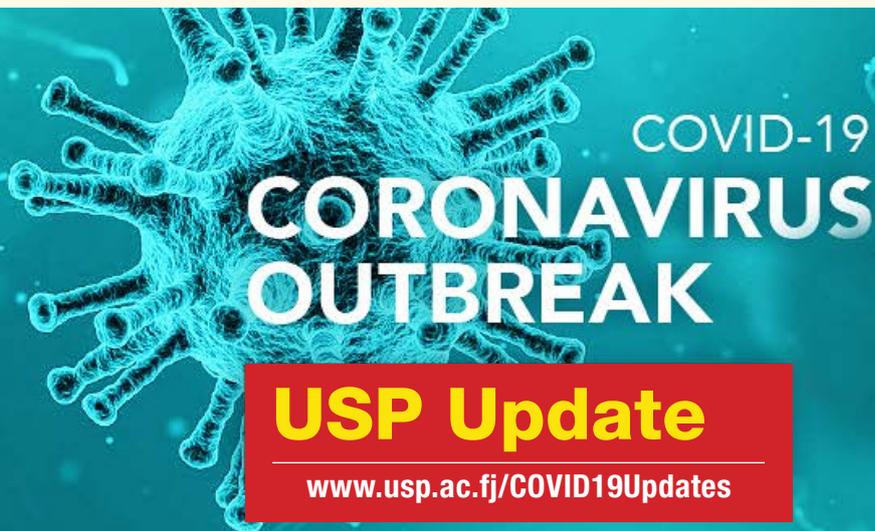


# USP *Beat*

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## COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

### USP Update

[www.usp.ac.fj/COVID19Updates](http://www.usp.ac.fj/COVID19Updates)

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses, with six of these viruses known to cause a range of illnesses from the common cold to the more serious Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The first cases of COVID-19 infections was discovered in late December 2019 after an unusual cluster of pneumonia cases was noted in Wuhan City, Hubei province, China. The source of the infection was from a wet market where live wild animals were sold.

#### PREVENTION METHODS

- All Staff and students are instructed NOT TO SHAKE HANDS, but use alternative NON CONTACT physical forms of salutations and greetings
- All persons on campus are required to wash hands as frequently as possible and minimize physical contact with other persons as much as possible.
- All staff and students are required to ensure cleaning of their work surfaces as frequently as possible.
- All cleaners are required to clean surfaces in public areas and toilets under their responsibility as frequently as possible.
- All Staff and Students where possible are encouraged to bring their own personal handwashing soaps, handkerchiefs, Sanitizers.
- Any persons with fever or cough are required to seek medical attention and treatment. Stay home as per medical certification and advise your HOD / HR office.
- All doors in high pedestrian entry points are to be kept open to minimise their frequent opening and closing.
- All meetings of more than 5 persons are to be reverted by using Zoom and Online platforms with immediate effect.
- Practice social distancing 2 meters at all times.

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## PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM FOREIGN MINISTERS AGREE TO ESTABLISH A PACIFIC HUMANITARIAN PATHWAY ON COVID-19

Pacific Islands Forum Leaders have invoked the Biketawa Declaration, to collectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as a major crisis to The Blue Pacific – its peoples, wellbeing and economies.

As an immediate priority, Forum Foreign Ministers met virtually yesterday to establish a Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19, following two weeks of consultation with senior officials, regional agencies and development agencies through the Forum.

The Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 (PHP-C), under the Biketawa Declaration is the Region's mechanism that will provide the enabling political environment and commitment to expedite assistance and cooperation between member countries in preparing for and responding to COVID-19, by enabling the provision of medical and humanitarian assistance from regional, international and development partners in a timely, safe, effective and equitable manner.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health emergency of unprecedented

scale. It poses a real and extreme danger to the health and security of the Pacific peoples. Never before has the full Forum Membership simultaneously been in crisis," said the Honourable Kausea Natano, Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum and Prime Minister of Tuvalu.

The Chair of the Special Foreign Ministers Meeting, the Honourable Simon Kofe of Tuvalu, said that responding to COVID-19 as a region reflected the Tuvaluan concept of *te fale-pili*, which literally means houses in close proximity to one another and which implies a moral responsibility to protect neighbors. It also went to the very essence of The Blue Pacific Way, where, in times of hardship, we help each other and ourselves to get through times of distress—together.

"The Biketawa Declaration recognises that in time of crises, all actions must be taken on the basis that all members of the Forum are part of the Pacific Islands extended family. This, I believe is the Pacific way.

It is with this agreement by our



*Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum and Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Honourable Kausea Natano*

Leaders to invoke the Biketawa Declaration that we gather, albeit virtually, to consider the proposal for a Pacific Humanitarian Pathway for COVID-19.

This could include expediting medical assistance, expediting customs clearance of medical supplies, and facilitating diplomatic clearances for chartered flights and commercial shipping."

The PHP-C will be overseen by Forum Foreign Ministers, supported by a Regional Taskforce of Forum Members, the Pacific Community (SPC), the Forum Secretariat and relevant CROP agencies, the World Health Organisation and other relevant UN agencies, and regional law enforcement and legal agencies.

*Source: PIFS*

## USP'S COVID-19 PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

**As of 12 MARCH 2020, World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a Global Pandemic.**

The most common signs of COVID-19 infection is respiratory related with cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, breathlessness, and fever with headaches, malaise and body pains.

Severe infections can result in organ failure e.g. kidney, severe acute respiratory failure and death.

USP released its COVID-19 Pandemic Management Plan 2020 on 12 March 2020 and the plan outlines the various response measures of the University based on prevailing conditions at the campuses and outlines the roles of those involved in implementing key

response activities. Your assistance and corporation to implement the various control measures will be required at this time.

The USP COVID-19 Pandemic Management Plan 2020 will continue to evolve as per the situational circumstances ahead of us.

<https://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=23638>

# COVID-19: PACIFIC COMMUNITY UPDATES

As of 10 April 2020, 6 countries (**Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI), Papua New Guinea, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam and New Caledonia**) in the PICTs have reported 225 cases including 6 deaths, excluding the number of cases from USS Theodore Roosevelt currently docked in Guam.

Cases were also reported in **Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii**.

## Restrictions in place

- **Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Tuvalu** have declared states of emergency.
- **The Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia** have completely sealed their borders.
- **CMNI** is under nationwide curfew from 7pm to 6am daily.
- **Cook Islands** are in Code Yellow recommending people work from home.
- **Fiji** is under a nationwide curfew from 8pm to 5am daily. Lautoka and Suva are under full lockdown.
- **French Polynesia** is under nationwide curfew from 8pm to 5am till 29 April.
- **Kiribati** is at Level 4 alert with a stay at home policy.
- **New Caledonia** self-quarantine measures continue.
- **Niue** is at Level 4 alert with a stay at home policy.
- **Papua New Guinea** ended its lockdown on 06 April. The state of emergency has been extended by 2 months.
- **Tonga** is under nationwide curfew from 8pm to 6am.

## Regional Challenges

COVID-19 represents a significant challenge for the region. The Pacific Community (SPC), as the Council of

Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) lead in public health, has taken all necessary measures to help address the spread of COVID-19. This includes the adoption of a response framework aimed at supporting staff well-being and business continuity while supporting an efficient regional response to the pandemic.

## Which are the main risk areas for PICTs?

- In most of the PICTs, access to quality health services is limited, due to a lack of infrastructure, equipment, and qualified personnel. In the current situation, this can pose a problem of access to care if the number of infected people increases.
- Most PICTs do not have the needed laboratory equipment to analyse the tests on site, which creates difficulties in identifying cases. The test samples have to be sent to other countries for analysis.
- Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) are frequented by tourists. This represents a risk due to the movement of people to and from PICTs (although restrictive measures have been put in place); and also a risk for the local economies.

## What is SPC doing to help its member countries and territories deal with the current COVID-19 pandemic?

- SPC is supporting PICTs preparedness and their responses to COVID-19 through public health surveillance, infection prevention and control, risk communication, disaster management, humanitarian response, statistics, educational assessment, data custodianship and GIS mapping.
- SPC is part of the World Health Organization (WHO)-led multi-

agency Incident Management Team (IMT).

- Along with its partners, SPC also implements all relevant preparedness activities to help its members manage the risks associated with the virus including;
- The deployment of staff to do in-country training on COVID-19 case identification, contact tracing, case investigation, outbreak management;
- The deployment of staff to do in-country assessment and training on infection control.
- SPC provides funding for laboratory sample shipment and testing, in order to help its members identify potential cases and respond accordingly.
- SPC coordinates the procurement process for point-of-care test (BD Veritor System) to allow in-country confirmation of influenza cases, thereby facilitating proper case management.
- SPC is the focal point of the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN). PPHSN includes six services to prevent and respond to epidemics. These include coordination of laboratory services, surveillance systems, infection control, alert and communication, knowledge exchange and capacity building.
- SPC continues to coordinate the implementation of the Strengthening Health Interventions in the Pacific (SHIP) programme, to develop and strengthen competencies in epidemiology, surveillance, outbreak investigation and management, risk communication and reporting.

Source: SPC

visit the link for latest updates:

<https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2020/04/covid-19-pacific-community-updates>

## USP AND SWISS FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STARTS COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH



*Dr Krishna Kotra Science, Science Programme Coordinator exchange the MoU with Mr Nef Danny of ETH Zurich*

The University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) represented by the Transdisciplinarity Lab (TdLab) last year signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaborative research and currently work being started in this regard.

The MoU was signed last year by Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor and President (VC&P) of USP and counter signed by Dr Pius Kruetli, Co-Director, TdLab of the Department of Environmental Systems Science of ETH Zurich.

Upon the invitation of Dr Krishna Kotra, Science Programme Coordinator at USP's Emalus Campus in Vanuatu, Mr Danny Nef a doctoral student from ETH visited in 2017 and presented his work at a public lecture. Further discussions in opportunities with staff at USP and ETH, it was agreed that a MoU would be benefit both parties.

Prof. Sushil Kumar, Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment (FSTE) thanked ETH in coming forward to collaborate with USP.

He said that the MoU with a prestigious university like ETH is always helpful for staff

and students at USP in doing quality research. He further felt that this collaboration would enhance research skills of both parties with mutual sharing of knowledge and expertise. The faculty would always support these initiatives and wishes all the very best on start of the frontline collaborative research, he concluded.

Dr Krishna Kotra thanked ETH for considering USP as their collaborator in the Pacific and assured that USP will facilitate all collaborative leads required for carrying out the research studies.

He said that it would be a privilege to work with ETH which currently stands as world's 6th and Europe's 2nd best university. Reflecting on the initiation he said that this is an era of collaborative research and parties must benefit from mutual expertise, thus leading to win-win situation.

He further explained that USP's Emalus Campus has been in the fore-front in attracting world –renowned universities and national research centres to carry out their research in Vanuatu and the Pacific.

“Inspite of limitations, collaborators believe in our ideas and logistic supports and thus

coming forward to carry out cutting edge research studies in collaboration with USP in Vanuatu and the Pacific,” Dr Kotra remarked.

Both, Dr. Kruetli and Mr. Nef stressed the importance of local partnerships for successful research projects aiming to develop effective solutions to the global challenges of today and tomorrow. They highly value the opportunity to scrutinize, debate, and exchange experiences together with USP as the leading knowledge hub in the South Pacific and emphasised the importance of this for academic and scientific achievements.

USP and ETH intend to collaborate in the following areas of cooperation:

- a) Joint research activities;
- b) Participation in seminars and academic meetings;
- c) Special short-term academic/technical/training programs; and
- d) Short-term student research student and scholar mobility.

## USP PACIFIC TAFE LAUNCHES DIPLOMA OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT COHORT IN LAUTOKA



Staff and students during the launch of Diploma of Project Management (Level 5) offered on a cohort basis at the Lautoka campus

Dr. Hasmukh Lal, the Chief Executive Officer, The University of the South Pacific (USP), Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE), launched the Diploma of Project Management (Level 5) offered on a cohort basis at the Lautoka campus on 12 March 2020.

Dr. Lal highlighted that USP Pacific TAFE was proud to launch the first ever cohort training for Diploma of Project Management, which was privately funded.

“Thank you for entrusting USP Pacific TAFE to enhance your learning in project management and we believe that this will enable you to make a meaningful contribution to the provision of services to the Fijian people,” he said.

“This is the first cohort delivery for Diploma of Project Management and I am happy to say that this certification is essential in your field and by utilising the knowledge and skills gained upon completion, this will be the key to your career success.”

Dr. Lal highlighted that there were many benefits associated in having a project management qualification.

“You might be wondering how you will be utilizing your project management qualification. First, by strengthening your project management skills, you will distinguish yourself from your peers and more likely be considered for advancement within your company and when seeking a new job,” Dr. Lal said.

“Second, when you take the time to gain cutting-edge knowledge not only can you put it to work immediately at your job, but you also attain valuable new credentials to include in your resume. Lastly, your new qualification can boost your professional value, as well as provide you with more job security and satisfaction.”

The Diploma of Project Management programme was approved in 2015 and delivered by Pacific TAFE in 2016 and 2017 as a semester-based programme. It underwent revision in 2018 to address the evolving compliance requirements and alignment to international best practices

## PACIFIC REGIONAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK (PacREF) ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

A number of activities have been undertaken in respect of PacREF and these include:

- (i) Workshops for the Implementing Agencies (USP – SOE/IOE, SPC-EQAP, UNESCO, UNICEF, APTC, PIFS) to Update the PacREF Implementation Rolling Plan. The main outcomes are:
  - a. Restructure of the PacREF IRP into the original four thematic areas of the PacREF Policy document and reallocation of activities into the four Thematic Areas have been completed and cleared by the Steering Committee. The four Thematic Areas are Quality and Relevance, Learning Pathways, Student Outcomes & Wellbeing, Teaching Professionalism.
  - b. As a planning tool, development of Theories of Change for each of the four thematic areas to logically align activities under specific outputs that will ensure the achievement of the broad intended outcomes of each thematic areas. So far the Theory of Change for the Teaching Professionalism has been completed. Workshop is now focused on remaining three thematic areas.
    - (ii) At the end of the workshops by next week, the Implementing Agencies will then be given time to finalise their work plans and budget for their activities agreed to from the workshops. The target is to complete the whole exercise by next week in order to finalise the Updated Implementation Rolling Plan and Budgeted for submission to ADB for funding.
    - (iii) The target is to have implementation start by July with the use of MFAT funds.
    - (iv) The other meeting was a teleconference between PFU, ADB, MFAT and Consultant catching up on where things are in regards to the Updating of the Implementation Rolling Plan and GPE application. ADB has submitted the first Quarterly Review documents to GPE and consultations now held between the group and GPE on the submissions.



## USP PACIFIC TAFE TO DELIVER MICRO-QUALIFICATION – DEVELOPING AND OPERATING A SMALL SEAFOOD BUSINESS

A team from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP), presented an approval letter to USP, Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE), to deliver Micro-qualification – Developing and Operating a Small Seafood Business in the region.

Mr. Rajendra Prasad, Team Leader at Educational Quality & Assessment Programme (EQAP), presented the letter to Dr. Has Mukh Lal, the Chief Executive Officer of Pacific TAFE at Statham Campus on 19 March 2020.

In his address Dr. Has Mukh Lal thanked SPC, EQAP for their support and approval to have Pacific TAFE, Workforce Development and Training Unit deliver the micro-qualification as a non-credit “Certificate of Professional Development in Establishing and Operating a Small Seafood Business.

“The Micro-Qualification in Establishing and Operating a Small Seafood Business is a professional qualification for people working in the seafood industry, including aquaculture farmers. It is intended to provide training for

people in occupations such as small-scale seafood businesses, entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises, market vendors, fishers, and seafood sellers,” Dr. Lal said.

“This micro-qualification helps learners to improve their record-keeping and financial management, sustain their businesses successfully and be cognisant of their supply chain, at the same time formally recognising existing practices.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Rajendra Prasad, Team Leader at Educational Quality & Assessment Programme (EQAP) thanked USP Pacific TAFE for its application to deliver the qualification in the region.

“The standards of this micro-qualification focus on the fundamentals of establishing and operating a small business, business models and business plans, marketing strategies, basic accounting, records and operational management, legislative requirements for business establishment and ongoing compliance will assist people already in business to operate successfully and help entrepreneurs to establish a new business,” he said.

## USP SCHOOL OF TOURISM & HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT & UNIVERSITY OF TARTU PÄRNU COLLEGE PARTICIPATE IN ERASMUS + HIGHER EDUCATION MOBILITY PROGRAMME

The Erasmus + programme provides students and staff an opportunity to experience global education at any University under the EU Member states.

Facilitated by The University of the South Pacific’s (USP) International Office, Professor Stephen Pratt from the School of Tourism & Hospitality Management participated in Erasmus + Higher Education Mobility Programme by visiting the University of Tartu’s (UT) Pärnu College in Estonia for seven days in February 2020.

The objectives of the mobility programme are to deepen the cooperation between both universities, specifically the links between the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, USP and UT Pärnu College. Among other things, the aims of the mobility are to de-brief and report on the past internships of UT Pärnu College students completing their internship in Fiji; to discuss future internship places in both countries; to give guest lectures; and to follow up research collaboration discussions.

Professor Pratt gave two seminars to staff and students at Pärnu College. The first seminar was titled ‘Destination Image and its Influencing Factors: Is it possible to change?’ The second presentation was called “Introducing Fiji – where happiness finds you”.

In this presentation, Professor Pratt provided an overview of the tourism and hospitality sector in Fiji, outlining the history of Fiji and its tourism industry and proving a snapshot of the different types of tourism that can be found in Fiji.

The visit gave Professor Pratt the opportunity to introduce USP to Estonian students and encourage them to undertake student exchange at USP.



## STAFF PROFILE

### *Most memorable moment at USP?*

The first Open Day I attended. Seeing how passionately students from different member countries showcase their culture through clothing, dancing, music made me extremely grateful and proud to be living and working in the South Pacific.

### *Best part about your job?*

Diversity. I perform a variety of tasks and get to meet a range of people including students, parents, stakeholders and government representatives. I also use Vanuatu's three official languages (Bislama, English, French) on a daily basis.

### *What three words would you use to describe your role?*

Challenging. Evolving. Interesting.

### *Favourite thing about USP.*

I love the regional character of USP. It is amazing to be working with staff and students from so many Pacific countries and to see that USP has been shaping Pacific leaders and forging further links between the islands for 52 years now.

### *What do you like most about your Campus?*

Its layout. All the buildings are at ground level, so our offices and even the classrooms feel like individual houses in a big family yard.

### *What has been your favourite project at USP?*

The Untrained Teachers Project, deployed by the School of Education in several USP member countries. I was part of the team for Vanuatu, which has a unique education system in the region, because some schools teach in English and some in French. It was very rewarding to be working with teachers and schools from different provinces to upgrade their qualifications and their teaching practice.

### *Best remedy for work stress?*

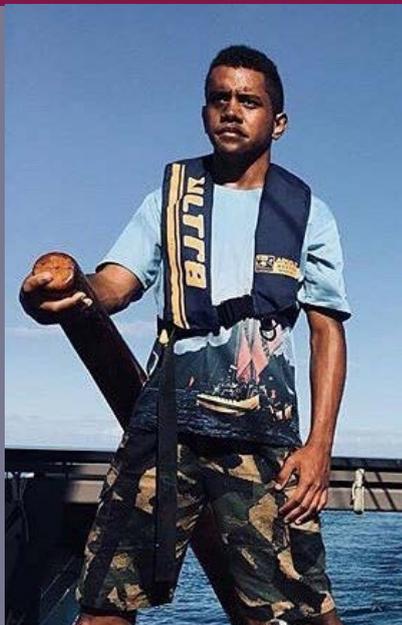
A swim in the ocean.

### *Where did you receive your qualifications?*

University of Bucharest, Romania

*USP provides a beautiful and diverse learning environment, with unique perspectives from the Pacific. It also accommodates flexible learning modes, such as online courses, in-country cohort-based programmes, summer or winter schools to offer you tailored, quality education!*

**Name:** Daniela Molnar  
**Occupation:** French Programme Coordinator  
**Faculty:** Arts, Law & Education  
**Year Joined:** 2014  
**Campus:** Emalus  
**Home Country:** Romania



## STUDENT PROFILE

### *Why did you choose USP?*

I found my labor of love in blogging and after researching found out that Journalism course offers a unit in Blogging and that was the closest I could get. So, here I am.

### *What are your career goals?*

I want to be a blogger but at the same time continue in my passion of helping others especially my new found passion of assisting people with disabilities.

### *Preferred mode of study?*

I prefer blended mode of study as it gives that flexibility to have classes and also independent study online when there are no classes.

### *Which course have you enjoyed the most? Why?*

I have thoroughly enjoyed the journalism course in USP because I found a family with the other students enrolled in the program. We have helped each other from the first year till date where most of us are graduating and others are near to the finish line.

### *Describe how you feel about studying on your campus?*

Funny I had this conversation with a friend just a week ago about how life would have turned out if we were not studying on campus. We both agreed that studying on campus has had a large impact

on us, from meeting people from all walks of life to the learning experience here at USP Laucala. People are always willing to help, so friendly and it is just a matter of reaching out to the right people and making great friends that positively influence your social life as well as creating a balance in the academic journey.

### *Three words to describe USP*

EMPOWERING, DIVERSE, TRANSFORMATIVE

### *Where do you see yourself 5-10 years from now?*

Sailing across the Pacific Ocean and blogging my experiences while at the same time visit small communities and provide any form of assistance to them.

### *What extra-curricular activities are you involved in?*

I volunteer as a student buddy at the Disability Resource Centre. I also sail on the weekend on the Uto Ni Yalo promoting sustainable sea transportation.

### *How is USP preparing you for the future?*

It has provided me with the resources and training to venture out to my chosen career path. It has also opened up new windows of opportunity for me.

**Name:** Epeli Lalagavesi  
**Programme:** BA: Journalism and Linguistics  
**Faculty:** Arts, Law & Education  
**Year Joined:** 2016  
**Home Country:** Fiji  
**Home Country:** Laucala



## WESTPAC BUDDY OF THE YEAR SHARES EXPERIENCE

A final year Education student, Mr. Niraj Singh of The University of the South Pacific (USP) was overwhelmed after returning from attending a week long orientation programme at Australia's Macquarie University last week. He attended the weeklong event after scooping the Westpac Buddy of the Year award in 2019.

The Buddy Programme is an initiative organised by USP aimed at smoothing the transition of first year students by linking them with senior students of the university. This linking process takes place during the University's orientation week and helps first year students better adjust to the new learning environment.

Mr. Singh said that he was grateful to be given the opportunity to visit an international university and witness how they carried out their orientation week. The trip was even more special for the Rakiraki lad as it was his first time travelling abroad.

The learning visit was fully funded by Westpac Fiji, who has been supporting the programme for the past 3 years. All expenses up to \$5,000 are sponsored by Westpac.

"The entire trip was just amazing; to get a tour of Macquarie University and witness their week long orientation programme was an experience I will never forget. I look forward to sharing all the information I learnt from the trip to the rest of the buddies," said Mr. Singh

While there, Mr. Singh said that the trip enabled him to enhance his knowledge about the University's programmes which will guide him and his peers for further studies abroad and enhance the learning of students here.

"During my trip I was able to compare the academic and non-academic standards of USP and Macquarie University, and I must say we are progressing well to be on par with them. However, there is always room for improvement".

He mentioned that the trip has also inspired him to work hard and also encouraged his friends to work hard. He further stated that the trip helped realise the importance of non-academic assistance to first year students.

"Overall the entire trip was a fun filled and a great learning experience for me, I will forever cherish the moments I spent at Macquarie University. I urge current and future buddies to do all you can to make the first year students feel welcome to the university and be creative in the way you showcase the different facilities available in the university," said Mr. Singh.



He is currently completing his final courses and will be graduating in September with a Bachelor of Science with a Graduate Certificate in Education.

Mr. Singh gratefully acknowledged USP and Westpac for such an amazing opportunity and hoped that he will inspire others to take similar initiatives.

Mr Pratish Raj, First Year Experience Coordinator said these sort of awards boost student's enthusiasm and motivates them to help other students play an active role in the community as a whole.

On how these awards are won, Mr Raj explained that at the start of every year, during Orientation Week, the volunteer Buddies sign up about 15-20 first year students and become their 'Buddy' for the year.

These buddies he said are well trained and have the necessary resources to help these first year students.

"This is particularly important in the Pacific, as we are known for being shy and being quiet, thus, the buddies help create a comforting peer support to these students. Throughout the year the Buddies have specific tasks they complete, and provide reports at the end of the year detailing the activities they did with their first year students," Mr Raj stated.

He added that the programme is quite competitive as there are benefits attached to it even though the Buddies are volunteers.

The Buddies have their own space on campus, with modern facilities and they also receive free data and talk time.



**IF YOU ARE FEELING UNWELL, OR KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS FEELING UNWELL AND IS SHOWING SYMPTOMS, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR RESPECTIVE HEALTH SERVICES.**

**STAY INFORMED | STAY SAFE | STAY ALIVE**

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