



FIJI NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

FNU **NIKUA**



AIMING HIGH

ISSUE NO. 11

DECEMBER 2018

#ichoosefnu

FNU makes huge strides in 2018 – VC Healey



The commencement of several multi-million-dollar projects, the successful semesterisation of study programmes at the start of 2018 and the graduation of a record number of graduates has contributed to a year of success by Fiji National University (FNU) Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey.

Professor Healey said while there are more goals the university has to strive towards, the developments that have culminated up to this year sets a solid platform for the future.

“A lot of work has gone into repositioning FNU as a modern tertiary institution and I believe we are now in a firm position to make Fijians proud of FNU’s role as the national university,” said Professor Healey.

During the series of graduation events held in December, a total of 1,854 students graduated from the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF), National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC), College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS), College of Humanities and Education (CHE), College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST), College of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences and FNU Labasa Campus.

This included 206 postgraduate awards (postgraduate diplomas and master’s degrees).

Vice Chancellor Healey said students are returning to the University to further their education, reaffirming FNU’s vision to be the leading academic and research institution in the Pacific region.

Professor Healey said the expansion in the University’s postgraduate range of qualifications is important, because in today’s fast-changing labour market, employees need to constantly upskill and reskill to remain productive.

“It is currently estimated that students graduating in 2018 will have 12-15 different jobs over their working lives. Many of these future jobs do not yet exist, any more than ‘big data analysts’ or ‘social media managers’ existed 10 years ago in 2008,” said VC Healey.

“The key to succeeding in a changing world is continuous professional development or lifelong learning. Our increasing range of postgraduate programmes allow past graduates to return to campus to develop new specialist knowledge or, increasingly in the future, retain in new fields of study to remain relevant in the workplace.”

Professor Healey while congratulating the graduates challenged them to take criticism positively.

“Succeeding in the years ahead will require you to be adaptable, open to change and be prepared to return to university from time to time to upgrade your skills and qualifications.”

Professor Healey reaffirmed that as Fiji’s national university, FNU was committed to providing training and education to create a highly-skilled labour force and underpin the country’s rapid economic and social development.

“We at FNU are focused on developing a culture of excellence that resonates throughout our academic history.”

Professor Healey also acknowledged the invaluable support of key stakeholders in the development of Fiji’s

future workforce, including employers, government, public and private sector to develop study programmes.

He said since its inception in 2010, FNU has invested heavily in upgrading all its campuses, building a state-of-the-art digital infrastructure to support learning and research and developing a raft of new teaching programmes.

The following are a few important projects that FNU is undertaking in partnership with key stakeholders including the government in an effort to provide the students with better learning experience:

Connection to AARNET

Professor Healey said this advancement has given the University an opportunity to expand and improve services in various ways.

“This submarine cable connecting the universities of Australasia with those of North America gives us superfast broadband speeds on campus and access to a range of new educational software tools.”

DigitalFIJI Initiative

The support of the Fijian Government for its DigitalFIJI initiative which has enabled students of FNU to enjoy free, unlimited access to the internet 24/7 has been acknowledged by VC Healey.

“We thank the government for making FNU a full player in the digital academic community. This digital capability has given our students the opportunity to access study portals wherever they are on campus, that is, within the geofenced range and access information from the internet.”

“FNU’s connection to AARNET and students having unlimited access to free internet has created opportunities to expand our blended learning provision,” said Professor Healey.

Blended Learning

The Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), led by Professor James Pounder, is working towards supporting the academic staff in enhancing their teaching and making the content accessible to students in online format.

“I passionately believe that blended learning, that is, face-to-face teaching blended with distance or online learning – is the future for tertiary education,” VC Healey commented.

“Moving towards greater online provision of content, combined with face-to-face tutorials and intensive block teaching in workshops and laboratories, offers a way of making tertiary education more accessible to Fijians wherever they live and whatever their circumstances,” he said.

Alongside the virtual advancements, the University is also constantly upgrading the physical infrastructure of its campuses.

Veterinary Hospital at Koronivia Campus

To further improve the teaching facilities, this year the University signed a contract for the construction of a new \$30m Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

The facility will be the first for the Pacific and it will establish Fiji as a hub for veterinary medical training in the region.

“It will incorporate state-of-the-art facilities for small animals, diagnostic laboratory and post-mortem facility for small and large animals,” said Professor Healey.

The project is currently at the final design stage and based on the current progress, the construction of the Hospital is expected to begin in first quarter of 2019 and should be operational by mid-2020.

Once complete, the hospital will be a dedicated teaching facility, and will also offer services to clients.

Four-storey building at Nasinu Campus

Another significant project that commenced this year is the four-storey College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies complex.

The new multi-million-dollar building is seen as a transformational new project for Nasinu Campus.

The new building will house a dedicated Student Services Centre on the ground floor – a one-stop shop with such provisions that students can deal with enquiries on everything from enrolment to student accommodation, academic counselling and other services.

“It will have modern teaching rooms designed to facilitate flipped classroom teaching and problem-based learning,” said VC Healey.

Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA) three-storey facility

The commencement of a multi-million-dollar project at FMA will boost its reputation of being the leading maritime training institution in the region.

The \$15m government funded complex will encompass labs on ground floor including Marine High Voltage Room, Safety and Survival equipment labs, computer labs, fisheries lab and an open foyer. The upper two levels will have lecture rooms with seating capacity of up to 45 students. The project also includes construction of a car park.

VC Healey stated that providing maritime education and training requires a range of specialist facilities, hence, the steady expansion in the physical infrastructure at FMA.

Labasa Campus construction

The \$27m new Labasa Campus is expected to be ready and operational by first semester of 2020.

This is another government-funded project which is part of its ‘Look North’ policy to revitalize the economy in Vanua Levu.

Phase one will include modern lecture theatres, tutorial and teaching rooms, staff administration offices, computer labs, library and a cafeteria.

The University has a \$50m year capital programme to replace old aging buildings, construction of new facilities in an effort to provide students modern studying and learning environment.

VC Healey said the focus now was on the recruitment of new students to join FNU in 2019. He urged students, parents and guardians to visit any University campus, ‘pop-up service centres’ or roadshows which are being undertaken to be assisted with enrolment.

“This is a very exciting period at the University as we go all out to assist students enrol in programmes they are interested in. I encourage all students to visit any of our campuses across the country or special FNU booths being set-up at strategic locations to find out more about how they can become part of the growing FNU family,” said VC Healey.

Academic wins prestigious inaugural VC's Research Excellence Award



Dr Rajeev Bhat receiving his award from FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey.

It was a gratifying moment for Dr Rajeev Bhat to be awarded the inaugural Vice-Chancellor's Award for Research Excellence during the College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) December graduation ceremony.

To promote the importance of research, this year the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) launched the Vice Chancellor's Award for Research Excellence. The prestigious award is given to an individual researcher whose research activity has achieved considerable impact and recognition outside the University.

Dr Bhat, an Associate Professor of Food Technology and Head of Department of Food Science and Home Economics at CEST said he was honoured to be recognised for his research contributions.

The academic said such recognitions motivate researchers to work harder and sets the bar for accomplishments even higher for themselves and encourages them to contribute more to uplift the image of their departments and the organisation as a whole.

"I would like to acknowledge the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) and the Vice Chancellor for initiating the Research Excellence award. This is a great way to showcase to the public the work of the academics in the research arena apart from normal teaching responsibilities," Dr Bhat said.

The soft-spoken Dr Bhat has more than 19 years of Research and Teaching experience in the field of agri-food technology with research expertise on various issues pertaining to 'Sustainable Food Production'.

He has gained extensive research experience by working in countries like India, South Korea, Malaysia, Germany and now in Fiji.

Dr Bhat was born and brought up in Mysore, India – the city of joy and culture! It is known for its royal heritage and magnificent buildings and monuments.

"I have always had close links with the farming community since childhood and that is when I developed the passion towards sustainable food practices," said Dr Bhatt.

"My wife also comes from a farming background in India and by observing various challenges the farmers face, my interest in assisting the farming communities boosted. We should never forget that farmers are the backbone of a nation and their contribution to any regional economy is invaluable," he said.

Dr Bhat joined the Fiji National University (FNU) in March 2016. Since then he has been focusing on bringing visibility to the Food Science Department nationally and internationally via his networks and research publications.

According to Dr Bhat, with the availability of natural resources in Fiji, there is a lot of scope in research for agri-food sector.

"Some of the innovative research activities that need to be undertaken in Fiji includes value addition for local agricultural produce, study of the impact of food processing on non-communicable diseases, evaluation of the effect of changing climate change patterns on quality and safety of foods, introducing innovative post-harvest technologies and so forth."

"Currently, there are several sustainability challenges that needs to be overcome in agri-

food technology based research in Fiji. We are working towards overcoming these challenges through contributions from our research activities," said Dr Bhat.

He is also a free-lance writer who pens his thoughts on food and health in local newspaper so that vital information reaches the local consumers.

Dr Bhat has almost 200 research publications in International Scientific Indexing (ISI) based journals and referred book chapters which were cited 6,300 times, carrying a h-index of 39 in Google scholar and 30 in Scopus database. (A h-index indicates how productive and influential a researcher is in the field.)

The 42-year-old has four edited books, 1 authored book (in press), sits on the editorial board of leading international journals and has been a scientific committee member and invited speaker at various international conferences.

Dr Bhat has successfully undertaken and completed funded research projects, as well as supervised student research projects.

He is also a recipient of prestigious international awards and recognitions, some of which includes; 'Excellence Recognition Award' conferred by the Association of Agricultural Technology in South-East Asia, 'Prosper.Net-Scopus Award in Sustainable Development' conferred by the United Nations Uni. Japan, 'IUFoST/Fi Young Scientist Excellence Award', conferred by the International Union of Food Science and Technology, Canada, Global Achievers Award conferred by the Institute of Oriental Heritage, India and Best Researcher Award 2017 from CEST, FNU.

As a special recognition he was appointed as 'Associate Fellow' at the Centre for Global Sustainability Studies (CGSS) in Malaysia.



Dr Rajeev Bhat receiving the 2017 Best Researcher Award for CEST from Acting Dean CEST, Salabogi Mavoa.

Perseverance leads Dr Singh to scoop top award



Humble, hard-working and friendly are few of the words that have been used to describe young academic Dr Patrick Mark Singh, winner of the inaugural recipient of Vice Chancellor's Early Career Researcher Award.

Dr Singh doesn't like to be in the limelight much, however his academic achievements have placed him in the spotlight a few times.

The most recent occasion was earlier this month during Fiji National University (FNU) College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) graduation ceremony where he was announced as the winner of the VC's award.

Dr Singh said when a researcher's work is appreciated it creates great satisfaction which boosts morale and provides greater motivation to continue with their research work. After receiving the award, he thanked FNU and extended his acknowledgement to the awards panel that nominated him.

"I was very pleased and felt proud and humble at the same time when the announcement was made," said Dr Singh.

"For a moment I paused to ponder at this recognition that I have been bestowed with and realized that I still need to continue the work, I cannot stop here," he added.

The 31-year-old was recognised for achieving excellence in research as an Early Career Researcher with seven highly ranked journal papers, six best paper awards for conference papers and a H-Index of 6.

Dr Singh, who is originally from Nakasi has made contribution to knowledge in the discipline of Mechanical Engineering.

He graduated with a PhD from the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Mokpo National University in South Korea earlier this year. He attained his Master's degree from the same University in 2014.

His field of specialization is fluid machinery (pumps and turbines) and renewable energy in the areas of energy storage (pump-turbine), wind, wave, tidal energy and hydro turbines (Francis, cross flow, bulb/propeller).

Growing up Dr Singh says he was torn between pursuing a career in medicine and engineering. According to the Assistant Professor his family and mentors encouraged him to join the medical field while he had a passion for planning, designing and construction of buildings and other

structures.

"Architectural works, in the material form of buildings, are often perceived as cultural symbols and as works of art – this was my interest. The sad thing was that it was not offered at undergraduate level which made me take up Bachelor of Engineering Technology (Mechanical/Manufacturing)," the young academic said.

Dr Singh was fortunate to have secured a scholarship from the Korean Government Scholarship Program to pursue his Master's studies. "My scholarship came with a condition that I must learn Korean language. I studied the language for 2 years."

He describes himself as in between an intermediate and fluent speaker of Korean language. He is able to understand it really well and communicate within reasonable limits.

"Now, I want to focus on the renewable energy sector and through FNU educate the upcoming generation on the importance and usage of renewable energies that we have readily available in our beautiful country."

"During the first year in Korea, I felt like quitting and returning to Fiji. Adapting to the food, language, weather and staying away from home was just too much to cope with. Fortunately, there were other foreign students in my group and we just encouraged and assisted each other in this journey."

Upon completion of his Master's degree and with the support from his Professors, Dr Singh continued with his studies and pursued a PhD in Korea under Woojung Education and Culture Foundation scholarship.

"My family encouraged me to go ahead and complete my doctorate degree. I acknowledge the Fijian Embassy for pointing me towards the Woojung Education and Culture Foundation that is founded by Lee Joong Keun, who offered me a scholarship to further my studies. This Scholarship Foundation offers scholarships to more than 100 students per semester from developing countries to study in Korea."

"I also acknowledge my church pastors in Korea who treated me as their own son and during this time, I also met my better half who was my pillar of strength in difficult times."

Dr Singh commended the relationship between the universities and industries in Korea.

"While we were full time students, we were also involved in several research and development projects with industries which was funded by the government – we were exposed to a lot of engineering work."

One of his most notable achievements is the design of a hydrofoil for tidal current turbines for which he was awarded by the Korean Society of Mechanical Engineers.

He also designed an experimental test rig on a pump-turbine system for energy storage systems for his laboratory work.

"Now, I want to focus on the renewable energy sector and through FNU educate the upcoming generation on the importance and usage of renewable energies that we have readily available in our beautiful country."

"All we have to do is to tap into it in an environmental friendly way where we do not end up exploiting these resources. All the research work that I did in Korea can be applied in Fiji."

It has been almost a year now since his to Fiji after being away for a little over seven and half years.

"I am still trying to adjust to life here but overall my learning journey has been an interesting one and I hope the same continues for the academic career."

In addition to writing scholarly publications and lecturing, Dr Singh enjoys playing soccer and hiking.



Dr Patrick Singh receiving his award from FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey.

Chief guests' graduation messages



Stanley Raniga
General Manager of Future Farms Limited
College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and National Training and Productivity Centre graduation

"I would like to encourage all graduates to always be open to learning and make the best use of resources available to you. The key to success is to remain humble, be honest and always maintain good work ethics. Future Farms has a strong working relationship with FNU and I reaffirm the company's continued support of providing training and employment opportunities to students. CAFF and NTPC have really assisted Future Farms in its journey. Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the CAFF, Future Farms took onboard two students under the graduate development program."



Nesbitt Hazelaman
Chief Executive of Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation
College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies graduation

"I would like to congratulate all the graduates here today and commend you for persevering and achieving your dreams. Graduates, you now have the challenge to translate your education into the national, regional and global workplace needs and realities. You have received well-rounded education from your teaching staff and both academic and on the job training to prepare you for the world of work. Fiji is a world class nation and we need to build our productivity. For those graduating, I commend you as you will reduce the skills gap that currently exists in various sectors in Fiji."



Alison Burchell
Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts
College of Humanities and Education graduation

"We need graduates who can question and be able to identify creative solutions to solve problems and find new ways. We are looking for people with excellence, aspirations, goals and targets that are achievable. I want to encourage you that when you go out into employment – fight against your comfort zones. The teacher graduates should be able to change the methodology of teaching according to the needs of the individual students. We need to treat people with dignity and understand the physical, auditory or the visual disability and make sure that we are catering for all Fijians."



Warren Yee
Managing Director of Irwin Alsop Pacific Limited
College of Engineering, Science and Technology graduation

"The sea of knowledge knows no boundaries. This phrase reminds me that learning does not begin and end with a university education. All of us here today are swimmers in the sea of knowledge, on our own continuous journey of learning without boundaries, whether at home, work, school, whether we are graduating today or here to support the graduates, we should strive to learn something new every day. University life and study builds your strength as a person. It is important to remember the certificates, diplomas and degrees you received today are paper qualifications, its real value rely in how you apply the training you received. To succeed in life, you also require personal values which, if applied well, will mold you into a responsible citizen."



Bruce Campbell
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Pacific Sub-Regional Office
Director and Representative
College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (Nursing) graduation

"Very hearty congratulations to the graduating Class of 2018 and a warm welcome to the noblest profession of nursing! Even the most daunting of all national rugby 7s team begin to tremble when they learn their next encounter will be with Fiji. What a great nation and place from which to graduate! I believe nursing is one of the few professions, where every morning when you wake up and plant both feet on the ground, you can actually feel that what you are going to do that day is really going to matter. And I would suggest that of the millions around the world who will graduate during 2018, those of you who are fortunate to have a career serving others may be the luckiest of all."



Gordon Burns
Counsellor for Regional Development Cooperation, Australian High Commission
College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (Medicine) graduation

"Australia is proud to continue its long term partnership with the oldest and most significant medical institution in the region, FNU's CMNHS. Graduates you now join members of your respective professions in giving back to the community through the skills and knowledge you gained not only from the College but also through placements and attachments in your own countries during your training. As you transition from student to a healthcare provider, manager or researcher – make the time to grow into the better version of yourself, be it as the eldest child, a wife, a brother or a parent – because the journey to achieving the two is similar in many ways."

Didrua follows late father's footsteps



Joana Didrua with her mum after the graduation ceremony.

Twenty-three year old Joana Didrua has big shoes to fill but she's up to the challenge. Graduating with a Trade Diploma in Electrical Engineering (Electrical) from the College of Engineering, Science and Technology, Didrua was inspired by her late father Penijamini Ralogaivalu to take up the blue collar trade. "Being an electrical engineer won't be an easy task. I will have to be on-call during emergencies and natural disasters and sometimes I might have to work beyond the normal 8-5 hour shift, but I am ready for it," said Didrua holding her graduation certificate proudly. "When I was growing up, I would watch my father taking pride in his job, my siblings and I used to see that satisfaction in his eyes, whenever he was able to help anyone with the skills he had. So that encouraged me to enrol at FNU." "I am over-whelmed, all my struggles are paying off and my dreams are now becoming a reality," said Didrua. Originally from Savusavu, Didrua said her success is the result of her mother's hard work and sacrifices. Her mother Siteri Nakubu said fulfilling her

daughter's dream as a single-parent was not easy. "There have been various times when my children and I missed their late father. He would have been really proud unfortunately he is not around to see this day," said an emotional Nakubu. Didrua who was one of the two females who graduated in this programme, said she intends to learn as much as she can in this field once she enters the workforce. "I want to serve my country and my people to access clean and an affordable electricity," she said. Fellow graduate Sulueti Tamanalevu said there were times when Joana and her found Electrical Engineering challenging, however they remained determined towards their goal. "There were some tasks where it required more manpower, we felt we won't be able to do it. We even had to compete with the male students but we did not look back," said Tamanalevu. The Tailevu native said joining the electrical field was her childhood dream. "I have always wanted to know how we get electricity plus I have an uncle who is my mentor, he took electrical too and I got inspired by him," she added. Tamanalevu hopes to encourage more female students in joining the electrical field. "It's surprising to see that very few women choose Electrical Engineering as their career. I have never seen anything that makes it less suitable for women. We need to break this norm," she said. "Through this programme, we have learnt Electrical safety and other occupational health and safety fundamentals along with project management of electrical installations and basic engineering calculations." "Overall, the programme was challenging but if you put your focus on your studies, you can overcome those hurdles and will be able to finish all your units with flying colors," said Tamanalevu.

Raman wins Special Award in Eye Care

Growing along the sugarcane belt in Vunivau on the outskirts of Labasa town, Jaishree Raman had a dream of pursuing a career where she could help people and make a difference in their lives. Raman, who attended All Saints Secondary School, decided on a career in the medical field. After attaining a Diploma in Nursing in 2010, she worked as a Nurse at the Lautoka Hospital until 2013. She then moved to Suva to join the Pacific Eye Institute as a Theatre Nurse. She found her true calling there and decided to study Postgraduate Diploma in Eye Care offered by the Fiji National University (FNU).



Australian High Commission's Gordon Burns, presents the special award in Eye Care to Jaishree Raman.

The 29 year-old graduated from FNU's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences with a Postgraduate Diploma in Eye Care and also scooped the Special Award in Eye Care, known as the Professor Fred Hollows Award, given to the best performing student. "I am very competitive with my own self. I work very hard and I always wanted to achieve this special award," said an elated Raman. Raman, who will now resume work as an Eye Specialist, said without a good vision, people are deprived of seeing the whole world. She said assisting people with vision difficulties provided her with great self-satisfaction. "The joy we see the on-patients face, after their surgery, is very rewarding. I have seen patients who have had vision challenges for over 20 years some who haven't seen their grandchildren. And after undergoing successful which restored their vision, the smile on their face is indescribable," Raman said. The Vunivau native aims to continue to help people in the community by pursuing Masters studies in the area of Public Health. "In Fiji, there has been very little research done for eye care and with the high rate of diabetes, which affects the eyes, I hope to create more awareness," she said. Raman is also aware that achieving this ambitions goal will be no easy feat. "Challenges were many because I was working student so I had to balance by studies and work. Sometimes I had to come early to the clinic to make up the number of patients I had to see," she said. Raman, also acknowledged the support of her family and God's guidance in her life. "When I joined nursing school, I wanted to make a difference in community by broadening my horizon. I think, the eye care programme at FNU is really good and if more people do this, it will be a big help to the community," she commented. Raman also shared a timely message for aspiring students. "Working hard is the key to success and you have to tell yourself that you can do better than what you did before. Being in competition with your own self will take you long way," she said.

■ Breaking barriers – Cakauniqoliqoli graduates as QS



Elenoa Cakauniqoliqoli proudly receives her certificate from FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey.

Being the youngest and only female Estimator at her workplace is a great honour for new graduate Elenoa Cakauniqoliqoli.

Cakauniqoliqoli, with origins from the chiefly island of Serua, graduated with a Trade Diploma in Quantity Surveying from Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST). The 21-year-old is employed at Rawlinson Jenkins Limited based in Suva.

"Being the youngest and only female in my team at work means I get to learn a lot from my senior colleagues. They have been helpful in sharing new knowledge and skills with me. It's a good working environment and I love my job," Cakauniqoliqoli said.

"Despite being the only female in my team, I am treated with the same level of respect as everyone else because everyone is committed to excelling as a team. This also helps me build my confidence in my field of work."

Cakauniqoliqoli, after completing high school at Ratu Latianara College in Serua, began to explore tertiary education programmes best suited for her liking.

Whilst discussing options with her family, Cakauniqoliqoli's mother suggested that she enrol in the Quantity Surveying (QS) course that was offered at FNU's Derrick Campus in Samabula.

"I was looking at FNU courses at the College of Engineering, Science and Technology when my mother suggested I look at QS. It was new to me so I did my own research and found out that it was a field with high job prospects in Fiji," Cakauniqoliqoli said.

"I also realised that my mum had suggested the course to me because it complemented the subjects I excelled at in high school, such as Math."

"Deciding to challenge myself in this field that caught my interest after I had researched about it, in 2016 I enrolled in the Trade Diploma programme."

The role of a quantity surveyor (QS) is to conduct and manage all costs relating to

building and civil engineering projects, from the initial calculations to the final figures. This means measuring and calculating how much material is needed and how much it will cost.

A QS also ensures that building projects is constructed within budgets that have been set out, prepares pricing documents and conducts value determination and risk management. A QS graduate enters the workforce as an Estimator.

Cakauniqoliqoli said it was a new experience for her to undergo the one-year eight months trade diploma programme when she began her university studies.

"I just finished high school and from doing five subjects the whole year I had to transition into the trimester mode doing different unit topics so this was new to me but something I was equally excited about because every day I knew I was learning something new."

"Even though at times I felt disheartened trying to juggle school, studies and my social life I was always motivated by the thought 'struggle now, enjoy later'," she shared with a laugh.

"I am happy I enrolled in this programme because calculating and doing the costing for building projects like a two-bedroom house from foundation to the roofs and all the structures in between made me understand the complexity and the hard work that it done behind the scenes of these projects."

Cakauniqoliqoli added that being taught at FNU by lecturers who were experienced and well-versed in the industry made learning easier and the assistance they provided helped her complete important tasks such as her final year project.

She said lecturers would sometimes conduct extra classes in the evening for the benefit of the students so that they were able to understand and complete their projects.

"Despite being a traditionally male-dominated field, females are now taking up this course and I would encourage everyone to consider this programme as there's not a lot of Quantity Surveyors here in Fiji."

Sweet success for marketing graduate

Having to work in order to fund his tertiary studies is a true testament to the passion and determination Fiji National University (FNU) graduate Eroni Daunibau Navunisaravi has in achieving his career ambitions.

The 26-year-old from Naisausau, Namara in Tailevu graduated from FNU's College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS) earlier this month with a Bachelor of Commerce qualification majoring in Management and Marketing.

Navunisaravi (pictured below with family) took leave from his work as a Brand Marketing Coordinator at Asaleo Care Fiji Limited to attend his big day in the presence of his parents. "Today is probably one of the best days of my life and even though my journey to receiving this Bachelor's degree was not an easy one, I am thankful to God for helping me achieve this," Navunisaravi said.

"On our way to graduation, my parents told me they were really proud of me and I was truly humbled to hear this as I plan to support them and the rest of my family in any way I can."

"During my graduation, I realised that the saying 'follow your dreams' is not just a cliché but something everyone should do for themselves."

Navunisaravi shared that after completing Form Seven (now Year 13) at Sila Central High School, he decided to pursue studies in the marketing field.

"However, my parents had other expectations of me and said they wanted me to become a teacher so I enrolled into a teaching programme but during the first semester, I realised that it was not the right fit for me," he said.

"I do understand the important role teacher's play in our lives but when I looked at myself, I have a very shy personality and I could not picture being a teacher."

"I was always quiet but creative and was always thinking of unique or different ways in

which I would market something, this was my true passion," added the new graduate.

During the first trimester as a full-time student, his family experienced financial difficulties. Navunisaravi decided that he would find employment in order to pay for his school fees.

"I knew I had to find a way to continue my tertiary education so I began to look for work and my place of employment was at Bondwell as a sales representative," he said.

"Working as a sales representative reaffirmed my passion of being in this field as I was passionate about how I would market products for the benefit of those that bought the products."

"Realising this, in 2011 I decided to change my tertiary programme and enrolled at FNU for the Higher Education Diploma in Marketing." Navunisaravi informed his parents of the change in his university education course and assured them that he would excel in his field of choice.

He decided to continue working to pay for his fees and became a part-time student.

"Going through financial difficulties was not an excuse for me to drop out of studies because I know there is always a way to address your challenges. Juggling work and studies was something I had to adapt to and this showed me the importance of time management and setting priorities in terms of my work and university load."

"I knew that my family would always support me in whatever way they could but I wanted to fund my own education to ease the burden on my parents. I made arrangements with FNU's Finance Office to pay my course fees through salary deductions."

Navunisaravi said after completing the Higher Education Diploma course in 2016, he decided to continue upskilling his knowledge and qualifications by enrolling in the Bachelor of Commerce programme.

"Graduating this year has been such a proud moment for me. My journey may not have been a straight forward one but I am happy that I continued to strive for something that I wanted to achieve."

"Over the years my parents have also seen my interest and work in the sales and marketing field and I am blessed that even though they had other plans for me, they were very supportive of the decisions I made regarding my programme of study."

"My message is simple, whether you are a school dropout, mature aged student, completing high school or deciding on what tertiary programmes to study – always choose something that aligns to your goals and interest because at the end of the day you will be the one working in that particular field," Navunisaravi stated.



Mone turns dream into reality

After being employed at the Ministry of Health in Tonga for nine years, Melesanipepa Mone decided to take a break and pursue studies at the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

Mone, who worked at the Vaiola Hospital's Radiology Department, enrolled for the Bachelor of Medical Imaging Science programme.

She started off as a private student for the first two years before she was awarded the Australia Awards Pacific Scholarship.

Three years later, Mone, 32, from Folaha, Tongatapu in Tonga successfully completed the Bachelor's programme and graduated from FNU.

"It was a challenge. Studying away from home and going back to school after so many years was a lot to cope with but I nailed it," Mone said.

She said life in Fiji was different from her homeland. She missed her family and the comfort of her home however the dream of attaining a degree was the key motivating factor.

"I feel joyous and grateful to be part of this graduating group of students because I dreamt about this day for a long time. I am very grateful to all my lecturers for helping me through my studies and I would also like to thank God and my family for being the pillar of my strength," she said.

According to Mone, studying at CMNHS was a unique and rewarding experience.

"The best thing is that we get to do practical with theory and that was very helpful especially for me because I came back to school after so many years," Mone commented.

The soft-spoken charismatic mother of two said anything was possible in life if aspiring students placed faith in themselves.

"I would like to encourage more students to undertake this programme which is good and also for the benefit for our family and country," she said.

Her husband, Ifalemi Mone who was present at the graduation ceremony was equally ecstatic saying they felt very proud of her achievements.

"She has accomplished her dream to graduate. From our two little daughters and me, we would like to say congratulate Mele on her journey and she has made us proud," he said.



Happy family... Daughters; Mele 'Unaloto Mone, 13, Koinonia Mone, 10, Melesanipepa Mone with husband Ifalemi Mone.

Working mother attains diploma

Entering the classroom after a lapse of twenty years did not deter 45 year-old Kanchan Devi to attain her goal, which was to graduate from the Fiji National University (FNU) with a Higher Education Diploma in Accounting.

Devi, a mother of one, who works as an Assistant Accounts Officer at the Fiji Police Force, Northern Division wore a radiant smile as her name was called out to receive her certificate during FNU's graduation in Labasa. "I'm so happy that I've made it," said Devi.

Originally from Daku, Labasa, Devi entered the workforce in 1995, soon after completing her secondary school education.

She worked for various government ministries and departments including the Labasa Hospital, Lands Department, Public Works Department, Department of Water and Sewerage and Department of National Roads.

"I was fortunate enough that I got a job just with my secondary school qualifications. However, I wasn't content with this and I wanted to learn more and upskill myself," she said.

Six years ago, with support from her family, Devi enrolled for the Higher Education

Diploma programme at FNU.

Devi admitted that having a demanding job, juggling family life with studies wasn't an easy one.

But Devi did things at her own pace and was grateful that she finally reached the finishing line.

"There were times when I had to put my focus on my work or family engagement, that would be when I will take break from studies so that I don't lag behind with my studies," she said.

Devi believes there should be no age limit to studies.

"One should not think that they cannot study further. Had I had that perception, I would not have had been here today," she said.

"You may have challenges ahead of you but when you succeed it will be worth it," she added.

Devi said she will now use her education to advance her career to management position.

"My next goal is to undertake a Degree in Accounting but for now I will continue with my work and specialise in my area of interest," she said.



Aruna Devi with her husband Rikash Deo.

Devi acknowledges supportive husband

my research and assignments. He has been my pillar of strength," she said.

"Whenever I was busy with my assignments or studying for my exams, my husband did most of the house work and I really appreciate the support that he gave which is the reason I'm here today," she said.

Devi's husband is Rikash Deo, is a school teacher at Shiri Gurunanak Khalsa College in Labasa.

Deo said it was a proud moment for him to see his wife graduate.

"I am glad to see her achieving what we dreamt few years ago. I am extremely happy and excited about my wife's achievement," said Deo.

The newly graduate from Naduna, in the outskirts of Labasa said she's looking forward to putting into practice newly gained skills and knowledge at her work place.

Devi is currently employed as a Librarian at Shiri Gurunanak Khalsa College in Labasa.

"This course taught me on the fundamentals of human and physical resource management as well as the importance of financial resources and time management. I can confidently say that I've learnt a lot and become more skilled with decision making and trouble-shooting," she said.

Devi hopes to return to FNU to further her education.



Kanchan Devi pictured with her family.

Donning the Fiji National University's (FNU) blue graduation gown and cap, walking up the main stage to collect her academic credentials was a dream come true for 33-year-old Aruna Devi.

The Labasa native graduated with Bachelor of Commerce in Management and Human Resource / Industrial Relation.

Devi said three years of hard work and perseverance had finally paid-off.

"I decided to enrol for studies when I got married and it was my husband Rikash Deo's dream that I graduate with Bachelors," said an elated Devi.

"He was really supportive of me in my journey. He stood by me from day one and has always encouraged me. He assisted me with

Chief guest graduation message



Jovesa Vocea
Commissioner Northern

"The modern world is not so easy for the young; there are many temptations and few incentives. You may not have a good role model around you. You may come from a family where there is not enough money to fulfill your dreams. You may feel that no one understands or hears what you say. But surviving in adversity is a test of

your personal strength. For every hurdle you counter, devise a strategy to overcome it and you will succeed. All we dream in life are; financial security, independence and safety. You want happiness, wisdom and stability. But you must earn these things. In these years at school, you have learnt about taking responsibility for the things you do. This is one of the most important lessons for the young people of Fiji to learn. We are all accountable for what we do. We reap what we sow."

Apprentice Chef Dawai scoops Excellence Award

As the saying goes 'hard work will take you places'. This has been true for young Ratu Vuniani Navuniuci Dawai, who scooped the Excellence Award in Certificate III in Commercial Cookery during the Fiji National University's (FNU) National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) graduation ceremony.

The Nadi man loves to be creative with his hands in the kitchen and dreams of one day becoming a Master Chef.

Ratu Dawai says his passion for cooking and baking came at a young age as his tailed his mother in the kitchen.

After completing his secondary school education, he followed his passion in cookery.

He joined FNU where he pursued a Certificate of Attainment in Commercial Cookery, and in Baking and Patisserie. Ratu Dawai (pictured with his family) joined Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa as a trainee after completing his studies.

"During my attachment period, I was offered an apprenticeship opportunity for 4 years. I saw my future here. This was an opportunity of a lifetime, so I grabbed it," Ratu Dawai said.

"Sofitel Fiji Resort offers excellent on-job trainings and in-house trainings to its staff and I would like to thank the General Manager Vincent Macquet, Director Talent and Culture – Mereoni Gusuivalu, Executive Sous Chef – Abhinesh Sharma and other colleagues who have enabled me to be successful."

Ratu Vuniani believes the local food industry which is riding on the back of a robust tourism industry, offers great job security given the influx of tourists at hotels and resorts.

"Food is life and it opens the door to socialization. Cooking gives you an opportunity to travel and expand your food experiences," he said.

"I can chop without looking. I can talk all day about cooking, experiences, and horror stories but, my journey in this industry is just beginning. I work nights and weekends and any given day we are booked solid. I love it!"

At the FNU's December graduation, the Apprentice Chef was one of NTPC's six recipients of the Excellence award. "I was

overwhelmed and emotional and wished my dad was around to be part of this success," he said.

The 22-year-old says growing up in a family of four brothers, him and his siblings were blessed with good and loving parents.

"My parents, Ratu Sailosi Raimoqe Dawai – late Tui Nadi passed away 2 years ago, my mum has been a purser with Fiji Airways for the past 30 years – Bulou Vuta Dawai taught us the value of how to be a decent human being, to care and help anyone that comes through our home and has always been supportive of our career choices and goals," he said.

"My eldest brother Ratu Napolioni Dawai is a professional rugby player. My second eldest brother, Ratu Nemia is an accountant with Ministry of Economy, currently pursuing MBA at Massey University in Wellington NZ. My twin brother, Ratu Apete also graduated from the FNU with a Trade Diploma in Civil Engineering and currently employed by Higgins."

"After completing my apprenticeship programme and receiving that award I want to take my learning to the next level. "I want to be as innovative as possible and develop deeper into the culinary world."

Ratu Dawai said it's important that students set learning goals early and strive towards achieving them. He said students must be disciplined and committed if they want to succeed.

"At the end of the day it comes down to being disciplined, always keep an open mind and dream big."

"Dreams might sound childish, but everything starts with a dream. Extraordinary ideas come from simple dreams. If failure strikes and you feel like giving up just remember to keep going because it's all part of it," said the new graduate.

Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa Learning & Development Manager Altaab Khan commended Ratu Vuniani on his achievement.

Khan said the young chef has been a passionate about his journey.

He said Ratu Dawai's humility and charisma has been the formula to his success.

"We are so pleased that FNU has given us a pro-active

candidate for our apprentice. Whilst on his journey with us, he has participated in numerous in house training program such as our core culture change program called heartist. We are pleased to have such calibre in our team," said Khan.

"Sofitel Fiji Resort has won the Gold Prize for Learning and development Programme of the Year 2018 by Fiji Human Resources Institute and recently was awarded Achievement in Business Excellence by Fiji Business Excellence Awards."

"We would like to thank FNU for the great job that they are doing to create, nurture, train individuals who will be running the show in the years to come."



Contributing to Border Security

Hailing from a rural settlement of Lomawai in Sigatoka, Shinal Sharma never thought she would grow up to be a Customs personnel overseeing the importation needs for companies in a male dominated field. The soft spoken the 23-year-old is a proud FNU alumna and one of the three female Customs Clerks employed by Carpenters Shipping Fiji Limited.

She currently resides in Suva with her family where they had moved in 2000.

Sharma, the youngest of three siblings attended Samabula Primary School and Suva Sangam College.

Growing up she had always wanted to pursue further studies in Accounting, however, her mother had different aspirations for her daughter. Sharma's mother wanted her to be actively involved in border security and always encouraged her to consider pursuing studies in the field. Being close to her mum Sharma did not think twice about fulfilling her mother's dreams.

Tertiary Life and Career

In 2014 Sharma enrolled in the Trade Diploma in Customs programme at FNU's Nasinu Campus. She graduated with the qualification in 2016. She says her experience at FNU was amazing.

"FNU continues to provide a competitive student environment. Better facilities and student friendly resources such as the library and campus design makes the University one of the best in the country," she said.

"Some of the fondest memories I have is getting to meet many students from different races which meant that I got to enjoy different cultures and ethnicities at the Campus. This allowed me to actively take part in my friends' festivals and religious activities and also develop networks that I still have," Sharma shared.

Sharma says that FNU has created a pool of graduates who are unique to FNU and this in itself is valuable to these graduates.

"FNU through the customs course has enabled an environment in the country where you get to visit and liaise with other FNU graduates with the same passion. This means strengthening networks and working better together for a good and safe importation structure," said Sharma.

In order to graduate, Sharma was required to complete six months industry attachment. This was the first step towards her career for Sharma. She was attached to Carpenters Shipping Fiji Limited from November 2015. Due to her exceptional work, she was offered a full time position as a Customs Clerk after the completion of the six months attachment programme in May 2016.

Sharma enjoys her work. According to her there is a lot to learn and there is something new happening every day.

"One of the things I enjoy about my job is the day to day clearance and meeting clients who come from different backgrounds and countries. This also means that I have first-hand opportunity to view goods which come in the country and it's exciting to understand the business environment in the country," stated Sharma.

With the perks however, come the challenges of the job as well.

In the next five years, Sharma plans to pursue an undergraduate programme in Customs and hopes that FNU will offer it in the near future. She also envisages gradual promotion in her professional career.



"One of the challenges is being a female Customs Clerk in an industry where males dominate. I overcame this by holding true to my word and always verifying things such as customs entries. Once one is well versed with a particular field, you cannot digress from your focus. This also means standing your ground on work ethics you hold close to heart on your job," said Sharma.

Words of Wisdom

For Sharma, her parents have always been an inspiration and guiding light in her life.

"My parents have always been the backbone of the family and providing a good education for me and my two sisters have been top priority for my parents. They have invested in our education and always believed that education alone defines life to greater levels and provides for opportunities like no other," she shared.

To current and future students of FNU, Sharma says that students should learn to value education.

"Be persistent and consistent with school work as it pays in the long run. The study environment is challenging and so is the work environment. Your education is building a foundation for your work life which is where we will spend most of our lives," she adds.

Sharma has these tips to share with fresh graduates.

"Ensure that your CV is updated and very well written; seek advice from persons who are already employed for details for a good CV," she said.

"We all have to start from the bottom of the ladder but maintain the same momentum, hard work, long hours, and the pressure from management often results in character building. In the end it is all a learning experience," she added.

"Time management is key. This sounds clichéd but it is key and procrastination is never good. What can be done today should be done today," she said.

These tips have helped Sharma and she feels it would do the same for fresh graduates.

The Fiji National University's Nikua is a monthly newsletter which aims to promote the University's activities to the wider community.

This newsletter is produced by the University Marketing and Communications team.

For views or comments please email mprc@fnu.ac.fj or contact 3394000.

Publisher: Fiji National University | Editor: Ranbeer Singh | Design & Layout: Tomasi Korovou, Vaseva Moroqa | Division Head: Director Marketing and Communications Jenies Mudiliar
Writers: Kalpana Kaajal, Shireen Lata, Sharon Chand, Charlene Lanyon, Ana Niumataivalu, Ronish Kumar

FNU NIKUA wants to hear from you

FNU NIKUA welcomes submissions by staff and students for publication in the newsletter. Please send your suggestions, comments or articles for consideration to mprc@fnu.ac.fj



Published in partnership with

