



**Address by the  
Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Rajesh Chandra at the  
USP Gold Medal Ceremony 2016**

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**Greetings and Welcome**

USP Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council: Mr Winston Thompson and Mrs. Queenie Thompson,  
Deputy Pro-Chancellor, Ms. Feikita Utoi'kamanu  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Members of Council, Senate, FIC and ARC  
Members of the Senior Management Team  
Our Valued Sponsors  
Medals and Prize Recipients  
Families and Friends of Medals and Prizes Recipients  
Media Representatives  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure in welcoming you to this Medals and Prizes ceremony to honour our high achievers. I thank you for taking out your time to celebrate this milestone in our students' lives.

I extend a welcome to USP's Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council, Mr Winston Thompson to his first Medal and Prizes awards ceremony. Your presence here tonight, Pro Chancellor, is greatly appreciated and has made this event extra-special for our awardees.

**Tropical Cyclone Winston**

At this juncture, I would like to extend our sincere sympathies to the people of Fiji who have been faced with severe devastation resulting from Tropical Cyclone Winston. As the first part of a broader assistance to help Fiji's rebuilding efforts, the University has donated a sum of [FJ\\$100,000.00 to the Prime Minister's Natural Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Fund](#). This gesture by the University adds to the considerable national and international response efforts geared towards assisting the affected population.

Aside from this, the University has initiated fundraising activities with its staff and students and encourages everyone to donate generously to this worthy cause.

**Honouring our Stars**

Tonight Ladies and gentlemen, we honour a group of young, promising and extremely talented future leaders, who have taken on the challenge to excel and who have proven that there are truly talented and highest caliber students in the Pacific who can hold their head high against any other student anywhere in the world.

Through these awards and prizes, we honor your hardwork and accomplishments in your respective fields of study. Every one of you here tonight has been chosen because of their merit. You all make excellent ambassadors of your University.

The path to excellence is never easy, ladies and gentlemen; it requires hard work, dedication, focus, ambition, commitment and countless sacrifices. These young achievers have shown us that anything is possible if one has the right mindset, attitude and inspiration to achieve. You are stars of tonight's function. I want to personally thank you for bringing credit to yourselves, your families, countries and the University.

I must take this opportunity to also congratulate your parents, guardians, spouses, families and friends who have given you such a strong foundation to excel. This is a proud occasion for them as well.

I would also like to congratulate the Faculties and support staff present here, who have played a key role in the success of the students sitting here today.

On this same note, I would like to extend a very special welcome to our sponsors, who have supported the winners in their respective categories. Some of you have been sponsoring this event for many years, and we remain very grateful for your loyalty. I would also like to cordially welcome the new sponsors to our circle of esteemed partners.

This partnership has seen more collaboration between the private sector and the University with our students gaining practical knowledge and research opportunities with the best organisations in the region. We thank you for your trust and confidence in our institution and your faith in the potential of our students.

### **Achievement is Possible at USP**

Academic excellence is the cornerstone of any good university. Transformation from good to excellent is the central theme of our Strategic Plan. I believe that an institution is only as great as its people. The University has set a record of being an exemplar and responsible institution, more so because of our dynamic students and staff.

The University is an excellent regional institution inspiring the minds of thousands of bright and young people, broadening their thinking and mindset towards respect for other cultures and the importance of co-operation and integration.

### **Our Winning Students**

The students you see on the stage before you have set a very high benchmark. We are pleased that there are students at the University who are willing to strive for the best, rather than settle for average performances.

To the winning students: I congratulate you and I hope that you realise that you have the ability to be outstanding throughout your life. You will find that being bright is not the only ingredient of success in life. To be outstandingly successful in life, you will need to have high ethical standards; be able to work within a team environment; be solution

driven; work extremely hard and smartly; have the drive to excel; and be a life-long learner.

On this occasion, where most of you will begin your professional journey, I would like to quote the most influential physicist of the 20th century, Albert Einstein: "Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance, you must keep moving." From here onwards, you will be moving through many phases of your life both professionally and personally. You will be faced with many choices and I hope that all the lessons, ethics and values that you have acquired at the University will enable you to always make the right decisions / choices and assist you in leading a prosperous life both economically and socially.

Ladies and gentlemen, there will be a total of 1,599 of students graduating this Wednesday, the highest number of graduates in any graduation in the history of USP graduations. Tonight we are acknowledging 31 top achievers in 34 categories.

Amongst these awardees, we have 18 students who have been sponsored under various scholarship schemes such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), Multi-Ethnic Affairs (MEA), Solomon Islands Government Scholarship, Office of Research and Graduate Affairs and the Caribbean-Pacific Island Mobility Scheme (CARPIMS). No doubt, this is a proud moment for these scholarship providers to see your sponsored students excel in their chosen field of study.

I am delighted to note that 55 per cent of our award recipients tonight are females (an increase by 1 per cent from 2015). This is a progressive number for women from this region and I am pleased to say that USP is doing its part in ensuring the full participation of women and girls in the area of higher education.

It is also pleasing to note that apart from our Fiji awardees, there are three students from Solomon Islands and two students from Belize present amongst the University's top achievers. This shows the passion for excellence from our regional and international students.

The University, Ladies and Gentlemen, prides itself on not only being a platform for secondary school achievers but is also an enabling environment for our mid-career entrants and I would like to pay special tribute to these mature entrants present here tonight who have had the courage and ambition to pursue higher education.

A key focus of the University has always been to ensure greater accessibility of our programmes and courses to enable all students to pursue their dream of higher education, regardless, of distance or time. This has been possible through our Flexible Learning courses and seven of our high achievers present here tonight have completed their programmes through the Flexible Learning platform. This is an extremely important validation of our flexible learning mode in showing that it does lead to outstanding achievement in the way face to face teaching and learning does.

## **Excellence at USP**

Please allow me a few minutes to enlighten you on the steps the University is taking to ensure that we continue to do justice to our history of being a leader in tertiary education in the region.

Accreditation is what differentiates us most from other tertiary and higher education providers in the region. This is why employers value us and the reason we are the first choice for students, parents and governments.

In addition to a number of accreditations we already hold, we are very pleased that:

Bachelor of Software Engineering and Bachelor of Net-centric Computing (BNC) received professional accreditation by the Australian Computer Society (ACS) in December 2015. ACS is a professional association for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector in Australia and also a signatory to the Seoul Accord. This accreditation means that the two programmes are now globally recognized under the Seoul Accord.

USP's Accounting and Finance degrees have been successfully re-accredited until 2018 by CPA Australia.

The University has been granted Eligibility status from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) of the US for candidature and we will submit our full application for site visit by the end of this year.

USP's Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE) has received full international accreditation from the International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE) for its Certificate III in Commercial Cookery qualification.

The Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) has given full accreditation to eight Pacific TAFE qualifications under the Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF).

The University has formulated an overall programme to get most of its programmes accredited by the end of the Strategic Plan in 2018.

These accreditations will further demonstrate that our programmes are comparable to those universities in Australia, New Zealand and beyond.

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 commence the awards.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyabad and Thank you.

**Professor Rajesh Chandra**  
**Vice-Chancellor & President**

(Monday 21 March, 2016, 6.00pm at OCACPS)

