USP Open Day 2010 Friday 24 September

Message from Professor Rajesh Chandra-Vice-Chancellor and President,
University of the South Pacific

Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, Honourable Netani Sukanaivalu and
Mrs. Sukanaivalu

Minister for Local Government, Urban Development and Housing, Honourable
Colonel Samuela Saumatu and Mrs. Alisi Saumatu

Representatives of Governments

Your Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Deputy Chair of USP Council, Mr. Ikbal Jannif

Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Deans, & the Director of Finance

Campus Directors and guests at regional campuses

President and Officials of Staff and Students Associations

USP Staff and Students

Prospective Students

Parents and Guardians

Secondary School Teachers

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen
I wish to extend to you all a very warm welcome to the University of the South Pacific. The USP Open Day 2010 showcases the University’s highly respected and innovative courses and programmes, its reputable and effective teaching staff, and its unrivaled facilities, including the state-of-the-art Japan-Pacific ICT Centre, to prospective students, their teachers and family members.

Open Day 2010 marks the start of the enrolments for 2011, and is taking place simultaneously at most other USP regional campuses. This event will see thousands of prospective students being provided with the information they need to make informed choices about their university studies and very importantly, their future.

This year’s Open Day theme—“USP: Preparing you for Lifelong Success”— captures the very essence and worth of USP education. USP plays an important role in the South Pacific as the premier provider of higher education and as the place where many of the region’s future leaders spend their formative years gaining both intellectual exposure and leadership expertise. We are very proud of the fact that USP equips its students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to succeed in whichever field they choose to make their careers. Due to the exposure, opportunities, and high-quality teaching afforded to USP students,
USP students and graduates are, as the theme of Open Day states, truly prepared for lifelong success.

Over the last 42 years, USP has produced over 30,000 graduates, many of whom have gone on to make extremely significant contributions in their countries, regionally and internationally.

I will now speak about the specific advantages that USP students enjoy. This will give you a taste of what you will feel and observe today- that USP is an internationalized university with a strong Pacific character that focuses on quality, offers excellent ICT and other facilities, remains student-centered, and has safe, healthy, and exciting campuses.

**USP is a unique university**, being one of only two functioning regional universities in the world. As a regional University, it plays an important role in exposing its students to many different cultures and countries. With students and staff from the twelve countries of the region, nearly 300 international students at Laucala Campus this year, and staff from all over the world, USP is a vibrant and exciting place to study. Of course, as the South Pacific’s university, we aim to develop in all students a deep appreciation and understanding of all things Pacific.
International students are attracted by our “Pacific” character and come here to learn about this unique region. As USP is where most of the region’s leaders are educated, the Pacific consciousness that develops here on campus is extremely important to ensuring the future cohesion and integration of the South Pacific region.

Rather than belonging to any one country, USP belongs to twelve member countries in the South Pacific. The “Pacific” character of the university will take on increasing importance, and changes to the buildings and natural environment at Laucala Campus over the next several years will clearly reflect the arts, culture, and traditions of the Pacific. Arts and culture are already an important part of life at USP, and many student performances and productions promote cultural sensitivity and support the development of artistic talent. The Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture, and Pacific Studies is widely recognized as an important regional resource.

In addition to being shaped by its “Pacific” character, the University is shaped by its commitment to quality and continuous improvement. Quality is a core value of USP, and its degrees are internationally recognized. Australian Universities Quality Agency provides quality assurance for USP. Recently, AUQA has
provided a very positive report on the University’s progress and quality. This year, we will have 14 External Advisors reporting on the quality of programmes.

In addition to reports from AUQA and External Advisors, the University has started a programme of international accreditation of its professional programmes. This has already resulted in 2 accreditations this year. Over 100 academic agreements with institutions worldwide are also testament to USP’s international reputation for quality, and offer students many opportunities to travel abroad and study in a different environment. Those agreements also mean that world class professors and researchers visit and collaborate with USP—and students benefit from them.

Academic courses at the University are challenging and compare well with the courses offered internationally. USP ensures that its instructors, whilst being experts in their field, are also specially trained to teach on a tertiary level. So they are up-to-date on the latest learning strategies, including the use of ICT to make learning resources more accessible and the learning process more interactive. I would like to emphasize that all USP staff have student success as their primary focus. The University offers a whole range of support to students, ranging from academic monitoring and mentoring to advice on how to write good reports, how
to make presentations, and how to study effectively. The University has many
strategies and tools that will help ensure academic success.

In addition to being recognized for their high quality, the academic programs at
USP are also relevant to the needs of the region and its future workforce. They are
also delivered flexibly, which means, in practical terms, that students can work
part-time and study or conduct research anywhere in the region whilst using USP’s
satellite network to attend class virtually. This is possible because of the
University’s strong commitment to the use of ICTs for education.

In support of its focus on serving the Pacific with the best quality education, the
University has positioned itself as a global leader in the use of ICTs for education,
and is dedicated to assisting the region in this area. The ICT facilities and the
internet bandwidth at USP are the envy of other education institutions in the
region. USPNet, which is our own satellite network, has been greatly improved,
which means that internet access is much faster and highly reliable. Many of our
courses are available online, and we are in the process of developing a large
number of programs that will be offered fully online. This means that students can
study at their convenience and still get the high-quality education for which USP is
known.
The recently completed Japan-Pacific ICT Centre has not only dramatically changed the look of the Laucala Campus, but has also dramatically increased the number of PCs available to students, and over time that will have a significant impact on the ICT “fluency” of all students. Computing science students are really thriving with the laboratories, and discussions with industry about partnerships to utilize the incubators will result in very exciting opportunities for students.

As I have mentioned, USP is student-centered, and has safe, healthy, and exciting campuses. For students who are able to study at one of USP’s fourteen campuses, an abundance of recreational activities and student support is on offer. A program of infrastructure improvements to the regional campuses is underway, and has already resulted in a more pleasant and convenient environment for students that is more environmentally sustainable. At Laucala, which over the next few years, will be developed into a botanical garden-type setting, many students choose to live on-campus. Recently the facilities in the hostels have markedly improved; they are a fun place to live and their full occupancy rate indicates that students find them safe, affordable, and convenient. The demand to live on campus is so great that a new student hostel is presently being constructed. USP is committed to building more international-standard student accommodation in the near future.
Campus Life organizes many sports events, and this brings students and staff from different academic areas together for some healthy competition. At Laucala, the large swimming pool, the Fitness Centre which is regarded as the best in the Pacific, and well-maintained playing fields offer students many opportunities for fun and the chance to learn new things. The learning and living atmosphere at USP gives students the space to explore their identities and the issues that are important to them.

USP is, for the reasons I’ve just outlined, the best choice for higher education in the Pacific. This is not just based on the advantages that USP students have during the course of their studies, but also the fact that USP offers its graduates excellent connections in the Pacific and worldwide. After all, for most people, university is not a destination, but rather a stepping stone. No other university connects you with so many of the most influential people around the Pacific. USP students can regard their classmates with the confidence that they are the future leaders of the Pacific. USP alumni hold prominent positions in all walks of life, and it is not unusual to hear gatherings of CEOs and Ambassadors from around the region reminiscing about their days at USP. USP offers opportunities, it offers support, and it offers you the best possible future.
This exposure to ICT, different cultures, and leadership opportunities, combined with a high-quality international standard higher education, equips USP students well for lifelong success. To prospective students, I am sure that today you will learn more about the opportunities that are waiting for you at USP. Over the next few years, you will, as students and graduates of USP, come to appreciate that lifelong success does not necessarily come with a degree certificate- although it certainly helps- but that success is all about your approach to knowledge and life. Keep questioning, keep searching, and keep trying to improve in whatever you do. These are the values that you will learn at USP, and that is how you need to think in order to be successful.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you an enjoyable day exploring USP. On behalf of all the staff and students of the University, I thank you for making the effort to attend this event, and I hope that you will feel free to ask any questions. A full program of information sessions and tours has been organized so that you will get a feel for the living and learning environment of the University. I hope that you enjoy this day of celebration and make USP your place of higher education. I forward to many of you joining the University community in 2011 and I assure you that USP will prepare you for lifelong success.
Vinaka Vakalevu

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Thank you