

**ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR RAJESH CHANDRA,
VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRESIDENT, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY, LAUCALA CAMPUS, SUVA, FIJI
FRIDAY 8 APRIL, 2011**

The Acting Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Minister for Primary Industries and Sugar and Acting Minister for Defense, National Security and Immigration, Mr. Jocketani Cokanasiga;
Honorable Ministers of the Government of Fiji
The Deputy Chair of USP Council, Mr. Ikbal Jannif
Your Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Heads of International and Regional Organizations
Permanent Secretaries and Senior Government Officials
Members of the Senior Management Team
Members of USP Council and Senate
Distinguished guests
Graduands and their families and friends
Staff
Ladies and gentlemen

Graduation and Congratulations

1. A very good morning to you all. I am very pleased to address you on this special occasion. For the first time, this graduation ceremony is being broadcast live by Fiji TV to all countries it operates in, so I also welcome all our viewers to the graduation ceremony.
2. I offer my heartiest congratulations to the graduates who are being rewarded here this morning. This is a special day of celebration and formal and public recognition of the efforts and success of those who will graduate today. This solemn and joyous occasion also celebrates the contributions and sacrifice of parents, family members, employers, and friends who have enabled these fine graduates to achieve their dreams.
3. This is also a moment of reflection for the Management and staff of the University who have worked extremely hard to create an effective and conducive learning environment at the University and spent endless hours preparing, teaching, researching and mentoring students.
4. Let me say to all those graduating today: you are the lucky ones; you are the cream of the Pacific; and you are the hope of the Pacific. Many of you will become leaders in politics, commerce and in the community—and I am confident that all of you will make very worthwhile contributions to your families, countries and the world.
5. The USP experience is all about being a member of the Pacific Community and as new graduates you should not lose sight of your obligation to sustainable development of your respective countries.
6. Let me also take this opportunity to remind all of you that you must continue to learn and better yourself. *Success is a journey, not a destination.* Receiving your certificates, diplomas,

or degrees today does not signal an end but rather the beginning of a long journey—I have often said at graduation ceremonies that it is what you do after graduation that will determine your success in life.

7. Today, we have **1,281** students who will receive degrees, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and many others will receive Certificates and Diplomas. At the postgraduate level, there are **113** Masters; **19** Professional Diplomas; **189** Postgraduate Diplomas; **50** Postgraduate Certificate level graduates; and **16** Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education.
8. It is pleasing that 30 percent of all these graduating today will receive postgraduate qualifications. This is consistent with the HR demands for the region and the University's vision to increase the number of higher degree completions, not only through coursework-based Masters but more significantly through thesis-based Master's and PhD's.
9. At the undergraduate level, there are **814** Degrees that will be awarded today, as well as **61** Diplomas, and **19** Certificates.
10. As you walk across the stage and receive your award, you start at that end as a student, and leave this end as an alumnus. I invite you to continue your interest in your University, actively participate in alumni activities and stay connected as we all join hands to contribute to the development of our countries and the Pacific region we call home. Make the University proud by being hard-working, innovative and committed. Be ethical in your future work, lead a life of meaning and impact, and be willing to make a difference. These should be the inspiring elements of the ***USP brand*** of which you will all be ambassadors.

USP Achievements

11. Ladies and gentlemen, at this stage I want to briefly share with you some of the important recent developments at USP. The financial position of the University remains healthy. This will allow it to further develop regional campuses; improve student services and facilities; make further investments in capital expenditure; and increase funds for staff development. These additional investments are necessary to improve student experience and the quality of the University generally.
12. I am pleased to report that confidence in the University continues to grow among our stakeholders, especially students and their parents. This year, our enrolment has grown by 10 percent overall, with 20 percent increase in postgraduate enrolment. We are very pleased with this vote of confidence by students as the premier provider of higher education.
13. The University has made many improvements in student support and services. Campus life activities have improved, with greater variety of sporting and cultural activities. A 144 bed hostel is nearing completion, and further capital developments for students are planned not only at the Laucala campus but at other regional campuses. The second phase of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre is in progress and will be completed this November. I wish to highlight also our plan to build a new campus in Solomon Islands and to consolidate our

activities in Kiribati with a major building. Significant development will start at the Emalus Campus in July this year, and there are plans for a new campus in the Marshall Islands. IOE is functioning well in Tonga and will be further strengthened. Indeed, the University is preparing a comprehensive Development Plan for all campuses to ensure that the University is responding fully to the needs of all member countries.

14. The quality of any university depends on the quality of its staff and students. The University has increased its efforts to recruit more high quality senior academic staff to ensure that the University produces outstanding graduates, rigorous and valuable research outputs and supports governments with high quality, innovative advice. I am pleased that while it is still challenging, the University is successfully recruiting very high quality professors and academic leaders.
15. The University's efforts to reform and reposition itself continue strongly. The Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) Project is an essential component of this transformation and is making significant progress. The STAR Project requires every Faculty at USP to examine all its programmes. It aims to transform all aspects of USP's academic programmes to make them more relevant and sustainable; reduce duplication; demonstrably incorporate graduate attributes in the curriculum; improve employment, completion and graduation rates; improve English proficiency, research literacy, and introduce a credit point system. The end result will be a more focused, higher quality, more relevant and more coherent set of programmes suited to the realities of the 21st century and the needs of our member countries.
13. Quality is at the centre of USP's operations and the University has continued to improve its quality. USP degrees are internationally recognized. Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) provides quality assurance for USP. Last year, AUQA provided a positive report on the University's progress and quality, reporting that USP was on track for its next quality audit in 2013.
14. Accreditations now form an important part of the University's quality strategy. The University obtained accreditation from CPA Australia last year for the B.Com in Accounting Programme. The Tourism and Hospitality Programme was also accredited by the Institutional Centre for Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education. These accreditations demonstrate that the quality of the University's programmes compares well with those offered internationally—but USP Programmes are much better value for money.
15. Since the last graduation ceremony, the University has strengthened and broadened its global academic networking, signing important MOUs with world class universities.
16. At this juncture I wish to acknowledge our major development partners including Japan, Australia, European Union, New Zealand, Korea, India and others. I also acknowledge the many private sector sponsors that support the University. The University is very pleased that aid to the University has increased significantly in the last two years and all indications are that it will increase even further in the future. We view this as another sign of increasing confidence in USP.

16. Recently USP has signed EUR 8 million contribution agreement with the EU for the project entitled “Support to the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) through capacity building, community engagement, and applied research” and is now being implemented across the University’s member countries.
18. With support from China, USP and the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications are in the process of establishing a Confucius Institute at its Laucala Campus. This will allow the students and staff to learn the language and through exchange programmes, experience the traditions and cultural practices of China, and help the region’s efforts to promote trade and investment with China.
20. Ladies and gentlemen, as we all know, our partners and neighbors, the Government and the peoples of New Zealand and Japan have suffered massively as a result of the recent earthquakes and tsunami. USP staff, students and the wider community collectively hope that those who have suffered so greatly will find solace in the empathy and compassion of their countrymen and women, and in the thoughts and kind wishes of their neighbors in the South Pacific. We also wish New Zealand and Japan God’s speed towards successful and speedy reconstruction and recovery.

Concluding Remarks

21. In concluding, let me indicate that USP has achieved a great deal in its past 43 years. It sees a bright future for itself. It is determined to transform itself into a higher quality, more relevant and sustainable institution that is widely seen as valuable by governments, students, development partners and other stakeholders. USP is a unique arrangement that our far-sighted leaders developed—and it remains central to the future of our member countries.
22. I pay special tribute to Fiji’s contribution to USP and through it to the development of higher education in the Pacific. Fiji has been a generous host of the main campus and headquarters of USP. USP has also been extremely useful to Fiji, contributing three times as much as it contributes to the University. As higher education develops further in Fiji, I hope that USP will continue to be the premier university of Fiji and all its member countries.
22. I similarly thank all our other member governments for their generous hosting of their campuses and for their significant contributions to USP and higher education.
23. To the graduates, please remember fondly your days at USP. You are the ambassadors of the University. We have done our part. Make us proud by your achievements. Uphold the good reputation of the University. I wish you every success as you take your journey in life.
24. Thank you, congratulations and God Bless.