Alumni Contribute to Entrepreneurial Fair

The University of the South Pacific (USP), hosted a weeklong Entrepreneurial Fair programme with the theme “Take a Step into the Known” at Laucala campus in Suva.

The weeklong Fair was organised by the University’s Campus Life - Career Centre and launched by the Fiji Development Bank, Chief Executive Officer, Mr Mark Clough.

“With our small islands economy and market size, coupled with our very competitive labour market; and limited employment opportunities, I strongly believe that entrepreneurial development is indeed a positive way to enhance economic development,” said Mr Mark Clough.

He also encouraged the audience to learn from the different group of influencers and successful entrepreneurs, as well as NGOs and government stakeholders.

The week long fair was not only for USP students and alumni, but was also opened to the general public with the aim to promote entrepreneurship to the community of Fiji.

“Students and the public at large must be taught entrepreneurial skills to make them more enterprising in creating employment rather than waiting to be employed,” says Mr Mark Clough.

The week long programme gave an opportunity for students, entrepreneurs, general public and alumni attendees to meet and interact with success industry partners from diverse backgrounds, which included local and international professionals, and Government representatives.

“They are here to share their unconventional and in some cases their unexpected insights into what it takes to launch, fund, sustain and grow a small and medium business,” says Career Counselor and Service Coordinator, and alumni Semi Bilitaki.

There were several guest speakers facilitating the week long programme, including three USP alumni, Ms Patricia Mallam, Ms Naziah Ali and Mr Beniame Bulilevuka.

Mr Beniame Bulilevuka, a representative from Cooperative College of Fiji graduated with a Postgraduate Certificate in Human Resource Management, a postgraduate diploma for General Managers and a Master of Business Administration in 2013 and 2015 respectively.

He introduced the programmes and spoke on several important topics ranging from challenges, business plan and proposal writing.

Young Entrepreneurial Council’s Vice-Chair, Ms Patricia Mallam graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Tourism Studies and Geography in 2014.

During her presentation, Ms Mallam encouraged entrepreneurs on focusing and getting to know their support networks.

While, Mai Life Magazine CEO, Editor and owner, Ms Naziah Ali graduated with Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Journalism Literature and Language in 2005. She reminded the audience that entrepreneurship does not only have a lucrative image but it also have challenges that require dedication and determination.

During her session on the final day of the event, Naziah also mentioned another exciting service her business is offering to entrepreneurs called Launch Lab. This service allows new and budding entrepreneurs to rent a space (either virtual or physical) at

Continued on Page 2
Launch Lab’s Nadi Office, and concentrate on running their business, while the service looks after sales and marketing of their business. The space also allows other entrepreneurs to meet and collaborate with each other at this co-working space.

Other speakers included: Australian inventor Mr Stuart Anderson and Mr Chris Eiphick, a business coach and mentor at Breadfruit Consulting. Mr Stuart, who is the Co-Creator of Flow Hive, a beehive invention that harvests fresh honey by simply turning on the Flow Hive tap, a process with minimal disturbance to the bees. The campaign for the invention broke several records for the Crowd Funding website - Indiegogo.

The other international speaker Mr Eiphick, a Business coach and mentor at Breadfruit Consulting, which is a consultancy, training and coaching company, which works in the region with a wide range of organisations and individuals SMEs, larger businesses, business support organisations, State Owned Enterprises, Entrepreneurs, Government Agencies, NGOs and development.

Videos from the 2019 USP Entrepreneurial Fair can be accessed from: www.usp.ac.fj/live

For more information about the Careers Centre contact Semi Bilitaki: semi.bilitaki@usp.ac.fj
We would like to congratulate one of our alumnus, Dr Shalini Lata on completing her PhD in April, 2018. She graduated with her Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science from The University of the South Pacific in Fiji in 2008. Shalini graduated with a Master of Science in environmental science degree from The University of South Pacific in 2010.

Dr Lata had written to the Alumni Unit to share her story with the Alumni Network, and we would encourage you to do the same.

From Dr Lata:

This PhD project extended climate change adaptation research in the Pacific region by understanding the physical exposure of a place and the perceptions of the people occupying that space.

Using data from recent fieldwork, this study assessed the exposure and perceptions of people living in Labasa (a coastal-deltaic rural-urban area developed on a flood plain) in northern Fiji in the South Pacific. Even though risks associated with future sea level rise (SLR) are generally recognised for coastal areas, risks specific to certain landforms, such as river deltas, are understudied.

This study provided an assessment of future risks from global SLR and storm surges under SLR in the Labasa Delta.

The inundation maps produced through the risk assessment showed that both the natural (vegetation and hydrological network) and the built (roads, communities, and infrastructure) environments in the river delta are at inundation risk from future SLR.

Despite growing behavioural and attitudinal data on climate change in developed countries, little is known about the determinants of climate behaviours in developing countries.

The second main aim of the current study was to provide the first set of representative psychological and behavioural data for the Pacific Islands region with tested hypothesised relationships.

The results also found a greater engagement with climate change amongst racial majorities (iTaukei), males, and educated people. The survey collected both demographic (age, gender, education, employment, and land tenure) and psychological (knowledge, information, risk perception, self-efficacy) data, and investigated the relationship between these variables and climate change adaptation behavioural intentions.

As hypothesised, multiple regression analyses identified affective associations, psychological proximity, flood experience, risk perceptions, and self-efficacy as determinants of pro-climate behaviours in Fiji.

The results also found a greater engagement with climate change amongst racial majorities (iTaukei), males, and educated people. The findings did not support the hypothesis that increasing objective knowledge, belief, and trust in information sources determines climate behaviours.

Although relationships existed between objective knowledge, belief, trust, and the behavioural intention variables, these came out as non-significant predictors.

Overall, these results contribute to global research on climate change adaptation. By examining two important aspects – the likely inundation in the Labasa delta because of sea level rise and the perceptions of people in the Labasa area of climate change, the project fills a significant recognised research gap on islands.

Previous climate change studies on islands have neither focused on local impacts in peripheral locations, nor looked at people’s perceptions in such vulnerable places.

The results of this research project provide a baseline of perceptions and vulnerabilities for islands that can aid in the design of future adaptation and risk communication strategies for vulnerable communities in Fiji and the wider Asia-Pacific region.

It is expected that the results will offer stakeholders evidence-based advice and important insights on how to make climate change adaptation efforts more sustainable and community-inclusive than current practice.
Alumnus reappointed as CEO

Elita To'oala

USP Alumni, Elita To'oala, has been appointed for a second term after serving for three (3) years at the Ministry of Public Enterprises, Samoa as the Chief Executive Officer. She attended Samoa College before pursuing tertiary education where she completed her undergraduate degree in business studies at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji, bachelor of commerce at the National University of Samoa (NUS) and Masters in Business studies at the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Prior to her appointment as the Chief Executive Officer, she was Assistant Chief Executive Officer (state-owned enterprises) at the Ministry of Finance. This Division was moved and created within the newly created Ministry of Public Enterprises in August 2015.

Ms To'oala is confident that the Ministry will excel by collaboration, cooperation and continued transparency, which will all strengthen the performance and accountability of public bodies and lead to quality service delivery to the public.

She credits much of the success for her previous term to the support of her staff and management team. The Ministry oversees 28 public bodies in Samoa, and for this term Ms. To'oala will continue to lead through robust legislation and by creating an enabling environment for public bodies. She said the Ministry is confident that the collaboration, cooperation and transparency will strengthen the performance and accountability of public bodies and will lead to quality service delivery.

Dream come true for Pacific TAFE alumni

Dillon Fihaki

Taking the decision to study at the University of the South Pacific, Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) proved to be a life changing experience for Dillon Fihaki.

Dillon was offered a position as a Demi-Chef at the award winning Alan Wongs Restaurant in Waikiki, Hawaii. Dillon, originally from Samoa, graduated with Diploma of Culinary Arts and Management (Level 5) from Pacific TAFE. This is a new qualification at Pacific TAFE and the first group of graduates have been offered positions as far away as France and Hawaii.

In an acknowledgment note, he thanked the entire Pacific TAFE team for making his dream come true. “I wanted to take this time to thank the entire Pacific TAFE team for making my dream come true,” he said. “I would also like to thank Chef Pasirio Kitione who helped me a lot from the beginning of my journey, teaching me as much as there is to know about culinary arts. I am here in Hawaii; I applied for a position as a commis chef at one of Hawaii’s most prestigious restaurants “Alan Wongs Restaurants” located in Waikiki. I was called in, did a “stage”, and was offered a position as a Demi-Chef to work the line in the restaurant which is a step above the position I applied for.

“Pacific TAFE opens so many doors for you,” he said. “They have internationally recognised programmes and some of the best-resourced personnel’s that guide you throughout your journey. Pacific TAFE gives firsthand experience by providing opportunities to students to participate in national event such as the Moffat National Salon Culinaire. This actually builds self-confidence, competing with some of the best industry practitioners and it changes the mindset that we are equally capable of delivering the desired results.”

Dillon who also won a bronze medal in the Class 16, open category at the Moffat National Salon Culinaire said he would recommend Pacific TAFE to all potential students.

Meanwhile, the Chief Executive Officer, USP, Pacific TAFE Hasmukh Lal congratulated Dillon on his appointment and wished him well in his future endeavors.

“This shows with international accreditation and industry driven programmes, our graduates are highly marketable nationally, regionally and internationally. Our quest to step up quality in all academic endeavors will continue so that students and employers get the best,” he said.
The University of the South Pacific (USP) accorded a traditional welcome to the new Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia and Mrs Sandy Ahluwalia at the University’s Laucala Campus on 21 February, 2019.

The traditional welcome was attended by the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of USP Council, Mr Winston Thompson; members of the University’s Senior Management Team (SMT) and partners and students of the University. While addressing those in attendance the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, Professor Richard Coll stated that the welcome ceremony provided a good opportunity to highlight some of Professor Ahluwalia’s achievements and commitment of which many have already witnessed since he took office on 1st January, 2019.

“We have already witnessed his commitment and passion towards University’s staff and students, and this is evidenced in his engagement through social media pages on Facebook and Twitter and vlogs, opening a new era of transparency for the University and management decision making,” Professor Coll said.

Similar sentiments were also echoed by Mr Jerry Siota, Deputy Chair of USP Students Association (USPSA). He stated that the student body pledges to support Professor Ahluwalia, to maintain and further boost the status as the premier education institution in the region.

Mr Siota further added that the student associations have to undergo transformation to remain relevant to its serving objectives and most importantly to students’ representation and advocating for student success and welfare at the University and with that in mind he looked to the Professor and the staff for their support.

In addressing those in attendance and on behalf of his wife, Sandy Ahluwalia, Professor Ahluwalia thanked the University for according them the traditional welcome, and they were humbled by the presentation.

“I would like to say how deeply appreciative and supportive both Sandy and I are, and humbled by you,” Professor Ahluwalia said.

He said that he is honoured to be asked to serve and lead USP and commented that for him, the baseline is fantastic, whereby the University is globally ranked. He said that he is really ambitious about working collaboratively with staff and students to take the University to new heights.

USP officially welcomes new Vice-Chancellor and President

Professor Ahluwalia took office as the Vice-Chancellor and President for The University of the South Pacific on January 1, 2019. He is charged with steering and leading one of the biggest Regional Universities in the world.

His special interest is to promote a culture of strong research and innovation with continuous improvement in the volume, quality and impact of research and enterprise outputs and partnerships.

He holds a Bachelor and Master of Arts from the University of Saskatchewan, and completed his PhD at Flinders University. He was subsequently at Adelaide University for 14 years, finishing as Professor of the Politics Department. Professor Ahluwalia has previously been a Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley and Professor with the Goldsmiths College at the University of London, where he was also Director of the Centre for Postcolonial Studies. He was also a Professor at UC San Diego.

Pal is a prolific publisher, both in terms of volume and prestige. He is the sole author of four books, Politics and Post-colonial Theory: African Infections; Post-colonialism and the Politics of Kenya; and Plantations and the Politics of Sugar in Uganda. His fourth book titled Out Of Africa: Post-structuralism’s Colonial Roots was published in 2010. He has been editor or co-editor of a number of journals, including three Routledge journals, Social Identities, African Identities and Sikh Formations which are “A” ranked Journals.

New Vice-Chancellor & President of USP

Professor Ahluwalia strongly believes in transparency and is really passionate about Pacific values.

“I am really keen about making sure that every one of our students succeed; they have a wonderful student experience; and by the time they leave here, they can contribute to societies at large,” Professor Ahluwalia said.

In an effort to hear from the students and staff and to ensure maximum inclusivity and he keen on taking the ‘Vuvale’ approach, and has since established Facebook and Twitter accounts and introduced a monthly Vlog video posted on the USP website and shared on the social platforms.

In addition the Vice-Chancellor announced the revision of the Strategic Plan, and the revised USP mission, vision and values of which staff can give their responses in an online discussion forum to be held on 26 March. The new Vision, Mission and Values in also available on-line: www.usp.ac.fj

During the Vice-President Regional Campuses and Estates and Infrastructure, Dr. Giulio Masasso Paunga’s Vote of Thanks he acknowledged the Professor Ahluwalia and reassured him of the University’s support.
Australian Prime Minister Visited USP

Australian Prime Minister, Mr Scott Morrison visited the University on the 28th of January. During his visit, Hon Morrison stated that Australia is proud to be associated with USP over the longer term, adding that it is investing in the young people of the region by focusing on improving the quality of teacher education and education of students at tertiary levels.

He also announced that Australia will invest $84 million over the next six years to the University of the South Pacific and the hope that this will promote greater linkages between USP and Australia’s tertiary education sectors. Hon Morrison further emphasised on the University’s unique role in developing the skills needed to drive the region’s development and economic growth long into the future.

The event was attended by the Hon. Rosy Akbar, Fiji’s Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts; Hon. Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for International Development and the Pacific; Pro-Chancellor and Chair of USP Council, Mr. Winston Thompson; H.E. Mr. John Feakes, the Australian High Commissioner to Fiji; Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Heads of Regional and International Organisations; Members of the Private Sector and NGOs; Senior Management, Staff, Alumni and Students of the University and media representatives.

Fijian youths are encouraged into Entrepreneurship

The United Nations Development Programme UNDP and the University of the South Pacific (USP) have partnered with the goal to foster innovations and entrepreneurship in the Pacific and to empower youth, women and people with disabilities to lead these processes.

An Innovation Hub and co-working space was launched at USP Laucala Campus after a vigorous three days of workshops with young entrepreneurs from around Fiji. The co-working space aims to have a meaningful partnerships committed in supporting innovation and accelerating the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific. Members of the Hub will receive guidance and support from innovation and business experts, networking and capacity building opportunities.

The event was attended by Mr Bakhodir Burkhanov, UNDP Resident Representative for the Pacific; Professor Pal Ahluwalia, USP VCP, H.E Mr John Feakes, Australian High Commissioner; H.E Mr Johnathan Curr, NZ High Commissioner; USAID Programme, Ms Maria Elder, members of USP’s SMT, representatives from civil society, international and regional organisations, entrepreneurs and innovators and staff and students. Alumni are encouraged to be part of the Innovation Hub.
Boosting alumni science teachers to address lack of scientist in the region

The In-country Science Programme (ISP) is an innovative, cohort-taught pedagogical model which is an initiative by the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment at the University of the South Pacific to provide selected full degree programmes at the regional campuses. The aim is to upskill science teachers in Samoa with a Bachelor of Science degree while they remain in service. The Science Teachers Accelerated Programme (STAP), which was the first ISP, started in June 2014 that has produced Alumni science teachers in the region.

The motivation for STAP was to address the serious lack of scientists in the region and to spearhead University’s drive for excellence in the provision of tertiary education, by proactively engaging with the region and its communities. STAP is an intensive two and half year in-service programme offered to a selected cohort of teachers with a certificate or diploma qualification from a recognised institution and with at least three years of relevant teaching experience. The programme is a step to increase the student interest in science in the Pacific region by empowering the torch-bearers of the education sector, the teachers. Therefore, a wide adoption of STAP model would ensure greater numbers of qualified science teachers in the region.

A total of 51 alumni teachers form the first cohort graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in November 2016. With the success story of STAP, the demand for full science programmes at the USP regional campuses escalated. This led to a second cohort for the Science Teachers Accelerated Programme (STAP II) in Samoa while a cohort of freshmen and teachers joined the Tonga In-country Science Programme (TISP) in 2017. The STAP II and TISP cohorts are earmarked to complete their programme in November 2019. The Vanuatu In-country Science programme was launched in June 2019 with a cohort of science teachers and continuing students after which the second VISP cohort which includes high school graduates joined the programme in January 2019.

Ideally, science students travel to the main USP Campus in Fiji for further studies, however with a tailor made programme like ISP, the University is able to deliver science to its various member countries at a cost effective measure. The ISP is possible through a tripartite partnership between the higher education institution (USP), the regional government and cohort of students. The University is grateful for the trust of the partners to deliver the programme.

The first group of Bachelor of Science degree Alumni at Alafua Campus Graduation.
Briefly reflect on your student life at USP.

My grandfather raised me and constantly advised me that this world is a new world and the time of the computer. He said if I wanted to be successful, I should study computers. Upon arriving at USP for my scholarship I looked through the curriculum for computer science and I came to the decision it was too hard for me. I opted for Management Public Administration double major with Information Systems so that I could still learn to apply computers hand in hand with management skills.

What memories do you have of your time at USP?

I remember rushing to class so that I could get one of the front row seat at the bigger lecture theatres, as classes were very full, I remember Moodle being launched and thought it was the greatest thing ever. I lived in 9th hall, it was just the newest hall and I was so thrilled to be there in the new rooms, we didn’t have Damodar or Sports city, Fatty’s shop was the place to hang then, other than that it was dining hall meal plans built into our fees. You would see everyone sitting in their friend groups. It was set up as a big communal cafeteria, back then certain times for breakfast, lunch and dinner for the residents. It was the greatest thing ever. I lived in 9th hall, it was just the newest hall and I was so thrilled to be there in the new rooms, we didn’t have Damodar or Sports city, Fatty’s shop was the place to hang then, other than that it was dining hall meal plans built into our fees. You would see everyone sitting in their friend groups. It was set up as a big communal cafeteria, back then certain times for breakfast, lunch and dinner for the residents.

Career highlights since graduation.

I am a full time entrepreneur and have been since 2009. Some of my career highlights have been designing and manufacturing uniquely branded wearables and merchandise for IUCN World Oceans Conference, Climate Action Pacific CAPP Meeting, several COP23 meetings, UN Women Markets for Change, REDD+, WHO and many other reputable organisations. My current project is design of a unique Celebrations Bula Shirts for Mindpearl Fiji 10 year Anniversary. We export on a small scale to Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Samoa.

Describe your business.

Allied Print Design Fiji Ltd. aims to create unique custom branded apparel and merchandise that is of high quality and locally made. We indirectly contract close to 50 women, and run an efficient cluster model of family owned factories, owned by enterprising men and women who left factories and started their own tailoring companies, and have since grown and employed more aunts, sisters and friends. We contract freelance independent graphic artists strong in their own areas as well as visual and technical artists who specialise in pacific designs and we ourselves are certified print specialists having gained certifications from USA and Australia in the latest print technologies. We have an industrial DTG cotton printing machine. We are complete solution, a hassle free solution for our clients, as we are experienced, small agile team that is flexible and able to fulfill large or small orders and in a very quick turnaround timeframe. We strive to use environment-friendly fabrics that are functional and we have up to date printing techniques that are known for their vibrancy and durability throughout the wash and wear life cycle.

Describe challenges you faced to reach where you are today and how you overcame those challenges?

Getting licensed and fully compliant is a daunting task, VAT is a big headache as a small business, we absorb a lot of it from suppliers and don’t charge it if we didn’t exceed 100k. Keeping up to date with the companies act and taxation changes, not able to afford good accountants and lawyers. For our new project we’ve been waiting on some government reports which has taken quite some time and you have to keep pushing. I feel like in Fiji the year runs from Feb to Nov, December and Jan everyone’s still in holiday mode! Joining PIPSO FECF, WEBC, YEC has been the solution to a lot of these challenges. We keep up to date on Govt Policies, have capacity training workshops and the networks means finding the best and affordable specialists or consultants.

Who or what inspires you to run your own business?

My kids, my freedom to be my own boss, work at my own pace, always adapting and facing challenges gives me a little bit of a high. I love to be able to be creative and adaptive at each growth stage in my business.

What are some of the character traits common among successful entrepreneurs?

Passionate, doing what you love, motivated, creative and adaptable, an innovative risk taker www.apdpacific.com
Briefly reflect on your student life at USP. What memories do you have?

My academic life at USP has been based more at the Statham Campus, during my GSB-MBA programme. It was indeed a wonder of a time, when I got to learn so much in the programme itself, and in making friendships with fellow students, many of whom are now ‘life-long mates’.

The lecturers and admin support staff are so friendly, helpful in making the MBA studies a fruitful, and a pleasant experience. Facilities, have been tailored to suit the study programmes, and the distinct international (including the Pacific) environment and flavor is a speciality for USP.

I cherish having graduated in MBA from GSB-USP.

Why did you choose your field of study?

I am in a managerial/leadership position at my workplace, and MBA being a general Admin/Business programme has truly suited my career and personal development ambitions.

How do you think USP has impacted the region?

It’s one of the only two regional universities in the world. Spread across the Pacific region, the campuses does reflect and capture the wider scope of the Pacific. USP graduates of the Pacific region have moved on to hold high civil, private, regional as well as international positions.

The current range of programmes, including that of Environmental/Climate Studies are truly embodiment of USP’s reach in the regional , and the global arena.

What were some of your achievements as a student?

Foremost, is the graduation from the MBA programme. The learning experience of studying in the programme, the collaborations with the academic staff, support staff, and students (buddies) has been the highlights gained whilst being a post-grad student.

I have secured two (2) promotions after completing my MBA programme.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it

I am currently working in the capacity of Deputy Director of Strategic Planning, Policy, Research and Development, and the much pleasant part amongst the routine is; liaison, collaborations, networking. I get to work and have established professional in my workplace, the ministry and the regional and international counterparts in my field of work, i.e. Law Enforcement.

Who/what inspires you?

Corporate leaders who excel at their workplaces i.e the Richard Bronsons, Bill Gates, Nadellas, Pachais, Tatas, Ambanis, Steve Jobs and others in the likes of them. Literature, training and development, reading is my passion, innovative and futures based intellectuals, philanthropists all inspire me to reach greater heights and achievements.

Please give details of any community work you are involved in. (if any)

I am currently a member of a social group (amongst friends), who are engaged year around on charity, philanthropic kind of work. There is too many to name.

How do you think you could contribute/give back to USP?

Being invited to Enrichment/Motivational sessions, senior buddy or syndicate coach kind of work. Experience can not be replaced or taken away. Having being in workplace for thirty-years brings a lot of baggage that can be shared and contributed back to the workplaces, and institutions such as USP.
STORIES IN PICTURES

- 1.4 million Upgrade for USP Library - January 2019.

- Alumni, students, and general public at the 2019 USP Entrepreneurial Fair - February 2019.

- Students and Alumni attending the MBA orientation at the GSB at Statham Campus - February 2019.

- Vanuatu PM launches new USP Mobile learning app - February 2019.

- One Ocean Hub launch - February 2019
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