



USP Beat

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Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), Prof Jito Vanualailai during a planning meeting

COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE 2020 ACADEMIC YEAR

USP is successfully forging ahead with its preparations for face-to-face teaching in Semester 2, beginning 3 August 2020.

Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), Professor Jito Vanualailai said USP will take into consideration all precautionary measures set out by the government and the World Health Organization to help avoid a second wave of COVID-19 in Fiji.

He emphasised that there will also be an equivalent remote component for those students who are not able to attend face-to-face classes due to current travel restrictions in place. All face-to-face Laucala, Alafua, and Emalus courses (with the exception of a few, due to the nature of the course or programme) will be activated in all the campuses encompassing the remote component.

“Teaching and support staff are working collaboratively to ensure we expound on learnings from Semester 1 and improve upon the delivery of Semester 2 courses,” he said.

Looking back at Semester 1, Prof Vanualailai said the Semester progressed well despite the challenges brought on by COVID-19 and

the University drew upon its 30 plus years of experience in delivering quality learning materials for flexible learning and teaching to guarantee education continuity in Semester 1.

Prof Vanualailai and the Learning and Teaching Continuity Team closely monitored student participation and engagement on Moodle. A small percentage of students who recorded inactive were contacted by the University’s Call Centre team. The challenges faced by them, attributed to lack of steady internet connectivity, personal computers/laptops, and/or financial limitations, were noted.

The University acted swiftly on the feedback to mitigate against the aforementioned challenges and improved the learning environment by providing tablets, establishing computer hubs off-campus, and engaging with internet service providers to provide free data plans for USP students.

Prof Vanualailai said that exams/assessment week held between 15 – 26 June progressed well with minimal disruptions.

A small number of courses held face-to-face exams as these were either a course in an accredited programme or one with less than 20 students in a class. The majority of courses offered a suite of assessments, with a final online and time-based exam, for which up to 80% students participation rate was recorded.

Those students who faced challenges with online learning due to lack of access to steady internet connectivity, hardware (PCs/Laptops) or financial constraints and missed out on the final exam component due to reasons beyond their control were allowed to sit a special exam.

Prof Vanualailai said the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated changes in how the University conducts its academic activities in the 2020 academic year to ensure learning and teaching continues without significant interruption to the progress of students. Specific academic regulations have been amended to enable an adjusted learning environment so that these changes do not adversely affect the student learning outcomes.

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31 LAW GRADUATES ENROL FOR SEMESTER 2 PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA IN LEGAL PRACTICE PROGRAMME

The Law School at Laucala became the first school at USP to begin face to face teaching for Semester 2 following lockdown in March this year due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

31 students began a 22-week intensive programme of clinical legal education on 14 July that will prepare them to practice as lawyers in Fiji and other Pacific Island jurisdictions. The last few semesters have seen a marked increase in women entering the legal profession. This semester is no exception. Out of 31 students this semester, 23 are women.

During this five and half months of training, the students undertake 8 modules of practical legal courses. This will equip them to become public prosecutors, defence lawyers and civil litigators. In addition, they learn how to handle matters relating to estates (wills, probates, letters of administration), business law (partnership agreements, setting up of companies, preparations of contracts, commercial transactions), family law and human rights.

Included in the programme is a 4-week attachment with either government, private law firms, statutory bodies or international/regional organisations or private/commercial entities that have legal departments to give the students hands-on experience of working in the legal fraternity.

The PDLP programme provides practical training to the law students on how to conduct client interviews, mediation,



PDLP students preparing for assessment

and how to conduct themselves in court. These are essential preparation to becoming a lawyer.

Acting Head of School of Law, Mr Nainendra Nand, extended a warm welcome to all the students on behalf of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education, Dr Akanisi Kedrayate at the orientation on 14 July. He congratulated the students for their years of sacrifice, perseverance and hard work in completing their law degree.

Mr Nand said the PDLP programme is very demanding, challenging and intensive which entails long hours of dedicated studies. These long hours will also be good training for life as a lawyer.

USP's School of Law was established in

1994 offering programmes specifically focused on the legal systems of the South Pacific region, particularly that of USP's 12 member countries.

The Law School is located at USP's Emalus Campus in Port Vila where the undergraduate programme is taught face to face over 4 years. Most of the undergraduate courses are also taught face to face in Laucala. The entire degree programme is also offered online throughout the region.

PDLP is taught face to face in Suva and in blended form in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa.

The School also offers Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting (PDL), LLM and MEL



Teachers and students at PDLP assessments



INVISIBLE PLASTIC IN OUR SEAFOOD

Microplastics (MPs) are prevalent in the waters of Fiji and through seafood consumed, they pose a risk to human health and to Mother Earth, a Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) Programme funded Master of Science scholarship recipient at The University of the South Pacific, Andrew Paris, has found.

MPs are tiny pieces of invisible plastic floating in the Pacific Ocean and are less than 5mm in size.

Speaking at USP's PEUMP first virtual live event on July 2, as a precursor to the global initiative Plastic Bag Free Day, celebrated worldwide on July 3 annually, with the aim to eliminate the use of single-use plastic bags, Mr Andrew Paris said, considering the importance of seafood in the diet of Pacific Islanders, the risk posed is a cause for concern.

"Apart from being a pervasive threat to the marine environment MPs will impact significantly on the health and vitality of marine resources and marine ecosystem services," he said.

"Globally, the discourse on the prevalence of MPs has shown that areas with higher abundance in water and sediment increased the risk of exposure to marine biota and consequently humans also."

Mr Paris is among eight students from around the Pacific region awarded scholarships for the USP Master's Degree Programmes and Doctor of Philosophy for marine related research under the PEUMP programme.

A recent study by Ferreira et al. (2020) found that a constant source of MPs into the Suva inshore environment was from the Kinoya wastewater treatment plant. The treatment plant outfall is located in Laucala Bay. Findings revealed that the main morphological classification of MP was fibres, followed by fragments and films. It is suggested these microfibers likely originate from washing laundry, which causes its separation.

The scope and potential threats of MP distribution in the marine environment can be better addressed by identifying patterns of distribution; however, the origins and pathways that transfer MPs in and around Fiji waters remain unclear.



Andrew Paris speaking at the USP PEUMP Virtual Live Event

According to Mr Paris' preliminary research results, seawater samples from the Kiobo and Makogai islands in the Lomaiviti group to the East of Suva were found to have a low abundance of MPs. In comparison to these sites, there is an elevated prevalence of MPs in Rakiraki and Navakavu coastal waters. These results are in-line with the initial hypothesis that areas with high population densities tend to release more MPs. However, ocean currents and winds can cause the accumulation of MPs in coastal embayments and have also been found to cause MP's hotspots in certain areas.

Upon completion of his research at the end of 2021, Mr Paris hopes to provide valuable insight into the levels of MPs found in surface waters around Fiji, the distributive processes, patterns and consequently the degree to which the Fiji marine environment is inundated with MPs of foreign origin. The research will aid in establishing baseline data on the levels of MPs in Fiji surface waters which will be key in developing long

term monitoring programmes to detect environmental changes and evaluating the effectiveness of management actions related to plastic pollution control.

Vice-Chancellor and President, USP, Professor Pal Ahluwalia said "such research enables marine focused staff, students and programs to substantially contribute to sustainability, health of marine resources and wellbeing of islanders and people across the world."

USP is one of four key implementing partners of the overall PEUMP Programme, which is funded by European Union and the Government of Sweden. The EUR 45 million PEUMP programme promotes sustainable management and sound ocean governance for food security and economic growth, while addressing climate change resilience and conservation of marine biodiversity. It follows a comprehensive approach, integrating issues related to oceanic fisheries, coastal fisheries, community development, marine conservation and capacity building under one single regional action.



Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Pal Ahluwalia and Dean of FSTE, Dr Anjeela Jokhan with the PEUMP Programme Team

BOOK/STATIONERY SUPPORT INITIATIVE BY A USP STAFF MEMBER TO HELP THOSE IN NEED

As the region battle against the COVID-19 Pandemic, many individuals and organisations are coming forward to help the ones affected.

A Teaching Assistant at the School of Geography at USP, Kunal Singh, came up with an initiative to donate books and stationery to needy families in Fiji.

Kunal heads a group at USP called the Chemical Society of the South Pacific which focuses on science education in the region.

"I had initially started the stationery drive with the support of the society members, and it has expanded since then. I have now received assistance from fellow colleagues, friends and family," he said.

"It was a One Book and One Pen drive

where we asked the public to give a book and pen to help the children of Fiji. We get the books into packs, together with basic stationery and give it to those who are in need."

To date, this group from the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment (FSTE) have donated books and stationery to 85 families. They go the extra mile to deliver the packages if parents and children are unable to pick it up from a designated location.

The group helps two-children per family to reach as many families as possible. They plan to continue with this initiative as it is making a difference in the lives of parents.

Kunal said the COVID-19 Pandemic has caused a lot of disruption to people, with many having lost their jobs with no

support; the reason he has decided to make a change through his group.

"I have seen many people starting to donate after seeing my posts on social media. This small initiative makes a difference in people's life," he said.

He wants people to work together to get Fiji on a speedy path to economic recovery. He said Fiji has to look at how it can encourage investment and how it can keep small and micro businesses in operation.

Kunal has targeted people living on or below the poverty line in the country and urges children and parents to come forward if they are facing difficulties.

In future, he is planning to work with UNICEF to promote awareness of such initiatives.



Kunal Singh handing out stationery and books



**COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS
ADVISORY**

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



TUVALU 'THEORY OF CHANGE COALITION' CONSULTATION



TVSD Working Group Committee

A working group of Technical Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) stakeholders met in Funafuti, Tuvalu earlier this month to discuss a way forward for technical and vocational programmes in Tuvalu. The workshop was coordinated by the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC).

Currently four tertiary institutions in Tuvalu offer technical and vocational courses. The Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute (TMTI), Tuvalu Atoll Science Technology Training Institute (TASTII), Australian Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) and The University of the South Pacific (USP) participated in this workshop to collaborate on how they can better serve the needs of Tuvalu's youth unemployment which is also a matter of concern for the Tuvalu government.

As Tuvalu also participates in the Labour Mobility programme with Australia and New Zealand, having quality TVSD programmes in schools and tertiary institutions will mean well-trained young

people for the available market.

Its Department of Education is also in the process of developing a policy to promote TVSD, with Assistance from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT),

One outcome of last week's consultation was the need to change people's perception about TVSD.

Chair and USP's Tuvalu Campus Director, Dr. Rosiana Lagi, said technical and vocational skills are survival skills. These skills are important for everyone to know to be able to survive. As such, it is important that they be formally recognised in schools and society and be given the same respect and attention given to academic subjects.

Dr Lagi said according to Howard Gardner there are multiple types of intelligence, however our schools seem to generally focus on academic and no other important skills. Consequently, society perceives

TVSD as second-class knowledge and schools rob them of learning these important skills. With COVID-19 people are returning to use these skills to be able to survive. Therefore, it is paramount that we teach these skills with high regard, otherwise we will fail our people by not equipping them to face the new life challenges.

Dr. Lagi commended APTC for taking the lead in this initiative and collaborating with the stakeholders in this crucial exercise.

Acting Labour Officer, Meafou Brian who participated in the workshop said tertiary institutions providing technical and vocational courses play a key role in marketing people from Tuvalu for the Australia and New Zealand labour mobility programmes.

Sosela Tinilau, Acting Assistant Secretary for Ministry of Public Works Infrastructure Environment, Labour, Disaster and Meteorology Services, wants awareness to be created. He said awareness was a key factor in ensuring people know about this initiative and alternative education and career pathways that they can take. He added that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports can play a key role in rolling out the initiative.

APTC's Country Liaison and Engagement Coordinator in Tuvalu Fetagisi Titivalu said this was a significant development for Tuvalu. The outcome of the 30 June consultation will be presented to the CEO of the Ministry of Education and Education, its officers and stakeholders for further deliberation and implementation.



Dr Lagi presenting during the consultation



PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR SOM NAIDU ACHIEVES PRINCIPAL FELLOWSHIP OF THE HEA

Professor Som Naidu (Pro Vice-Chancellor, and Director of the Center for Flexible Learning) at USP has achieved Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA). Fellowships of the HEA is a professional recognition for practitioners in the higher education sector.

There are four grades of Fellowships offered by the HEA. These are Associate; Fellow; Senior and Principal Fellowship. The Principal Fellowship represents significant leadership in the promotion of teaching excellence, and are only awarded on the basis of an assessed portfolio.

In announcing the award to Professor Naidu, Professor Alison Johns (Chief Executive of the HEA (Higher Education Academy) said that “Principal Fellowship is a great achievement and recognises your commitment and contribution to student learning, as well as the positive influence you have with your colleagues as a strategic leader in teaching. I am determined that great teaching – and great leadership in teaching – are recognised and rewarded, and the Fellowship is a clear route for doing that”.

In locating the value and importance of the Principal Fellowship in the scheme, she pointed out that “There is now a total of over 133,000 Fellows in the UK and internationally of the HEA, and [Professor Naidu], now joins a small but very prestigious group of over 1,200 (less than 1% of its Fellowship population) who have attained Principal Fellowship. I think these

numbers illustrate your achievement very clearly”. Adding also that “I am determined that Advance HE works more closely and in partnership with Principal Fellows so that your individual and collective expertise is shared with colleagues in the sector. I am confident that together we can make a difference in the ceaseless pursuit of teaching excellence”.

In congratulating Professor Naidu, USP Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia acknowledged that “This is a huge accolade and one that needs to be widely publicised”.

The award reflects well on the University of the South Pacific as it is largely based on work carried out by Dr. Naidu over the past 4 years at USP. In September 2017, Dr. Naidu also served on the judging panel of the HEA/GLOBAL Teaching Awards including attending the awards ceremony which was held in London, UK (<http://www.usp.ac.fj/news/story.php?id=2453#.WW6kAYiGPIU>).

About the Higher Education Academy

Now known as Advance Higher Education (<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>) the HEA is a British professional membership scheme promoting excellence in higher education. The HEA advocates for evidence-based teaching methods and awards fellowships as a method of professional recognition for university teachers. The HEA is responsible for the UK Professional Standards Framework for higher education practitioners. On 21 March 2018, the HEA merged with the Leadership



Professor Som Naidu (Pro Vice-Chancellor, and Director of the Center for Flexible Learning) at USP

Foundation and the Equality Challenge Unit to form Advance HE.

The merger of the Equality Challenge Unit, the Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education followed the recommendations of the Bell Review for a single sector agency for equality and diversity, learning and teaching, and leadership and governance in higher education.

The HEA has premises in York Science Park, Heslington, UK. Its work is continued by Advance HE, which now operates the Higher Education Academy's professional membership scheme. For more information on the HEA please follow: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_Education_Academy.

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USP APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PEOPLE AND WORKFORCE STRATEGY

The University of the South Pacific is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr Jone Maritino Nemani as Executive Director People and Workforce Strategy following the resignation of Ms Hilary Faulds. His appointment is for a term of one year through direct appointment effective 20 July 2020.

In announcing the appointment, Vice Chancellor and President Professor Pal Ahluwalia said USP was grateful for Mr Nemani's availability to be able to join USP at short notice to take on this important role in preparation for the start of Semester 2 in early August.

Mr Nemani has previously served in senior positions with Fiji and regional governments. He was, until recently, the Permanent Secretary for Youth and Sports in Fiji.

Prior to that he has served as Chief Human Resources and Governance Advisor for the Government of Nauru. He brings with him a wide range of experience as a Human Resource/Employment Relations and Capacity Development specialist with broad expertise spanning more than 30 years working in diverse industries in the Pacific region.

Mr Nemani is a USP Alumnus having successfully completed his Diploma in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management and his Bachelor of Arts degree in Business and Public Administration and Management. He holds a Master of Commerce (Business/ Advance HR Specialisation) degree from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia.



Jone Maritino Nemani, Executive Director People and Workforce Strategy

STUDENT PROFILE



Name: Umar Siaka Diarra
Programme: Postgraduate Diploma in Biology
Faculty: Science, Technology & Environment
Year Joined: 2016
Home Country: Nigeria
Campus: Laucala, Fiji

Why did you choose USP?

It is the most reputable tertiary institute in the region and it also caters for my academic interests.

What are your career goals?

I dream of becoming a successful microbiologist and entrepreneur

Preferred mode of study?

Print

Which course have you enjoyed the most? Why?

I enjoy taking microbiology courses because they are aligned with my interests. UU204 (Pacific worlds) was also enjoyable because it exposed me to many beliefs, practices and issues that are present in the Oceania.

How has COVID-19 affected your studies and mode of study?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were forced to switch to online mode of study. While I initially did not like the idea of online learning, I was amazed by the effort put in by staff to maintain high quality teaching. As restrictions started easing, we were allowed to continue our projects, provided we observed social distancing and necessary precautions. So overall, I was quite pleased that I could continue my education despite the pandemic.

Three words to describe USP
 RELAXED, DIVERSE & INTERESTING

Describe how you feel about studying on your campus?

Studying at Laucala campus is quite an extraordinary experience. Nonetheless, my favorite part is meeting new people and learning about cultures that I previously knew nothing about.

What extra-curricular activities are you involved in?

I occasionally jog, hike, and play sports like futsal and basketball.

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

I hope to complete a master's degree within the next 5 years. After that, I plan to work as a microbiologist while venturing into the business world at the same time.

How is USP preparing you for the future?

USP has given me the opportunity to meet very amazing and inspirational individuals that have not only mentored me professionally but also personally. The lessons I've learnt at USP will go a long way in shaping my future (pun intended).

“University life is often portrayed to be all about urban living. USP challenges this notion because it also provides the amazing experience of living on a beautiful tropical paradise”





All the best for Semester 2, 2020

USP - SHAPING PACIFIC FUTURES

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CALL TOLL FREE ON 1568 (for Fiji)

REVISED ACADEMIC CALENDAR YEAR

SEMESTER 2, 2020 COMMENCES ON 3 AUGUST

28 August:

Fees Due Date

19 - 27 September:

Mid-Semester Break

14 - 22 November:

Study Week

23 November - 04 December

Examination/ Assessment Weeks

TRIMESTER 2, 2020

18 May:

Trimester begins

1 -14 August:

Study Week and Examination Period

TRIMESTER 2 BREAK: 15 - 30 August

TRIMESTER 3, 2020

31 August:

Trimester begins

14 - 27 November:

Study Week and Examination Period

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Managing Editor:

Vineeta Nand | Manager Communications

Reports By:

- Swashna Chand | Media & PR Officer
- Contributors

Desktop Publisher:

Loriza M Bano

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