Mr Nemani, the newly appointed Executive Director People and Workforce Strategy at The University of the South Pacific (USP) is an alumnus of USP, graduating with a Diploma in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business, Public Administration and Management. He also holds a Master of Commerce (Business, Advance Human Resources (HR) Specialisation) degree from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia.

Prior to his current role at USP, he served the Government of Fiji as the Permanent Secretary, CEO Ministry of Youth & Sports Development, and before that he was the Chief Human Resources and Governance Advisor for the Government of Nauru under AusAID assignment. He brings with him a wide range of experience as a Human Resource, Employment Relations and Capacity Development specialist with broad expertise spanning more than 35 years working in diverse industries in the Oceania region.

It was during his time as a student that Mr Nemani realised that having a formal qualification will be his passport to the future. With this in mind, he chose to study at USP as it was well recognised as the premier university in the South Pacific. He added “And because of its uniqueness and positioning I choose USP. This was a benefit to me as a Fijian, taking an advantage of the opportunity of gaining a higher qualification degree from a regional university based in Suva.” Enrolling as a mature student with industry experience, his education at USP provided him with a competitive advantage by providing a platform to connect theory and industry practices.

Mr Nemani then shared his fond memories at USP, “I recall the good old days when coming to USP for me was similar to attending football or rugby training. There was a greater understanding and support from academics and student relations, I remember how our lecturers used to ask students already working to relate theoretical learning to real work-life experience and making that connectivity and conceptualisation.” His new role at USP is challenging but enjoyable, as he is able to utilise his experiences as a Human Resources (HR) and
Operational Development (OD) professional and practitioner in the Oceania region.

He believes HR needs to take ownership of HR functions and deliver on its promises but not without strong and sound policies based on good governance and best practices. With this in mind he is working with stakeholders to review existing HR policies, and align them to best practices. Through this intervention the University endeavours to also introduce new policies given the changing workplace dynamics. “There is absolutely a lot to do but my plan in order of priority is to meet immediate needs of the USP operations at academic and general administration. Streamlining processes and making HR a more people centric hub for providing excellence in service to all our USP communities including our regional campuses” he said.

As a seasoned HR and Sports professional, Mr Nemani shares three tips for those who are starting on their new careers:

- Plan your career well
- Know your job market and match that against what you want to study or are currently studying, so basically ask yourself what you want to do or become after successfully completing your studies.
- Adaptation, discipline and sacrifice – the world out there is ferocious, so anticipate the unexpected and be prepared to change. COVID 19 is a classic example.

He also shared some recommended books to read: “Everybody Matters” by Bob Chapman and Raj Sisoda; HR books by Dave Ulrich and “Play to Win” by A.G.Lafley and Roger L. Martin; These books contain simple and practical approaches and methodologies on how strategies really work.

Apart from contributing to various professional bodies, Mr Nemani is also part of the Marist Old Boys Alphonse community. One of their principle objectives is to reach out to the Brothers and families in the community who require assistance. He said that “It’s about our community support and engagement. I also from time to time engage with the Suva Football Team from a mentoring and motivational perspective.”

"USP offers this enabling space and environment built on the foundation of genuine pacific spirit and regional collaboration and partnership – the USP spirit."

Mr Nemani has participated in and represented various clubs and associations and shared his views on sports integrity, "Fiji is a sporting nation, and we love our sports. It is a source of social and economic benefit to Fiji. It is now time for sports to make a shift and take it to another level of professionalism. Without going too much detail, he added that Sports integrity plays a critical role in enhancing both athletes and officials conduct, behaviours and performance. This platform enhances Fiji’s opportunity to also anticipate “what sports will look like in the future” and what it means for athletes, officials and administrators including sponsors and stakeholders.”

Mr Nemani said the following about USP, “USP is the Pacific premier university established under the true USP spirit, woven and intertwined by the fabric of pacific culture and traditions with global content, connectivity and learning. It has its unique reputation, long standing history. I am proud that I choose USP for undergraduate studies, acknowledging our past Fijian leaders that have gone before us, their foresights and vision.

They identified USP land/hub and collaboratively concurred to render it free for the purpose of academic learning excellence and professional development of our Pacific people. Our Fijian leaders at that time saw the common thread that connects us as one Pacific people, vulnerable small island states with little land, challenging social and economic states, the effects of climate change, hence required a hub to develop and nurture human capital. USP offers this enabling space and environment built on the foundation of genuine pacific spirit and regional collaboration and partnership – the USP spirit. USP is diverse and rich with culture - That’s how I understood USP and would encourage students to attend USP before exploring the world of intellectual institutions.”
What memories do you have of your University student life and what inspired you during your studies at USP?

Some memories of my time at USP that stand out for me include the occasional intense debate during a tutorial, staying late in the journalism newsroom when an assignment was due, and many, many coffees with friends at the campus cafe.

During my time at USP, I was most inspired by my tutors and lecturers that took special care to make classes engaging and ensure we had Pacific readings to ground our understanding of topics and themes.

Why did you choose USP and your field of study?

The programmes that I wanted to pursue were available at USP and I wanted to stay close to home. I did some volunteering in high school and developed an interest in the media. So, I built on the interest by studying journalism. I also wanted to better understand people and systems of governance, so I also chose politics. After some years in the workforce, I wanted to deepen my understanding of development (as it is the sector I work in), so chose to do that through a postgraduate diploma.

How did USP prepare you in your career?

USP provided a lot of opportunity to practice time management as I continued to volunteer and work during my BA and PGD. My time at USP also really helped me find value and enjoyment in continuous learning.

Describe your present job and what you enjoy about it.

I work in communications for a development programme that covers 14 countries. It’s challenging work given the programme’s scale but is really great because I get to support a range of initiatives that are (in all their different ways) seeking to address gender inequality. It’s like learning something new, innovative and interesting every day.

What literature or subscriptions would you recommend for graduates (books/blogs/magazines)?

I read a lot of online and regional news to keep informed, including for my day-to-day work. Alongside national media outlets, I also follow ABC Pacific Beat, Radio NZ International, Islands Business, the Pacific Media Centre and the Guardian’s Pacific news section - they have some interesting content about current issues. DevPolicyBlog also carries some interesting Pacific pieces.

Please share three tips that you think would be important for current students and recent graduates that will help them start out on their career paths.

One: If you can, find ways to “try out” your chosen field - intern or volunteer if you can. It’s a great way to test the waters and see if you enjoy what you’re working towards.

Two: Try to understand your preferred way of working and develop your social skills. In the workforce, relationship building and clear communication make everything easier.

Three: Find out how to stay up to date with trends in your chosen fields. You don’t always have to be on the “cutting edge” but people are always innovating and finding great ways to work better and smarter.

What has your involvement been with the University since you graduated? (Or how would you like to be involved?)

I’ve stayed relatively up to date with the range of interesting presentations that always happen on campus. I also still follow the student publication, Wansolwara.

Any other information you would like to share e.g. community work you are involved in. (Include other relevant information and photographs that you would like to share)

My time at USP was an opportunity to explore my interest in the creative arts. USP has historically been a place where artists and activists have found or developed their voices (like the Niu Waves Writers’ Collective). Such spaces are critical for our Pacific communities. I continue to enjoy spoken word/poetry and try to make it to the occasional event around Suva when I can.

What would you tell someone who’s considering USP?

It’s a great place in our own region to get a firm footing (or deepen your understanding) for your chosen field. If you’re also just starting out, make the most of your elective course opportunities to widen your horizons.
Where are they now?

**1970**

**Hitendra Pillay**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Arts (1978), USP
- Country: Fiji
- Occupation: Research Professor and Development Consultant - Queensland University of Technology

**Joape Kuinikoro**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Agriculture (1980), USP
- Country: Fiji
- Occupation: Former CEO, Post Fiji, Current Insurance Advisor, BSP Fiji

**1980**

**Tata Graham Crocombe**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Arts (1982), USP
- Country: Fiji
- Occupation: Founder at hospitable.tech.ai

**Sitiveni (Siti) Weleilakeba**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Science (1990), USP
- Country: Fiji
- Occupation: Executive Chairman at Weleilakeba Family Group of Companies

**1990**

**Teke Kaake**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Arts (1990), USP
- Country: Fiji
- Occupation: Chief Valuer at Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources

**Makereta Sauturaga**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Science (1990), USP
- Country: Fiji
- Occupation: Energy Efficiency Adviser at Secretariat of the Pacific Community

**2000**

**Tofiga Injimo**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Science (2004), USP
- Country: Cook Islands
- Occupation: Manager Sales at Vodafone, Cook Islands

**Jessica Tiningkon**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Science (2006), USP
- Country: Vanuatu
- Occupation: Research and Analytics Manager, ANZ Vanuatu

**2010**

**Etuale Ioane**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Engineering (2014), USP
- Country: Samoa
- Occupation: Mechanical Engineer

**Ashika Bali**
- Graduation: Bachelor of Laws (2006), USP
- Country: Fiji
- Occupation: Solicitor/Owner at A Bali, New Zealand, Australian Lawyer, Supreme Court NSW, Admitted Barrister & Solicitor, Fiji
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- **Address:** Suva Branch1 Thomson Street Suva FIJI
- **Branch/Swift code:** WPACFJFX
- **BSP or IDN #:** 039001

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