



USP *Beat*

VOLUME 19 | ISSUE 12 | DECEMBER 2020 | www.usp.ac.fj/uspbeat



PROFESSOR PAL AHLUWALIA
Vice-Chancellor & President
University of the South Pacific

VCP'S END-OF-YEAR MESSAGE

We have reached the end of another successful year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment and support. The year 2020 has been a challenging one, bringing many life changing events for us.

Although we have faced environmental challenges such as climate change and adverse weather conditions, it is the coronavirus pandemic that has been a test of our humanity and resilience. It has altered the way we live, commute and communicate. For our Pacific communities, the repercussions will continue to be felt in the years to come.

Despite the many hurdles 2020 has brought, we have remained steadfast. You have continued to give your all for the University, further building its reputation and enhancing its standard globally. Your immeasurable support continues to raise the University standards that drives it to become more prominent in its role in the Pacific.

As part of the University's development, we have witnessed innovative measures put in place for the University to be

able to cushion the effect of COVID-19 on its operations. We have entered into new partnerships and grant arrangements. We have adapted to new ways of teaching, learning and research, whilst staying focused on our Strategic Plan. This is what the future is about – innovative thinking, resilience adapting to new challenges.

For me personally, the year 2020 has given me the opportunity to work with many of you to lay a foundation that will allow our University to reach new heights. As staff of USP, your contribution is integral in this journey and to the University's success.

I look forward to 2021 and I am confident that we are forging ahead to serve our people.

My wife and I send our best wishes to you and your family.

Professor Pal Ahluwalia

Vice-Chancellor and President

In this
issue:

3

USP Vice-Chancellor encourages a culture for research

5

Sixteen Pacific Islanders First to Receive Micro-Qualification in Maintaining Seafood Safety and Quality

7

Our School Structure

USP JOURNALISM STUDENT AWARDS NIGHT

Seventeen journalism students were rewarded and recognised during the 20th University of the South Pacific Journalism Student Awards Night on 10 December.

The USP Journalism Awards is the longest running, most consistent journalism awards in the Pacific region.

The Most Outstanding Graduating Students award went to Jared Koli and Shreya Kumar. The Exemplary Student Award was awarded to Dhruvkaran Nand, who recently launched his memoir, "Unlocking Destiny".

Dhruvkaran is a student with low vision and his memoir is about the 'highs and lows' of his student life, to overcome the stigma and discrimination faced by people with disabilities.

The awards winners are as follows:

- Most Promising First Year Students Award – Viliame Tawanakoro and Sera Sefeti
- Best Radio Student Award – Josefa Babitu
- Best Television Student Award – Ioane Asioli
- Best Documentary – Group 2: Kim Rabuka, Swastika Singh, Verenaisi Domoika and Ian Chute
- Best News Reporting – Wanshika Kumar and Jeshu Lal

- Best Sports Reporting – Bulou Naugavule
- Best Feature Reporting – Brian Lezutuni (Solomon Islands)
- EJNI Best Environmental Reporting – Ben Bilua (Solomon Islands), Jared Koli (Solomon Islands), Sera Sefeti and Patrick Lestro
- Exemplary student award- Dhruvkaran Nand
- Most Outstanding Graduating Students – Jared Koli and Shreya Kumar

The Awards Night was dedicated to Professor David Robie, former coordinator of the USP Journalism School who is based at the Auckland University of Technology.

Dr Shailendra Singh, current coordinator of the USP Journalism programme, described professor Robie as the 'champion' of media freedom and media development in the Pacific, both as a journalist and as an academic.

"Professor Robie's contribution to Pacific media is unparalleled," he said.

"Dr Robie introduced the USP Journalism awards 20 years ago and it was only fitting that he was honoured on the 20th anniversary of the awards."

Dr Singh also paid tribute to the USP journalism alumni for making a "sterling

contribution in the region and beyond in their various roles".

He reminded students that they had an important role to play, and as journalists, to never underestimate their responsibilities to society and the power of media to effect change.

"The region faces many challenges. Climate change is seen as the gravest challenge of all but even before climate change, we face major issues like corruption and environmental degradation. In some parts of the Pacific these problems have become entrenched. As journalists, it is your responsibility to draw sustained, unrelenting attention to these issues," Dr Singh added.

Earth Journalism News Pacific Partnership Coordinator and USP Journalism alumni, Donna Hoerder, sent a special message to the students. She said, "Remember your role is that of a watchdog or the fourth estate of power. Use your influence to tell a story that relates to now and one that can be linked to the wider picture,"

"Although COVID-19 has brought about a huge challenge for everyone, as a journalist, there is always a story to be told. Whatever you publish or broadcast, you can always relate it to the current situation. But don't stop there, be sure to look at how this relates to the region and even at the global level," Hoerder said.



USP Journalism staff with journalism students Sera Sefeti (second left) and Ben Bilua (second right) at the USP Journalism Student Awards night last Thursday.

Picture: WANSOLWARA



USP VICE-CHANCELLOR ENCOURAGES A CULTURE FOR RESEARCH

“Research incentives and culture brings about innovative solutions for the Pacific region”, says the University of the South Pacific Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia during the launch of two reports relating to COVID-19 research by the University’s Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCESD) at Laucala Campus on 12 November.

“Research is vital to help support actions designed to respond to some of the most vulnerable challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has caused to our region and local communities,” he added.

The reports are based on research carried out in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, titled “Assessing Nutrition and Socio-Economic Impact of COVID 19 on Rural and Urban Communities in Fiji” and a second version for the Solomon Islands.

The reports were financially supported by IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) while research work that was carried out in Fiji and in the Solomon Islands was built on a partnership with the Foundation of Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND - Fiji), Fiji Government through the Fiji National Food and Nutrition Centre (NFNC) and the Naitasiri Provincial Administration.

Kastom Garden Association carried out research in the Solomon Islands.

During the launch, Professor Ahluwalia acknowledged the close partnership of the Fiji and the British governments, FRIEND Fiji and Kastom Garden Association in supporting the efforts to conduct the assessments.

He also acknowledged the support of the University of Exeter, the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning at McGill University, the University of Cambridge, the University of West Indies and the Universite d’etat d’Haiti (UEH).

“We are living in exceptional circumstances; the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented and swift changes to all of our lives. As COVID hit our region, many countries and organisations intensified special efforts to keep agriculture safely running as an essential business, marketplaces well supplied with



Professor Pal Ahluwalia, USP’s Vice-Chancellor and President with His Excellency George Edgar, British High Commissioner to Fiji reading a copy of the report

reasonable and healthy food, buyers able to access and procure food in the midst of movement restrictions and income losses,” Prof Ahluwalia said.

The British government through the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) have been integral in providing funding for the Community Foods and Health (CFaH) and the Intervention Co-creation to Improve Community-based Food Production and Household Nutrition in Small Island Developing States (ICoFAN) projects within PaCESD.

British High Commissioner to Fiji, His Excellency George Edgar, also acknowledged the research work carried out by the students and staff of PaCESD.

The CFaH project is designed to establish research programme to carry out high quality evaluations of community-based food production initiatives in low and middle income countries (LMICs). The ICoFAN project, on the other hand, focuses on evaluating society-led interventions to improve community-based food production in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Acting Director of PaCESD, Dr Morgan Wairiu, praised the data collectors in Fiji and the Solomon Islands and acknowledged their work in getting the field work completed in strict COVID-19 conditions.

The assessments were conducted in nine communities on Viti Levu (Matawalu village, Naviyago village, Vakabuli village, Bila settlement, Drasa Civicivi settlement, Kalabu village, Muanikoso settlement, Molitua village and Vusuya settlement)

and four peri-urban and rural communities on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands (Burnscreek, Barana, Ngalimbiu and Panatina (Mataruka).

The assessment were conducted in nine communities on Viti Levu (Matawalu village, Naviyago village, Vakabuli village, Bila settlement, Drasa Civicivi settlement, Kalabu village, Muanikoso settlement, Molitua village and Vusuya settlement) and four peri-urban and rural communities on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands (Burnscreek, Barana, Ngalimbiu and Panatina (Mataruka).

The reports found that in the Solomon Islands, preventative interventions implemented by the government of the Solomon Islands to safeguard their people affected the socio-economic status of its communities. It also found that communities were living with reduced income from loss of jobs, decreased working hours and closure of markets as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Fiji, the findings suggested that COVID-19 had affected communities and households in Fiji, both positively and negatively. It also found increased involvement in home gardening.

Copies of the reports are now available online and can be downloaded from the PaCESD website using the following links;

<https://pace.usp.ac.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CTA-2020-Fiji-Final.pdf>

<https://pace.usp.ac.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CTA-2020-Solomon-Islands-Final.pdf>

USP'S DIPLOMA IN LEADERSHIP GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ALUMNI FORMS HUMAN RIGHTS ALUMNI BODY



(from left) USP HRAA President, Asilika Marama, OHCHR Regional Representative, Ms Heike Alefsen and PIANGO Executive Director, Ms Emeline Siale Ilohahia following the launch of the association.

The University of the South Pacific's Diploma in Leadership Governance and Human Rights Alumni and graduates have formed a human rights alumni body.

The newly formed USP Human Rights Alumni Association (USP HRAA) will facilitate and serve as the pillar of human rights coordinating mechanism, with the aim to advocate, educate and disseminate human rights, governance and leadership information.

It will also focus on enhancing the capacity of regional students to advocate on these issues in the Pasifika context.

Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia, when launching the USP HRAA, congratulated the students for having the foresight to form an association that will empower USP students to become agents of positive change in their various communities.

"The launch is a testament of the dedication of staff, students and alumni of the School of Governance, Development and International Affairs," he said.

"It reflects the great relationship between staff and students of the School, living beyond the classroom context, inspiring actors of change infused with the vision of advocating for human rights issues that are affecting our Pacific."

He added that the initiative was also an

opportunity to reflect on the learning and achievements of the University.

"Most leaders at the helm of governments and NGOs in our region are alumni of this University and as your Association grows, you must realise that amongst you, you are networking with future leaders of the Pacific.

"Do build cohesive, constructive dialogue and relationships amongst yourselves and your Association to secure our Pacific now for the future," he added.

Association President, Asilika Lomani

said since its inception, the USP HRAA has been active in raising awareness and advocacy on issues relating to West Papua, and partnering with NGOs to advocate on human rights issues affecting the region.

The Association plans to begin its membership drive in January next year.

The USP HRAA is being supported in its advocacy work in the region by the Pacific Islands Association Non-Governmental Organisation (PIANGO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Pacific Region and members of the Youngsolwara Pacific.



PIANGO Executive Director, Ms Emeline Siale Ilohahia

SIXTEEN PACIFIC ISLANDERS FIRST TO RECEIVE MICRO-QUALIFICATION IN MAINTAINING SEAFOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY

Nine women are amongst the first 16 Pacific Islanders to have a Micro-Qualification in Maintaining Seafood Safety and Quality through scholarships offered by the University of the South Pacific (USP) under the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) Programme.

The 16 awardees went through a two-week vigorous hands-on practical and theory assessment to equip them with necessary skills to improve seafood safety and quality from 'hook to plate', which ended today.

The micro-qualification was timely, given that entire communities and families have become increasingly reliant on the ocean for sustenance and income in most parts of the Pacific, as the pervasive effects of the global pandemic, COVID-19, has seen major job losses.

Benjamin Narayan, who was amongst laid off workers at the Air Terminal Services (ATS) in Nadi, Fiji turned to the sea to feed his family in Lautoka by selling seafood from his home from March this year.

"This micro-qualification is very important for me as I travel to meet fisher folk to buy seafood. These learnings will help me to ensure maximum quality control is in place because as a seafood entrepreneur, I travel distances with the spoils of the sea. This training has given me an opportunity to provide the same guidance to my suppliers. My customers deserve seafood that is free from bacteria and chemicals," he said.

Rakiraki fisherwoman and seafood entrepreneur, Kesaia Kaisuva, said as a

single mum she ventured into fishing, selling seafood both cooked and freshly harvested and the main challenge she had to overcome was to retain freshness and shelf life.

"As Pacific Islanders know seafood either cooked or raw can perish. I have learnt so many new tactics that I can use to ensure I never sell cooked seafood that is spoilt as freshness is essential to customers buying seafood. I only sell seafood that is sustainably caught myself if I am buying from fisherfolk I ensure the process used has not harmed our Pacific Ocean," she said.

Director of the Catholic Women's League (Teitoiningaina) for the Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru, Ioanna Nabura, who has been stranded in Fiji due to border closures said with Kiribati relying on marine resources for livelihoods and government revenue, the 33,000 women she works with play a crucial role that needs to be recognised and at the same time the learnings provided to her is an opportunity to ensure she passes on the knowledge and skills she has learnt.

The Deputy Head of the European Union (EU) Delegation for the Pacific, Dr. Erja Askola, while congratulating the awardees said: "The EU is proud to have helped the beneficiaries achieve these essential skills, all the more so in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU is a key importer of fish and seafood from this region. This brings a particular interest in and responsibility over sustainable management of marine resources and food safety for the benefit of artisans and small

entrepreneurs in coastal communities. The EU is happy to partner with Sweden, the USP and other regional organisations to translate the "farm to fork" strategy of the European Green Deal into "hook to plate" in the context of the blue Pacific."

USP Associate Dean Planning and Quality, Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment, Dr Francis Mani, said at the core of this intervention was the thought of how to provide a hand up approach to coastal communities through education and ensure that everyone has the right to education, irrespective of gender, age or ethnicity but meeting the criteria set out to be eligible for the scholarships.

Twelve of the awardees are also part of the 41 Pacific Islanders who are the first to have been awarded the Micro-qualification in Establishing and Operating a Small Seafood Business certificate through scholarships by the USP PEUMP Programme.

USP is one of four key implementing partners of the overall PEUMP Programme, an initiative funded by the European Union and the Government of Sweden. The USP, as an implementing partner, focuses on building capacities for Pacific islanders through education, training, research and development in fisheries and marine resources management.

The overall EUR 45 million Programme promotes sustainable management and sound ocean governance for food security and economic growth, while addressing climate change resilience and conservation of marine biodiversity.



The 16 Pacific Islanders who now have a micro qualification in Maintaining Seafood Safety and Quality through the USP PEUMP Programme

BEN BILUA WINS AN INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP IN DENMARK

Final year USP journalism and law student Ben Bilua has been chosen as one of only two university journalism students in the region to win an international fellowship in Denmark after competing in an Australasian student journalism project across 27 institutions.

The fellowship prize winners were among hundreds of students across Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific, who took part in the multimedia project, encompassing a three-day television broadcast, radio show, and podcast series as well as published work on The Junction.

The collaborative Constructive Journalism: Making a Difference 2020 project, is part of The Junction, a national journalism initiative that publishes the best student journalism from 27 universities and colleges across the region.

The fellowship was also awarded to Jack Meehan of Swinburne University. Meehan's piece was about the implications of the Australian Government's drive for increased gas production while Bilua's piece focused on how home gardens were supporting local economies in the Solomon Islands during the Covid-19 pandemic. The judges described it as a detailed story, which suggests solutions and provides a strong constructive approach.

"I am most grateful and appreciative to the Judith Neilson Institute for making the Constructive Journalism Making a Difference 2020 project possible," Bilua said.

"Thank you to The Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia, The Junction team esteemed judges, and staff at The University of the South Pacific's Journalism Programme. I am very humbled and excited at the same time. I hope to learn more about this opportunity.

"For me, constructive journalism has broadened my understanding of journalism and the concept of making a difference through various approaches.

"I chose to focus on the growing importance of home gardens in Solomon Islands and Fiji because it not only supports local economies but also promotes food and agricultural sustainability in light of the hardships brought on by COVID-19.

"I took my cue from a report recently published by the USP's Pacific Centre for



USP Journalism staff with Ben Bilua (second right).

Picture: WANSOLWARA

Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD) titled, 'Assessing nutrition and socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on rural and urban communities in Fiji and Solomon Islands'.

"These are the realities on the ground, the socio-economic impacts that continue to affect a great number of people."

The students will attend the Independent Center for Constructive Journalism in Aarhus, Denmark for one month when international borders open. The institute was set up by journalist and former broadcaster Ulrik Haagerup, as a response to the increasing tabloidisation of news.

The editor of The Junction, Andrew Dodd, said they were delighted with the quality and range of the work submitted by the next generation of emerging journalists.

He said the Constructive Journalism project is a real showcase for their skills and ideas.

USP Journalism submitted two articles for the project, including a piece on preserving the endangered Rotuman language by final-year journalism student Shreya Kumar.



USP is undergoing an organisational restructure effective from 1 January 2021 with phased implementation over the following six months.

The three Faculties have been reorganised into six Schools as follows:

1. **School of Accounting, Finance and Economics (SAFE)**
2. **School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences (SAGEONS)**
3. **School of Business and Management (SBM)**
4. **School of Information Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Physics (STEMP)**
5. **School of Law and Social Sciences (SoLaSS)**
6. **School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE)**

There will be no disruption to programmes or courses, however, in case of any uncertainties or enquiries, please refer to the Student Administrative Services for Admissions matters (www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=sas_contact) or the Prospectus (www.usp.ac.fj/prospectus2021) for other information and contact details.

Regional Students can contact their Campus Directors at www.usp.ac.fj/campuses for assistance.



USP FEATURES IN FORBES: DESCRIBED AS SUCCESS IN PROVIDING ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The University of the South Pacific recently featured in the globally acclaimed entrepreneurship and leadership magazine, Forbes.

The Forbes article “Why Equitable Access to Quality Higher Education Matters More Than Ever” highlighted the University’s ability to easily “adapt to new ways of teaching, learning and researching,” during and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic had caused great interference to higher academic

institutions and USP has had to adapt to new ways, shifting to online and blended mode of learning in order to efficiently meet its core functions.

The article is based on a survey by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) which tried to assess and provide a snapshot of digital engagement across the higher education sector within the Commonwealth, by looking at the degree of broadband access during the pandemic for high and low income countries.

As a member of this global network of Universities, USP was able to provide accurate assessment of not only the challenges institutions all over the world have been facing, particularly in recent months, but also what they have been doing to overcome those barriers.

You can access the full article by clicking the link: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattsymonds/2020/11/17/why-equitable-access-to-quality-higher-education-matters-more-than-ever/?sh=220914ee37ed>

**BEGIN
HERE!**



**Shaping
Pacific
Futures**

Offers face-to-face & flexible learning and teaching, research on emerging global, regional & national issues and opportunity to innovate to become job creators.



BE PART of an exciting and diverse learning environment

**ENROL
NOW**
for Semester 1,
2021

TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP AND LOAN
Students can email: enquiries@tslb.com.fj or tel: 8921240

Tel: 3231000
www.usp.ac.fj

USPBeat Magazine

USP Beat is published by the Strategic Partnerships, Advancement & Communications Office, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

Reports By:
Vineeta Nand
Communications Manager
Kelera Serelini-Varawa
Communications & PR Coordinator
Swashna Chand
Media & PR Officer

Desktop Publisher:
Loriza M Bano

The views expressed in USP Beat are not necessarily the views of the University.

Next issue
JANUARY 2021



Follow USP on Social Media:



Visit our website for more information:
www.usp.ac.fj

E: helpdesk@student.usp.ac.fj | CALL TOLL FREE ON 1568 (for Fiji)

USP - SHAPING PACIFIC FUTURES

