SPEECH FOR THE GRADUATION CEREMONY AT
THE LAUCALA CAMPUS, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE
SOUTH PACIFIC,
10TH SEPTEMBER 2010
Professor Rajesh Chandra
Vice-Chancellor and President

1. Greetings and Welcome

The Head of State of The Independent State of Samoa and Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, His Highness Tui Atua, Tupua Tamasese Efī; and Her Highness Filifilia Tamasese, Ministers of the Government of Fiji; the Deputy Chair of USP Council, Mr. Ikbal Jannif; Your Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Heads of International and Regional Organizations; Permanent Secretaries and Senior Government Officials; Members of USP Council and Senate; distinguished invited guests; USP alumni, staff, graduands; parents; ladies and gentlemen.
Ni Sa Bula, Namaste and good morning. It is a pleasure to welcome you to this graduation ceremony and to address you on this special occasion. I thank all of you for gracing this occasion.

2. **Installation of the 17th Chancellor**

Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we have just witnessed a dignified installation of the 17th Chancellor of the University. The Chancellor is the titular head of the University, who confers the qualifications of the University. We are privileged to have the Head of State of the Independent State of Samoa, His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi as our Chancellor. Mr. Chancellor, we welcome you warmly to the USP family, and we look forward to working with you to advance the work of the University. Your appointment and installation today amply demonstrate the true regional character of this University and its importance to all its Member Countries, large and small.
3. Graduation and Congratulations

I offer my heartiest congratulations to our graduands. The years of hard work and toil are today formally recognized and rewarded. Today’s graduation ceremony is also an opportunity for those who have encouraged and helped you along the way to share your success.

As Colin Powell the former Secretary of state in USA Government aptly said:

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.”

He went on to say that:

“A dream doesn’t become reality through magic: it takes sweat, determination and hard work.”

I am sure you have all gone through this road to your success today, but let me remind you that this is not the end of the road. Success is a journey, not a destination. Receiving your degrees today does not signal an end but rather the beginning of a long journey. You embark on this journey knowing that USP has prepared you well, and that your qualifications are internationally recognized.
Today we have over 800 students who will receive degrees, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and some will receive Certificates and Diplomas. It is pleasing to note that over twenty seven percent of today’s graduates are at the Postgraduate level, which includes seventy-six masters’ degrees and four (4) PhDs including one, posthumous. Under the University’s current Strategic Plan 2010-2012, one of the University’s objectives is to increase the number of higher degree completions, not only through coursework-based Masters but more significantly through thesis-based Masters and PhDs. I am therefore particularly encouraged by the award of the PhDs this morning. I offer my congratulations to the PhD recipients and urge those receiving Masters today to consider proceeding to doctoral studies.

Graduands, as you walk across the stage and receive your award, you start at that end as a student, and leave this end as an alumnus. I invite you to take a continuing interest in your University
and stay connected as we all join hands to contribute to the development of our countries and the Pacific region we call home. Make the University proud by being hard-working, innovative and committed. Be ethical in your future work and lead a life of meaning and impact – and be willing to make a difference. These should be the inspiring elements of the USP brand that you become ambassadors of.

4. USP Achievements

At this stage, I want to briefly share with you some of the more important recent developments at USP. The financial position of the University remains good and continues to perform as per budget.

There is increasing donor confidence in the work of the University and a substantial increase in donor funding. This strong support of our many development partners enables the staff and students of USP to pursue world-class learning, innovative teaching
and research in priority areas, such as climate change, adaptation and renewable energy.

Of course, as you all know, with increased contributions come heightened expectations from donors and other stakeholders to deliver innovative, cost effective and sustainable solutions. The University is increasing its efforts to recruit high quality senior staff to ensure that the University produces high-quality outputs that will justify the confidence of donors. This is an ongoing challenge to the University.

Representing a very major development for the University, Phase I of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre was officially opened on 6th July 2010 jointly by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Fiji, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, and His Excellency the Ambassador of Japan to Fiji, Mr. Yutaka Yoshizawa, in the presence of ministers of Fiji Government, senior diplomats, esteemed government officials, and USP staff.
The University is greatly indebted to the Government and the people of Japan for this magnificent gift of knowledge and equipment, which is a significant contribution toward ICT development and capacity building in the Pacific. The University acknowledges the generous support from the Government of Fiji, which willingly accepted the project under Japan’s bilateral assistance to Fiji.

At this juncture I wish to acknowledge our other major donors Australia, European Union, New Zealand, South Korea, India, ROC/Taiwan, France and China. I also like to acknowledge our many sponsors.

The implementation of the Strategic Plan has been progressing well. It is imperative that momentum is not only maintained but accelerated. We have been successful in filling some of our senior positions including a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Services), Professor Susan Kelly from the United States of America. We look forward to Professor Kelly’s
work in the critically important area of learning and teaching and especially in our Strategic Total Academic review that will overhaul our programmes and academic structures and programmes.

I am also delighted that Professor Vilsoni Hereniko has joined us as the Director of Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies and the Professor in Pacific Studies. Professor Hereniko is one of our alumni and former members of staff and is an inspiration to current and future students of USP.

However there remains a great need to recruit additional high quality staff and provide more development opportunities to existing staff. The Senior Management Team is committed to ensuring high standard and quality of performance by putting in place good policies that will produce relevant and measurable outputs.

As part of its regular reviews, the Australian Quality Audit Agency (AUQAA) visited the University to provide an honest appraisal of USP’s progress on the implementation of the
recommendations and affirmations made in the 2008 Audit Report and to assess the readiness of USP for a quality audit in 2013. The report from this review was positive, and I quote briefly:

*The Reviewer was deeply impressed by the changes at USP since 2008: the improvement in staff morale; the sense of teamwork exhibited by the senior management team, the growth in postgraduate numbers, the establishment of a research culture, the commitment to quality enhancement, and the improvement in the financial situation.*

I am pleased with the very positive feedback received. We can all be proud of the achievements so far. Much remains to be done in preparation for the 2013 Audit but all efforts are targeted towards raising the quality of programmes and services. USP graduates should be salutely confident that USP quality is the same as those of universities in Australia and New Zealand and internationally.

7. **Concluding Statements**
The last twelve months have been hectic but also very rewarding and satisfying. USP remains central to the future of our member countries in a world that is already knowledge oriented a world in which higher education will play an increasingly crucial role for survival and prosperity. We are engaging increasingly with our member countries to assist them in meeting their national, regional and global challenges.

Mr. Chancellor, Hon. Ministers, Excellencies, graduands, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your patience. Once again, I congratulate all the graduates and wish you success as you take your journey in life.

God Bless.

Faafetai lava

Vinaka Vakalevu

Dhanyabaad

Thank you