



**ADDRESS BY THE
VICE CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT PROFESSOR RAJESH CHANDRA
AT THE USP LAUCALA GOLD MEDALS AND PRIZES CEREMONY 2014**

His Majesty, King Tupou VI of Tonga, Chancellor of USP
Her Majesty, Queen Nanasipau'u
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Pro-Chancellor and Chair of USP Council, Mr. Ikbal Jannif
Chair, Finance and Investments Committee, Ms Fay Yee
Council, Senate, FIC and ARC Members
Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching and PVC Research and
International, Professor John Bythell and other members of SMT
Our Dedicated Sponsors
Medal Recipients
Families and Friends
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 2014 Medals and Prizes Ceremony, an occasion to celebrate the achievements of some of our brightest students.

I wish to humbly acknowledge the presence of His Majesty, King Tupou VI of Tonga, Chancellor of USP and Her Majesty, Queen Nanasipau'u. Your gracious presence makes this evening particularly special for all winners and for everyone attending tonight's function. I also acknowledge the presence of all the dignitaries for being here tonight.

This is a very special evening for USP staff, who dedicate countless hours and invest a great deal of their energies and hopes in their most capable students. These medalists have made their teachers- and all of us here- very proud. I welcome the medal and prize recipients here tonight and look forward to meeting and speaking with each one of them.

I also extend a very warm welcome to all of the sponsors of the awards. The sponsors' names and donated funds make our medals and prizes all the more prestigious, and the external recognition of their accomplishments is gratifying for our students. Some of you have been sponsoring this event for a number of years, and we remain very grateful for your loyalty.

I also cordially welcome new sponsors to our circle of esteemed partners. Cooperation with the public and private sectors improved USP's value and offers our students numerous opportunities for research and practical learning. Thank you for your trust and confidence in our institution and your faith in the potential of our students.

A special welcome is also due to the families and guardians of the winners. Parents, guardians, spouses and family members have supported these winning students over many years of hard work, deadlines, late nights, and examination stresses. I must congratulate you for the support and guidance you have offered, as you have, no doubt, been the rocks that our winners have leaned on in times of difficulty.

Achievement is Possible at USP

The achievement that we recognise tonight is possible because USP is an excellent institution that provides the right mixture of outstanding teaching, a learning culture that values diversity of opinion and worldview, and facilities that enable students to test their ideas.

USP has a vision of itself in 2018, as an outstanding institution that provides education and training to the highest standards, contextualised to the Pacific Islands.

USP launched its new [Strategic Plan for 2013-2018](#) in February last year. The theme of the new plan is the transformation of USP into a world-class and internationally recognized institution by its 50th anniversary in 2018. In order to complete this transformation, work is being done across seven priority areas — Learning and Teaching; Student Support; Research and Internationalization; Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Regional and Community Engagement; Our People; and Governance, Management, Leadership, and Continuous Improvement.

Partnership

Ladies and gentlemen, our corporate sponsors have also played an important role in supporting the University and its students in their achievements. Many of our most valued corporate sponsors are present this evening. Sponsors have stood by us and contributed to the achievements of the University – be it the Open Day, Orientation Week, social activities, the Graduation Ceremonies or this ceremony tonight. Sponsors have been quick to come forward to exercise their corporate social responsibility by taking part in University activities. There are a variety of ways that sponsors can engage with USP and its staff and students, and I hope that we can explore new modes of cooperation looking forward to 2018.

I wish to thank all our sponsors and, in particular, those who have supported today's medals and prizes. Furthermore, I hope to reassure you that we value your sponsorship, and encourage you to continue to support your university for many more years to come.

Our Winning Students

These students have come out on the top of their classes. The individual accomplishments that we will be recognising this evening are indicative of the high standard of work and achievement at this University.

A university is only as good as the graduates it produces; we can confidently say that USP, with its unmatched mixture of high-quality student support, modern facilities, and progressive teaching provides the conditions that are conducive to success. In such an environment, students are confident and inspired to strive for outstanding results.

The students here tonight have truly excelled. To the winning students: I congratulate you and, while I hope that you savour the feelings of triumph, I also expect you to realise something; you have the ability to be outstanding *throughout* your career.

You are the best of the best. There will be a total of **1,292** students graduating this Friday. Tonight we are acknowledging the **top achievers**, as this year we are presenting awards in 28 categories to 29 winners.

Premium Students Who Achieved Significant Achievements

Our students are achieving excellent international recognition for their work. I will wish to highlight two such cases

Last year, the organizers of the first meeting of the Heidelberg Laureate Forum – which is a forum that discusses the greatest achievements in Mathematics and Computer Science, and brings together the best researchers, and the best 200 research students from around the world – selected our triple gold medalist Ashna Sharan to this meeting to also discuss the work of potential Fields Prize and ACM Turing Award candidates. These are prizes in Math and Computing Science equivalent to the Nobel Prize.

Ashna Sharan was chosen after completing an excellent Master of Science thesis, titled “Swarm Model for Planar Formations of Multiple Autonomous Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. Early this year, she won a competitive scholarship offered by Auckland University to enter a PhD program in this area. Ashna Sharan’s case shows that our students are capable of rising to the very top and competing well internationally.

The second student I wish to highlight is Cook Islands Alumni Ano Tisam

Ano has completed the PGDip in IS in-country in Cook Islands and will complete his Masters in IS this year with 2 FSTE flexischools to be delivered by FSTE in Cook Islands this year.

Ano has established a company in Cook Islands and has developed the Cook Islands Maori Database, an Online Bilingual database of Cook Islands Maori Words, their English translations and how they’re used in conversation. The database currently has more than 6000 words and is growing constantly with contributions from the public.

This year Ano received funding from Information Society Innovation Fund Asia to further develop the project with part of the funding being used to develop mobile applications. The ISIF Asia Awards seek to acknowledge the important contributions ICT innovators have made with creative solutions to the social and economic development of the Asia Pacific region. Ano won financial support for up to AUD 3,000 via a competitive process.

This case speaks to the importance of entrepreneurship among our graduates. I like to encourage more graduates to develop their own businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to once again congratulate the recipients on the Medals and Prizes, and have the pleasure of requesting the Master of Ceremonies to start the awarding the awards.

Thank you

(Wednesday 9 April, 2014 at OCAPS)