

**SPEECH BY THE
ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT PROFESSOR DERRICK ARMSTRONG
AT THE USP EMALUS CAMPUS GRADUATION CEREMONY,
DECEMBER 2016**

1. Acknowledgements and Greetings

The Chancellor, Honorable Mr. Henry Puna, Prime Minister of Cook Islands and Mrs. Akaiti Puna;

The Pro Chancellor and Chair of Council of the University of the South Pacific, Ambassador Winston Thompson and Mrs. Queenie Thompson;

Minister for Education and Training, Honorable Jean Pierre Nirua;

Hon Ronald Warsal, Minister for Justice

Other Hon Government Ministers and Members of Parliament;

Excellences and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Chief Justice, Honorable Vincent Lunabek;

Josaia Naigulevu, Public Prosecutor

Jacob Kausiama, Public Solicitors' Office

Members of the Emalus Campus Advisory Committee;

Campus Manager, Mr Ruben Bakeo Markward;

The Head of the School of Law, Professor Eric Colvin;

Representatives of the Private Sector and NGOs;

Graduands and their families and friends;

Staff and students;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. Welcome and Congratulations

Welkam (Welcome)

It gives me great pleasure to join the Pro Chancellor in warmly welcoming you all to the University of the South Pacific's Emalus Campus Graduation for 2016.

I extend a special welcome to all dignitaries present here today. We acknowledge your presence here today in support of our commitment to higher education in Vanuatu and continued support to The University of the South Pacific.

I also extend a special welcome to our Chancellor, the Prime Minister of Cook Islands, Honourable Henry Puna and Mrs. Akaita Puna.

I extend a very warm welcome to the graduands and their families, relatives and guardians. It is indeed pleasing to see the proud faces of parents, relatives and well-wishers who have gathered here to witness the celebration of your success.

3. Graduation Ceremony

Today we have 155 compared to 120 students last year receiving certificates, diplomas and degrees. Fifty one percent of those graduating today are women. A total of 4 students will be getting their Masters degrees. Students from six countries are graduating today including students from Vanuatu, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

4. A Word To The Graduands

To our graduands, graduation is the end of one journey and the beginning of another. The celebration of the journey that ends today is that of a fantastic achievement of one of the greatest chapters in your life. It is a journey of influences, teachings and learnings.

It is your chance to take the teachings from these influences in your life and interpret it through your own understanding and drive for success. How you tread from this day onwards will be a testament of the ambition and dedication that is within you.

The experience you have gained in this journey will have prepared you well to step into the work environment anywhere in the world. The knowledge and skills that you have gained at USP have prepared you well to think outside the box, solve problems, and to make outstanding contributions.

Today, you deserve to celebrate. You all have worked hard and persevered. Remember to thank those who have supported you so far, your parents & families, sponsors, lecturers and tutors without whose support, you would not have reached this far.

5. Emalus Campus

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will highlight some of the more significant achievements of the Emalus Campus this year:

After many months of consultations and a cabinet decision, USP is pleased that physical connection of the fiber between Emalus Campus and Government point of presence works were completed in August this year. The Campus anticipates getting even better bandwidth from STM1 sometimes in the near future and moving to Government fibre before the start of semester 1 2017. USP ITS also plans to work with the government towards connecting the outer island centers and neighboring schools to the existing e-government network. With the government's support we will continue to serve the people of Vanuatu.

The University has much infrastructure development needs and we thank the Government of Vanuatu for funding the construction of the Emalus campus front fence in 2015. Through the Ministry for Education and Training we are seeking funding for additional facilities on campus. Two infrastructure initiatives that will be completed by early 2017. First the construction of the College of Foundation Studies (CFS) science lab at the Santo center which began last month and is expected to be completed in January 2017. When completed we will begin delivering Foundation and Preliminary science courses there from semester 1 2017. This will serve students not only from Santo but the northern islands as well. Secondly, USP is in the process of tendering the construction of the main entrance gate at Emalus which will include a guardhouse. The current front

fence will now be extended all the way to the student and staff residence. This will mean improved security for the campus. We are grateful to the Ministry for Education and Training for further providing a grant of VUV 10 million for the fence in 2016.

Discussions are underway for more delivery of courses at Emalus in high demand areas. We make special reference to Council decision last month to have increased delivery at Emalus from 2017. This is in response to request from the government but also in keeping with commitment to optimize operations at regional campuses.

Two members of the Campus, Dr. Amton from Education, and Dr. Mosses from SOL were members of the organizing committee which was established by the Ministry for Education and Training to make preparations for a workshop that was held in early November to consider ways and means of establishing a National Research Centre. Three members of the Law School, Professor Paterson, Dr. Jowitt and Dr. Mosses, made useful contributions at this workshop.

Emalus campus staff continue to provide important service to the Vanuatu government and the community through membership on boards and committees and contributions to other projects. For example, Professor Don Paterson is a member of the Constitutional Review Taskforce and contributed to a recent workshop on establishing a National Research Centre. Dr Howard Van Trease continues to work closely with the Department of Women's Affairs and the Electoral Commission to develop laws for quotas for women at provincial government level and Dr. Anita Jowitt is a member of the Commission of Inquiry into the Vanuatu National Provident Fund and is an employer's representative on the Vanuatu Tripartite Labour Advisory Council.

The Law School also had achievements in mooting. Apart from the internal Moot Competition this year, USP also participated in two external Moot Competitions and one Friendly Moot Competition. These were the Law & Culture Moot Competition held at Victoria University of Wellington, QUT Torts Moot Competition held in Brisbane and USP vs ACU Friendly Moot Competition held at Australian Catholic University in Sydney. We thank our many stakeholders for their support.

On the research front, the School of Law recently established the Pacific Constitutions Research Network and hosted a successful international conference to launch the network. It has also maintained a series of public seminars throughout the year, helping to bridge the gap between academic work and the wider community. Staff have also been very active in participating in regional and international conferences, which helps to raise the research profile of USP.

Emalus Campus is also the home of the Pacific Legal Information Institute, PacLII. PacLII publishes the laws of many Pacific countries, and is an absolutely vital resource for the promotion of justice and the rule of law throughout the region. USP remains committed to PacLII and has recently established the PacLII Institute within USP.

6. Significant Achievements

The value of the certificates, diplomas and degrees you will receive today has been increasing steadily as the University continues its efforts to improve its quality and

reputation through international accreditations of its programmes. We have now achieved a total number of 18 international accreditations and 4 recognitions.

The accreditation of the University's programmes gives students confidence making them internationally recognized with the qualifications being comparable with similar programmes by other universities from around the world.

7. Achievements of USP and Future Developments

Recently our very own Pasifika Voices recorded the choral components of the whole animated production Moana. This recording by Disney demonstrates that our music and arts programmes produce world-class talent. It is a historic moment for our local talent that our singers & artists are recognized in Hollywood at the highest level.

8. 50th Anniversary Preparations

The University will have its 50th Anniversary in 2018. The 50th Anniversary Steering Committee is being chaired by our Pro Chancellor. We plan to mark this milestone with significant events and legacies and I invite you all to be part of this exciting event in 2018 that will celebrate our achievements and regionality, and secure our future as a world-class university that our leaders, the Pacific people, and our partners can take genuine pride in.

I want to take this opportunity to invite all of you to be part of this historic milestone in the development of USP and the development of our region.

9. Acknowledgement

I wish to thank the Campus Director, Mr. Ruben Markward and his team and the Head of the School of Law, Professor Eric Colvin for the continued improvements at Emalus Campus.

The University has been richly blessed by the faith and goodwill of its member Governments including Vanuatu, and its development partners. With this strong and steadfast support, our tasks have been made easier. We gratefully acknowledge this support and confidence in the University.

10. A final word

Ladies and gentlemen, a final word to the graduands – Congratulations once again. Go out and do your best. I have every confidence that each and every one of you will excel in your life and make your families, your country, and all of us proud.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.