

**SPEECH BY THE
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT PROFESSOR RAJESH CHANDRA
AT THE USP OPEN DAY 2016**

1. Greetings and Welcome

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister of Fiji, Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama;
Your Excellency, USP Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council
Mr. Winston Thompson;
Excellencies and members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Members of the Fijian Government;
Members of USP Council, and USP Committees;
USP Senior Management Team colleagues;
Principals, Teachers and visiting Students;
Valued Sponsors and Friends of USP;
USP Staff, Students, and Alumni;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. Ni Sa Bula Vinaka, Namaste, and a very warm welcome to all of you to the Laucala Campus of The University of the South Pacific for [USP Open Day 2016](#).

3. I am extremely honoured and delighted to extend a very special welcome to our Chief Guest, Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for i-Taukei Affairs and Sugar Industry. It is always a great pleasure to have you amongst us Hon. Prime Minister, as your presence represents your Government's firm commitment to making higher education accessible to all young people.

4. Let me also extend my warmest welcome and appreciation to all the visiting students, their principals and teachers.

Benefits of Studying at USP

5. The theme for this year's [Open Day](#) is "**USP – Shaping your Future**". What it means is that we equip students with the knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes for **life-long success**.

6. We believe that USP programmes are of the highest quality, offer best value, and give the best chance for long-life success.

7. What distinguishes USP from other providers of higher education **is its quality and especially international accreditations**. Our programmes are just as good as those offered by universities in Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere, but our programmes cost much less and are contextualized to the Pacific.

8. The University now has 16 programmes that have international accreditation, details of which are published in today's newspaper.

9. If you decide to come to USP, there will be many more programmes that will have international accreditations by the time you graduate.
10. Apart from our three faculties, USP offers skills based qualifications through its Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) which has grown rapidly in the last three years. Pacific TAFE offers 20 qualifications and expected to grow based on regional demand. The merger with College of Foundation Studies will further boost Pacific TAFE enrolment to over 10,000 from 2017.
11. The University is therefore fully responding to the call by Fiji and our other member countries for more skills training and pathway programmes that allow presently excluded students to enter higher education.
12. The other big advantage our graduates have is that **they are very employable**. Last year, 66% of our graduates were in full time employment 4 months after their graduation, only 2 percent less than the figure for Australian graduates. If we combine full time and part time work, then **80 percent of our graduate were employed**.
13. We have very close relationships with industry and professional bodies, and many of our programmes have industrial and professional placement as part of the degree requirements. These work placements and holiday jobs all mean that our graduates can find work easily and many are offered jobs even before they complete their degrees.
14. In this regard, we thank you Hon. Prime Minister that in the National Budget for 2016 – 2017, the Government has given special attention to university students getting work placements with tax breaks for employers for attachments and part-time work.
15. We also give students many choices in terms of **how you wish to study**, offering options like face to face teaching, blended teaching, print-based flexible learning, and fully online courses: but all of them are underpinned by our **commitment to quality and innovation**. We are fully committed to digital learning and to learning anywhere anytime.
16. Apart from having the finest sporting and fitness centres, Campus Life at USP ensures that university life is memorable, fun and exciting.
17. USP gives students extraordinary opportunities for cross-cultural experiences because it has students from over 59 countries and staff from 38 countries.
18. We produce graduates who are experts in their fields of study and have a good base knowledge of the Pacific Islands, demonstrate excellent cross-cultural and leadership skills, and are highly proficient in the use of ICT and the English language.
19. This is why about 92 percent of the employers in Fiji that USP surveyed last year indicated that they were moderately/highly and very highly satisfied with our graduates across the top ten graduate attributes. This is why our graduates are highly employable—and why if you come to USP, you can secure your future success.

20. USP has produced a number of Pacific leaders and will continue to do so. You will have the best chance of becoming a leader through your study and total experience at USP.

21. The Open Day is really about EXPERIENCING what USP has to offer. I therefore encourage you to make the most of this opportunity and explore every aspect of university life on offer for you.

22. This is an exciting time to be at USP. We are preparing to celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2018 and this means that there will be more events, excitement and celebrations of our achievements than ever before. You can tell your children and grandchildren that you were at USP and celebrated its 50th anniversary, a truly historic event.

23. We at USP welcome all of you who want to succeed, and will provide you with all the support and encouragement that you need. I hope you have a wonderful experience at USP Open Day 2016, and I look forward to welcoming you next year as a new student.

Brief Introduction of Chief Guest

It is now my profound pleasure and honour to introduce our Chief Guest, who is of course very well-known not only in Fiji and our region, but internationally:

- Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama is the democratically-elected Prime Minister of Fiji after leading his *FijiFirst* party to a decisive victory in the 2014 General Election.
- Hon. Bainimarama has been the Fijian Prime Minister since 2007. Under his leadership, Fiji has undergone fundamental, transformational social, economic, electoral and constitutional reforms that have placed Fiji very well for future stability, sustainability, and prosperity.
- The Prime Minister has unified Fiji with a common name and strong national identity, enthused its citizens with unwavering commitment to equality, merit and concern for the poor and vulnerable.
- The Prime Minister has made the delivery of basic services – such as education, clean water, electricity, roads and affordable mobile and Internet – his Government's top priority. His vision of a smart Fiji, and the Government's unprecedented investment in education has been widely praised.
- He is also committed to rooting out the systemic corruption that has plagued Fiji in the past, as well as generating an investment-friendly environment that enables job creation and economic growth.
- The Prime Minister assumed his position after a successful career as the Commander of the Royal Fiji Military Forces. The Prime Minister was born in Suva and was educated at Marist Brothers High School and is a strongly family man.

I now have the honour to request the Honourable Prime Minister to deliver his keynote address and officially open the 2016 USP Open Day.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaad, Thank You.