December marks the end and the beginning of a year. Another year of camaraderie, achievements and service to the region. As we spend this holiday season with our friends and family, let us take this season to reflect on the things that we have achieved and things that we hoped to achieve but failed to do so. And be it a motivation for the challenging and exciting year to come.

Let us be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas, which is to love, to give and to be kind to one and all. The year 2018 has been a great year for the University of the South Pacific. We just celebrated our 50th Anniversary and working towards the next level of heights.

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the unending support of our partners, funding agencies and other stakeholders in building the Pacific Region through quality education. Also to the hardworking staff of Alafua campus, who were able to provide and deliver quality services to all types of clientele of the university.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!

- Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar
Campus Director/HOS of SAFT
A commencement exercise marks a bountiful harvest to USP Alafua. The ceremony started with the parade of colorful academic gowns worn by the learned Academicians and the 95 USP students who received their diplomas, certificates and degrees during the USP Alafua Campus Graduation on the 7th of December 2018 at the Maota o Tupulaga, Sogi. Of the 95, forty-eight are from the Faculty of Business and Economics, 24 are from the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education, 11 are from the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment, and 12 are from the Pacific Technical and Further Education (PACTAFE). The momentous event was attended by the USP Official headed by the Chancellor and the President of the Republic of Kiribati, H.E. Mr. Taneti Maamau and the Vice-Chancellor & President Prof. Rajesh Chandra, Government Officials headed by the Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata’aafa, the Pro Chancellor Mr. Winston Thompson, friends and families of the graduates. Mr. Winston Thompsom, USP Pro-Chancellor, officially welcomed the guests, visitors and the graduates and Prof. Rajesh Chandra, Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, delivered his final University report as he will be retiring this year. (cont. in page 2.)
USP Alafua Campus Graduation of 2018

cont.... During the ceremony, Prof. Chandra was given a very moving and thoughtful gesture of appreciation through a farewell song led by the EFKS Vini Fou Choir. Two graduates were awarded the Telefoli Retzlaff Memorial Prize for their exemplary performance as student namely Ms. Fuamata Fuatino Sialaoa as the Top Samoan Law Student and Ms. Priya Pritika Lal from Fiji as the Top Animal Husbandry Student. (LTU)
Honoring a Lifetime Commitment to Education

This year the University of South Pacific is awarding an honorary degree to four distinguished individuals. One of these four is Samoa’s very own Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata’afa. Her Excellency Mata’afa is a former USP Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council. She is a Samoan high chief, born in Samoa and began her education in Samoa. She is one of the longest serving Members of the Parliament and the first female member of the Cabinet. She served as Minister in various ministries included the Ministry of Education (1991-2006), Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (2006-2011), Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration, and Film Censorship and Electoral Commission (2016-2021). She is an advocate for women’s development especially in the area of women in politics and women’s equality. With her extensive achievements as public servant championing women, education and environment, as Mr. Thompson put it, “it is only fitting to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of USP by honoring remarkable individuals who have contributed significantly to the development of the Education sector of the South Pacific”, Her Excellency Mata’afa was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.

The awarding was held during the USP Alafua Campus graduation. It was a celebration like no other. After the presentation of the honorary degree, now Dr. Fiame Naomi Mata’afa, gave her very inspiring speech and right after the choir sang “Vii o Lotofaga” wherein Dr. Mata’afa gracefully danced and joined by other Samoans in the audience including USP Staff and Officials. (LTU)
2018 School of Agriculture and Food Technology Harvest

The 20 graduates of the Bachelor of Agriculture and 15 students who received their diploma in Agriculture have marched, proud and tall, in their light tapa brown academic gowns distinct to USP graduates during the Alafua Campus graduation ceremony. The School of Agriculture and Food Technology this year reap the fruits of their labor and dedication. Particularly the 20 graduates who are from the different countries in the South Pacific. This year’s harvest was dominated by the students from Solomon Islands with 10 graduates in total, 6 from Samoa, 2 from Tonga, 1 from Fiji and 1 from Tuvalu. Ms. Priya Pritika Lal received the Telefoni Retzlaff Memorial Prize for Top Animal Husbandry student. In attendance to witness her achievement was her family from Fiji. During the ceremony, Ms. Evangeline Hanamoa Potifara delivered the Graduation Address in behalf of the graduating students. In her speech, she offered a heartfelt accolade to God, her family and friends, classmates and Professors who have unceasingly help her go through the university life. She reminisced some of the hard times she experienced with her classmates which apparently in the end they have able to survive as well as the good times that made student life in USP more bearable and memorable. And as one chapter ended, another chapter will begin as the 15 students who received their diploma in Agriculture will continue their quest for that Bachelor’s degree and hopefully next harvest session they will wear again the light tapa brown academic gown with the hood and the cap. While, SAFT is also hopeful that few if not all of the 20 graduates will pursue postgraduate diploma starting Semester 1, 2019. (LTU)
On the 5th of December 2018, the staff of Alafua campus welcome the USP Official from Laucala Campus headed by Prof. Rajesh Chandra and His Excellency, Mr. Taneti Maamau, USP Chancellor and the President of the Republic of Kiribati in a sumptuous dinner prepared by the I and J Staff of Alafua. The dinner was a bittersweet occasion as the staff of Alafua Campus bade goodbye to their beloved USP Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Rajesh Chandra. Prof. Chandra will be retiring at the end of this month after a decade of being the VC and President of USP. The HOS and CD Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar gave a farewell speech on behalf of the campus highlighting Prof. Chandra’s achievements as VC & President for the past 10 years. Ms. Josie Fuimaono, the President of the association of I & J Staff of Alafua, extended her thanks on behalf of the USP Alafua community for his relentless support to the welfare of all the staff. The campus gave Prof. Chandra a painting of his imagine as a token of gratitude for the 10 years of serving USP.

The dinner was filled will chats, foods and dances, wherein by the way Prof. Chandra danced for the second time this year. (LTU)
After a very successful graduation ceremony, the Pro-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor & President organized a dinner at the Taumeasina Island Resort to honor the USP Chancellor and the President of the Republic of Kiribati, H.E. Taneti Maamau. The dinner was a gathering of USP Official including USP VC and President Prof. Chandra, USP VC and President Designate Prof. Pal Ahluwalia, Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council Mr. Winston Thompson, VP for Regional Campuses, Property and Facilities, Dr. Giulio Masasso Tu’ikolongahau Paunga, Alafua Campus Director/HOS-SAFT/IRETA Director Assoc. Prof. Umar, Academic and I & J Staff, and guests. The invited guests were from the different agencies and organizations in Samoa namely Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataafa (Deputy Prime Minister and Min. Of Natural Resources & Environment), Ms. Eriko Hibi (FAO Sub-Regional Rep. for the Pacific), Ms. Nisha (Sub-Regional Representative Coordinator, UNESCO), H.E. Amanda Jewell (Acting Australia High Commissioner), Afioga Taefu Lemi (Member of Parliament - Associate Minister of MNRE), Susuga Cherie Moana Robinson Moors (Country Director - APTC), and Mulitalo Esekia Solofa (Former VC of USP). It is indeed a very rare and special event to have the three Vice-Chancellors, the past, the present and the future VC in one place. Prof. Pal Ahluwalia gave a short message wherein he acknowledged the presence of His Excellency Taneti Maamau, pointing out that despite his busy schedule he made time for USP Alafua. His Excellency will be heading to Europe to attend the Climate Change meeting the next day. (LTU)
Despite the very hectic schedule, the staff has managed to arrange for a meeting with the USP Officials from Laucala in the afternoon of the 7th of December after the graduation ceremony at C3 and C4. The meeting was attended by VC and President Prof. Chandra, VC and President Designate Prof. Ahluwalia, Pro-Chancellor Mr. Winston Thompson, VP for Regional Campuses, Property and Facilities Dr. Paunga, Campus Director/ HOS-SAFT/IRETA Director Assoc. Prof. Umar, Academic and I & J Staff. It was the first time Prof. Ahluwalia talked to the USP Alafua community. He mentioned the pressure on his shoulder now as Prof. Chandra will leave the USP in an excellent state and as expected he will have to bring the USP to the next level. He said “as I take the reign next year, I am expecting for you to run not walk but run with me”.

After the meeting the USP Officials were joined by the Chancellor and President of the Republic of Kiribati, H.E. Taneti Maamau in visiting the different sections of Alafua Campus such as the Pest Museum, Tissue Culture, Food Technology Laboratory, and IRETA Crops and Animal Farms. During their visit, plans for further improvements and solutions to the problems encountered were discussed.
I&J Staff Received the Best Gift this Holiday Session

After a year of negotiations, the I & J Staff Association headed by their President Ms. Josie Fuimaono has sealed the deal. On the 7th of December 2018, Prof. Chandra, Ms. Fuimaono and Ms. Seiuli signed the new agreement that will result in salary increase for I & J Staff and a back pay. The event was witnessed by VC and President Designate Prof. Ahluwalia, Pro-Chancellor Mr. Winston Thompson, VP for Regional Campuses, Property and Facilities Dr. Paunga, Campus Director/HOS-SAFT/IRETA Director Assoc. Prof. Umar, Academic and I & J Staff. Six months ago during his visit for the 50th Anniversary celebration, Prof. Chandra promised the staff that he will do his best to come up with a reasonable agreement before his term as VC ends by the end of the year. In his speech, he reaffirmed his belief that a good organization must value its employees and encouraged everyone to support the incoming VC and President the way everyone had supported him for the past 10 years.

Campus Directors Meeting in Suva

To set the tone for the next school year, Campus Directors of the different campuses of USP headed by the VP for Regional Campuses, Property and Facilities Dr. Puanga met in Suva on the 11th to 14th of December. In attendance was the Acting Campus Director of Alafua, Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar who presented the work-plan for Alafua Campus, School of Agriculture and Food Technology and IRETA. Some of the highlights of his presentation were the continued offering of CISCO, establishing a testing center for CISCO, commercialization of three food products namely Cassava Chips, Breadfruit Flour and Green Tea, expansion of IRETA farms and renovation of IRETA Lodge and Fale. A night before the said meeting, the campus directors and Dr. Paunga were joined by the VC and President Designate Prof. Ahluwalia for a dinner.
SMSMCL Community Service

A project supported by the UNDP through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) known as Strengthening Multi Sectoral Management of Critical Landscape in Samoa or the SMSMCL aims to assist the Government of Samoa achieve the long-term goal which is to “protect and sustainably managed the productive landscape of Samoa to mitigate land degradation and to increase soil carbon sequestration so as to contribute to poverty alleviation and mitigation and adaptation to climate change impacts”. Since its conception in 2013, the project has actively implemented activities in Upolu, Savaii, Manono and Apolima engaging communities and farmers in various undertakings to achieve the project’s objectives. Just recently, the SMSMCL team accomplished four major activities before 2018 ends. On the 16th of November 2018 in partnership with the Avele College, the team planted native trees to restore part of the College grounds which was destroyed by the cyclone Gita. Another activity was in partnership with the ‘taulele’a of Gagaifo Lefaga which aimed to restore the degraded lands that had been taken over by invasive species. On the 37th of November 2018, together with Gagaifo Community they removed the invasive plants and restore their native forest by planting 500 seedlings from the MNRE National Parks and Reserves. Also in Aufaga community on the 28th of November 2018, the team joined the community in planting trees along the riverbanks as part of their ecological restoration activity in the Aufaga Sustainable Land Management Plan. And in Alafua uta riverside on the 3rd of December 2018, trees were planted. This effort aims to stop soil erosion that constantly caused inconvenience to the good people of Alafua uta particularly during heavy rains and flooding which always result to road closure. (Photos from SMSMCL FB Page)
Protecting the natural fauna and flora of Samoa is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The continuous threat brought about by invasive species to the ecosystems, habitat and species in the island country has been the focus of the National Stakeholders Consultation on the status of the National Invasive and Action Plan of 2008-2011 held on the 2nd of November 2018 at Hotel Millennia, Sogi. The University of the South Pacific was represented by Dr. Leslie T. Ubaub, an Entomologist. Other participants were from FAO, SPREP, MAF, UNDP, Private Sectors and MNRE. During the consultation, the panel reviewed the 2008-2011 Action Plan which aimed to address the thematic area of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, Theme 6-Biosecurity. MNRE presented the updates of its efforts to achieve the goals of NISAP while each of the panel commented and gave recommendations on how to strengthen the already in placed action plan. The highlights of the consultation were the renewed commitment of each stakeholders in protecting and supporting the NISAP and the input each stakeholder had contributed to update and improve the implementation of NISAP. (LTU)
The USPSA is the official students governing body in the University of the South Pacific. This year the association held its annual awarding ceremony to deserving students in the field of sports, social, cultural and governance, and the handover ceremony to the newly elected USPSA officers who will continue the leadership in the next school year. The program was attended by the Campus Director and Head of School, Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar, Academic Staff, students and invited guest. In his speech, Assoc. Prof. Umar emphasized the importance of education and agriculture in the Pacific Region and the contribution of the students in achieving the university’s goal. He further encouraged the students to study well and make their family proud. After the formalities of the program, the attendees enjoyed the food served courtesy of the association then followed by dancing and singing, indeed this was the best way to end the 2018 academic year.
Ms. Priya is from Baulevu, Nausori in Fiji. She dedicated her success to her family and acknowledged the role of her parents in all her achievements which are basically the evidence of their sacrifices. She learns from them that diligence and hard work is always the key to the path of success. When she was asked on her motivation, she said “I could do all things through Christ who strengthened me. I owe it all to God, only he did what no man could do. Also, as an undergraduate I was determined not to underutilize any potentials in me. Although this feat wasn’t at all in the picture, I stayed focused, hence didn’t indulge in anything that could alter my personality negatively. I had and still have challenging friends who didn’t encourage me in inactiveness or dullness. Hence, I ceased every moment and ensured I was productive. Friends in boarding schools make life easier and cheerful. My family were the most supportive all the way financially, emotionally, mentally, spiritually and in all ramifications. I couldn’t have gone far in life without these ones. Lastly, I was persistent and consistent. Times when I fell, I kept pushing forward forgetting the past. Especially when I was in a foreign country and life in hostel wasn’t easy but I couldn’t allow any negativity set me back.”. She is planning to further her education by pursuing Master’s degree abroad or in USP Alafua Campus. She would like to also acknowledge TELS for the scholarship, the Ministry of Agriculture in Fiji, workmates in the Ministry and USP Alafua Faculty and Staff for all the help and making this part of her journey a success and memorable.
USP CISCO Academy Awarding of Certificates

On the 9th of November 2018, USP Staff, guests and CISCO Students gathered in C3/C4 Room to witness the awarding of CISCO-CCNA2 and CCNA3 Certificates to dedicated students. The Head of School of SAFT/Campus Director/IRETA Director, Assoc. Prof. Mohammed Umar gave the welcome and keynote address. He expressed his congratulations to the students and their parents for their success and hard work. According to him, in every program like this, it is also a proud moment to USP Alafua to see students successfully complete the course. He also recognized the efforts of IT Staff in USP Alafua headed by the IT Manager, Lemamea Sia Matalavea. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of the application of the knowledge the students have acquired in improving the life of many and encouraged the students to be creative in inventions, discoveries and innovations. And let this invention be a “Samoa First”.

![Image of students and staff at the award ceremony]
SAS Announcement!!!

THINK QUALITY EDUCATION – THINK USP
ENROL NOW for 2019

1. NEW APPLICANTS TO USP
   Persons who have never studied at USP and wish to undertake studies in Semester I 2019 are invited to apply online for admission through www.usp.ac.fj/apply OR complete an Admission Form from www.usp.ac.fj/forms and submit with the required documents to the SAS Office – Alafia Campus or Savaii Centre, Salelologa.

   The List of Programmes that you may apply for are available at www.usp.ac.fj/programs

   - Student Administrative Services, Alafia Campus
     - Monday to Thursday 8:00am - 4:30pm and Friday 8.00am - 4:00pm
   - OR the Savaii Centre for the Savaii based students.

   **APPLICATION CLOSING DATE:** 30th January 2019

2. STUDENTS WHO WISH TO RESUME STUDIES
   (a) Students last registered at USP in or after Semester II 2013 in an undergraduate programme or postgraduate programme by coursework and wish to resume studies in the same programme are required to send an expression of interest through www.usp.ac.fj/resume.

   (b) Students will need to reapply for admission online at www.usp.ac.fj/apply if they:
       - were last registered prior to the terms stated in 2 above or
       - wish to apply for admission in a new and/or higher undergraduate or postgraduate programme by coursework.

   **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**
   
   Telephone 21671 Ext 200/231/233/234/236 or 20874 - ALAFUA CAMPUS
   OR 51776 - SAVAII Centre, Salelologa Public Library
   **During the University Break – 24 Dec 2018 – 3 January, 2019** – Applications can be uplifted from MAIN GATE – Alafia Campus + Security @ Savaii Centre
   OR email: enquiries@samoa.usp.ac.fj
The Journal of the South Pacific Agriculture (JOSPA) is a peer reviewed, online, open accessed Agricultural Journal which publishes research articles, critical reviews, general papers and short communications in tropical and sub-tropical agriculture. It has highly qualified editors and a transparent peer review system which normally takes about 6 to 8 weeks from submission of manuscript to the decision with reviewers’ comments. We are inviting contributions relevant to agriculture in the tropics and sub-tropics for JOSPA’s Volume 20.

Now, JOSPA receives and reviews article by using online system. Please first register in our journal website (http://www.journalofsouthpacificagriculture.com/) and create your user id and password before submission of your manuscript. Then submit your article through online system. Now, manuscript is being published soon after acceptance as an online early version that later organized in volume. Guide for authors are provided on our website. If you have any confusion and/or need additional information, please contact our editor.

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