. Include information that is immediately informative to the reader such as: Research Outline, Results, Discussion, and Conclusions. Avoid long descriptions
4. Use colour to highlight key headings/points
5. At the Poster presentation time you must be present to discuss your Poster with the interested participants

Best Paper/Poster Awards for South Pacific Participants: To encourage young tropical root crop workers and other participants 3 awards will be made by the ISTRC-PB Secretariat at the Closing Ceremony of the Symposium. This will include a certificate and a very small amount of money.