



FIJI NATIONAL
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FNUNIKUA



CELEBRATING SUCCESS

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FNU PROVIDES STRONG FOUNDATION
TO GRADUATES TO GROW AND
BECOME LEADERS – DR CHANDRA

SIGHT IMPAIRED VUKEVUKE GRADUATES
WITH CERTIFICATE IN MUSIC

FNU provides strong foundation to graduates to grow and become leaders – Dr Chandra



The Fiji National University continues to undertake developments in key areas that reinforces its commitment to academic excellence said the newly appointed Chancellor, Dr Rajesh Chandra.

Dr Chandra, while speaking at the May 2019 graduation ceremonies, said the University's brand proposition New Skills, Practical Experience and Real Opportunities ties in with its vision to support the economic and social development of Fiji through relevant, high-quality education and training that maximises graduate employability and applied research that has positive societal impact.

He said the University investing half a billion dollars over the next 10 years in infrastructure upgrade, this will no doubt transform the institution into a modern, well-equipped higher education institution which Fijians will be proud to call their national university.

"I would like to acknowledge the Fijian Government for its support in increasing our repairs and maintenance budget several folds over the last two years. We have commenced repair works at various buildings across our campuses," said Dr Chandra.

"Through our Government Operating Grant, the University is also able to offer high-cost programmes in medicine, engineering and agriculture at tuition fees far below economic costs."

Dr Chandra said Government's vision of making education more accessible and affordable for all Fijians through the Tertiary Education Loans Scheme (TELS) and National Toppers Scheme (NTS) is commendable and ensure a brighter future for the country.

A total of 1,396 students graduated in a series of graduation ceremonies from FNU's five colleges and the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC).

Dr Chandra encouraged all graduates to work hard and never extinguish the flames of their dreams and aspirations. The senior academic urged students to continue to strive high, excel grow academically and in their professional career.

"You have already proven that despite the many daily obstacles, you preserved your aims with vision. Be inspired and motivated by your goals and turn them into reality."

"We are confident that the knowledge, skills, competencies and values that we have tried to instill in all of you will mould your individual success as well as the future success of our country," Dr Chandra added.

Dr Chandra highlighted some key achievements of FNU

Colleges and NTPC during his speech. Here are a few selected ones:

College of Humanities and Education (CHE)

The College, through its School of Education, has produced highly skilled teachers to meet the learning needs of our children in Fiji and beyond for the past nine years.

FNU is working closely with the Ministry of Education to also train teachers in subject areas such as Maths, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, English, Agricultural Science and Industrial Arts that have been identified as current priority areas where teachers are needed.

This year there has been a 13 percent increase in the intake of students undertaking teacher training programmes offered at the College compared to Semester 1, 2018.

Given the critical role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), FNU fully recognises the need to have top class instructors. Therefore, the university is providing staff development opportunities for them to upgrade their qualifications.

College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS)

The College has developed and refined the Master of Professional Accounting (MPA) programme in association with CPA-Australia which will be offered from Semester 2 this year. This is the first of its kind programme offered in Fiji. Upon completion of this programme students will not only graduate with a MPA degree, but will also attain CPA status which is a prestigious and internationally renowned professional qualification.

CBHTS also developed and started offering a Law major in the Bachelor of Commerce degree. As a result, students are able to study Law together with other majors including Accounting, Economics, Finance, Industrial Relations and Management.

College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST)
An important Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the University, the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) and the Construction Industry Council (CIC) has been signed recently. The MoU is significant because, while the University already has a very close partnership with each of these organisations, it is the first time we have managed to connect the whole sector to achieve a common goal.

The University Senate has also approved a new Bachelors of Nautical Science programme, which will be offered by the Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA), to prepare Fijian seafarers up to

Class I Masters level, allowing them to captain foreign-going ocean vessels of unlimited size. With the accreditation from the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF), we plan to launch this important new qualification in the second semester this year.

Another exciting journey we are looking forward to is the 'hand-over' of the Technical Colleges to the Fiji National University from the new financial year (1 August, 2019) as announced by the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts Honourable Rosy Akbar in parliament recently.

College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF)

CAFF Forestry has made remarkable progress this year including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment. As part of the MoU, the Ministry plans to adopt a model that would enable Government to support key research being conducted by CAFF staff and students. The College is also helping the Ministry develop a global editorial board for the Fiji Agricultural Journal and discussions are underway for this project.

Also, by 2020, the College plans to create a Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, to improve the dissemination of research findings.

College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS)

The College has recently obtained Senate approval for 22 Postgraduate Programmes and two new Post Graduate courses.

CMNHS graduate continue to make FNU proud in their respective areas. Two of FNU alumni created history this year by successfully undertaking Vanuatu's first ever 'reduction of the zygomatic complex fracture' surgery. Dr Nelson Tanghwa and Dr. Mackenzie Sitobata (Class of 2018), who are both dentists, conducted the successful surgery at Vila Central Hospital.

National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC)

Earlier this year, NTPC hosted the inaugural National Conference on Information Technology which was attended by the country's leading IT specialists who shared knowledge on the best practices in the industry through paper presentations, panel discussions and networking.

NTPC continues to raise public awareness on the National Apprenticeship Scheme. Most of alumni have done exceptionally well in various companies and organisations and the industry and employers have found this scheme extremely beneficial as they get hands-on, work ready graduates.

Honourable Rosy Akbar
Minister of Education, Heritage and Arts

“The sacrifices that you have made while trying to complete your studies is the reward for your achievement today. We will fail at times, sometimes we fail more than once. This will be painful, discouraging and at times it will test you to the very core but if you really want to change the world then do not be afraid of such struggles, don't be afraid of challenges you come across. If you want to change the world sometimes you have to slide down and eventually you emerge as winners. You need to build internal resilience.”



Saud Minam
Chief Executive Officer ANZ Fiji and Head of Commercial and Retail Banking ANZ Pacific

“Maintaining learning, setting the goals and reaching a higher level, that's the most important part in your life and once you achieve that, you don't need to become a big headed person, you still be down to earth because when you will look back you won't be the same person as before. Starting tomorrow morning you will be looking for a job or you may have a job. Challenges will come on you not on a daily basis but an hourly basis. You have to get ready to face the music of the real world.”



Nathan Kirk
President of the Fiji Institute of Engineers

“Remember to be mindful of your surroundings and be aware of other professions in the wider community. Engineering, science and technology is a very technical field and there is an attraction to become so focused on what you are currently involved with, you don't consider the big picture. We all need to think about the wider community and the effects of our actions on the world as a whole. At the end of the day, we're all part of one very large family. It is important we understand our placement. Also, you're going to advance in life but what you're going to learn after you leave here. It is only through continuous learning that we can all advance the knowledge of humankind.”



Honourable Dr Ifereimi Waqainabete
Minister for Health and Medical Services

“Use the platform that you have today to become a better version of yourself as you never know what you are cable of unless you continue to learn and put into practice the skills attained to develop further. Never stop being a life-long learner. This is not the end of your learning – this is the beginning. Never lose compassion. With compassion you will be able to well serve the fellow Fijians. I also encourage you all to always support those who assisted you in your journey. As you leave this place, it is your duty to care for them, be there for them in every circumstance because they were there for you – even in the most difficult moments they stood by you.”



“Graduates, you have worked hard to see this day. You now stand on the threshold of new opportunities and dreams and the prospect of a bright future with your new qualifications. You are ready to join the workforce and contribute to economic and social development of our nation. Your qualifications are globally recognized and, should you decide to spend part of your career overseas, they will hold you in good stead. You are entering a digitally-connected 24/7 world that is unrecognizable from that of your parents' generation. And it will change in the future even faster, in ways we cannot predict. As fast as Industrial Revolution 4.0 is destroying manual and routine jobs, it is creating new occupations. At University, we have equipped you with the knowledge, skills and competencies to join the labour market and contribute in your chosen profession. But, hopefully, we have done more than this. We have given you the critical thinking skills, the independent research skills and the hunger for learning which will mean that – as the world of work changes during your lifetimes – you can constantly adapt, relearn and reinvent yourselves for what lies ahead. For it is certain that, to succeed in this world of ever-more rapid technological change, you will need to build upon the qualifications you have earned at university and continue to learn and reskill throughout your lives to adjust to the changes that have yet to come. I hope that, in the years ahead, we may welcome you back to the University to take further qualifications, to enable you to keep up with changes in the workplace and society. Many of these will likely be in subjects and disciplines that do not yet even exist.”

*FNU Vice Chancellor
Professor Nigel Healey*

SIGHT IMPAIRED Vukevuke graduates with Certificate in Music



could and made me feel equal.”

The 38-year-old encountered many hurdles during this journey, but he was able to face all the challenges with an optimistic mindset.

“With positive thinking even in trying situations you get the courage to face problems. Positive attitude makes me feel happy and gives me strength to keep moving forward in life.”

Humble Vukevuke urged people living with disabilities to actively participate in social gatherings while striving for excellence in education and not see their disabilities as a reason to hold themselves from turning their dreams into reality.

Vukevuke, from Bua, is now continuing with tertiary education in inclusive education and his ambition is to teach children with special needs.

He also acknowledged his wife, Kerela Taveta, for her continuous support towards his education.

Emotional Taveta said it was a gratifying moment to witness the standing ovation given to Vukevuke during the graduation ceremony.

“I am so proud of the fact that he is the only person with disability graduating at this ceremony and the love from people present was just overwhelming for us,” said Taveta.

She admitted that this was a tough journey for both of them.

“He recorded the lectures and I transcribed it for him when he came back home from classes. The lecturers increased the font size of his notes so that he is able to read it. Sometimes I read his notes to him and that's how we studied together. I even assisted him with his assignments.”

“We are really thankful to the academic staff for their assistance in making this day possible for us,” Taveta added.

Academics, graduates and guests present at Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Humanities and Education (CHE) graduation ceremony cheered, whistled and applauded as sight impaired Iosefo Romulo Vukevuke walked onto the stage to receive his Certificate IV in Music from the Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey.

Vukevuke, who also won the FNU Student of the Year Award at the inaugural Disability Gala Awards Nite earlier this year was full of emotions after the graduation ceremony.

“I feel really proud to finally receive my certificate. This achievement has given me recognition in the community and my sincere gratitude goes to FNU for allowing me to enrol in this programme,” said Vukevuke.

“The staff at the FNU Disability Centre went out of their way to assist me, even other staff of the University assisted me in any way they



Prasad graduates with Postgraduate Diploma in Social Policy



Hirdesh Ashish Prasad is proud of the fact that he has four levels of qualifications, all of which has been attained from the Fiji National University (FNU).

Following his graduation from FNU's College of Humanities and Education (CHE) with a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Policy earlier this month, Prasad immediately made this fact known with a proud smile.

"It's a wonderful feeling because I have now completed 4 qualifications from FNU. The first was a Trade Certificate in Carpentry/Joinery from the College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) then I did a Diploma in Tertiary Teaching and Bachelors of Education (TVET) and now I have a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Policy, all from CHE," Prasad said.

"As a Fijian, I always have a lot of civic pride in our country and that's why I chose to study and be affiliated with FNU. I have done all my qualification with FNU and in the future, I will do my Master's and PhD from FNU," he shared confidently.

Prasad said he knew from a young age that he wanted to impact the lives of fellow Fijians through education and social work.

The 34-year-old, who is currently the Head of Campus for the Technical College of Fiji in Nausori, said he enrolled in the programme in order to better understand the core functions of policies mandated by the Government.

"I have been in the workforce for so long but it is always a good feeling to continue learning and expanding my skills and knowledge," he said.

"I have been in the education sector and over time, as a civil servant, I decided to enhance my knowledge of various ministry policies and how it affects us Fijians."

"Education itself is one of the major social issues at this moment in time. I believe education, health and housing are key issues to be addressed at the moment."

Whilst acknowledging the support of his wife and three daughters, Prasad said he was also grateful for the backing rendered by his colleagues during his studies.

"I would like to thank the Principal of St Vincent College and the warden and matrons because when I was undertaking this course as Assistant Principal, they were the ones who were helping me out in the hostel duties," he said.

"I also want to acknowledge the students of St Vincent College and Waidina Secondary School, where I have served as School Principal."

His words of encouragement to others were 'to be clear about what you want and identify a pathway to achieving them'.

Passion for drawing leads Simpson to graduate in Architectural Technology



As a youngster, Leon Joe Simpson says he always found himself busy sketching free hand drawings of things which seemed interesting to him. Simpson said his passion grew stronger as he grew older and surrounded by carpenters, he developed an interest for drawing building plans and houses.

Simpson, originally from Kuladrusi, Savusavu said after completing secondary school he decided to enrol in the Trade Diploma in Architectural Technology course offered at the Fiji National University's (FNU), College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST).

"Buildings always fascinated me and since I knew I was good at drawing, I decided I would be part of this industry by designing the buildings," Simpson said.

"I grew up around carpenters who were always working on some building project and observing how they all worked daily to construct the building they had already planned and designed was really interesting."

"During high school at Savusavu Secondary School, I did research and found the architectural programme offered by FNU suited my passion."

Packing his bags, and sketch books, Simpson left Savusavu to begin his tertiary education in Suva with the determination to succeed.

Three years later, Simpson graduated from FNU earlier this month with a qualification in architectural technology and workplace experience he is grateful for.

"Vinaka FNU. I honestly had to learn units in the programme that were out of my comfort zone and but I am thankful for all the lectures, assignments and attachment I underwent during my studies," he said.

"I was able to refine my skills and when I get an idea, I give it some time to come to life through my drawings and at the same time I get to feel the idea."

"This has also taught me patience as it can take pain staking hours of drawing to perfect the idea."

"I am grateful to my parents and extended family for also supporting me during my studies."

Accompanying Simpson to Suva from Savusavu for graduation was his mother, Carolyn, who said she was excited to have witnessed her son graduate.

"He is our only child and his father, Steven, and I are very proud of him for being committed to his university education despite all the challenges he had to face," she said.

"We know that he will continue to succeed in life because he is determined and we will always support him."

Simpson added that he plans to upskill his qualifications and knowledge, with plans to find employment overseas in the future.

"On my bucket list is the plan to also do carpentry as well, so that's all in the pipeline," he said.

Simpson currently works in the art department (carpentry section) for the Survivor series production team filming in Savusavu.

Growing up in a large family and being surrounded by her younger nieces and nephews strengthened Louisa Naceba's desire to work with children in the areas of early education and child care.

The 37-year-old from Viquele Estate in Savusavu said despite knowing which field she had wanted to pursue, she had to put her plans on hold due to family commitments.

Nevertheless, after finishing high school, getting married and having three children of her own, Naceba decided to turn her passion into a reality by enrolling in the Certificate IV in Child Care programme, offered by the Fiji National University's (FNU), College of Humanities and Education (CHE).

After one year of late nights, assignments, sacrifices and hard work, Naceba proudly graduated earlier this month.

"Growing up, my parents would put me in charge of the children at home and I found that this was something I loved doing, that I was able to relate to children," Naceba said

"I do feel that even children gravitate towards me because I make sure I am friendly so that they are comfortable being with me. But this is just my usual nature so I feel like I am definitely in the right field."

Naceba said this also motivated her to become a Sunday School teacher at her local church assembly.

"The best thing about learning and working in this field is the children themselves. Each child is unique and have their own personalities and characteristics so it is always a joy being surrounded by them."

"With their own personality comes their background so I get to meet children at different development stages with different cultural backgrounds and upbringing."

Naceba said she had decided to study at FNU because the programme offered aligned to her interests and would provide her with knowledge and skills she desired.

"My lecturers taught me well and I was able to pass with good grades and graduate on the 1st of May."

Her husband, children and family were also sources of motivation during her studies, Naceba added.

"I had to find time to study but before that I had to make sure my family were fed, helped with my kids' schoolwork and made sure they were all taken care of."

"I would wake up in the morning around 4am for my prayers and then study before my family wakes up."

Naceba said she hopes to open her own early childhood care centre in the future after upskilling her qualifications.

Naceba chases childhood passion, graduates in Child Care



Two-year dedication leads to Masters Qualification for Louis



Island girl graduates from CAFF



When Roge Louis applied for a scholarship to further his education at the Fiji National University (FNU), he had no idea where Fiji was and he described this as a 'journey to the unknown land.'

The Haiti national said he had to overcome many challenges when he began his studies at FNU in 2017.

Two years later, the 32-year-old proudly graduated with an Executive Masters in Business Administration (EMBA) from FNU's College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS).

"I do not have words to describe my feelings right now as I hold this certificate in my hands. It is a very surreal moment for me and my family back at home," said Louis with a beaming smile.

"The sacrifices, sleepless nights, struggles to meet the deadlines and adjusting to campus life have all been worth the hassle."

According to Louis, his stay in Fiji has been a great self-learning experience which he will cherish forever.

"If you believe in yourself and have dedication and pride and never quit, you'll be a winner."

"I had to leave my family behind and adjust to a completely new environment. Overcoming daily hurdles all by myself has molded me to be self-reliant and a responsible person."

"Back in my country we mostly communicated in French and very little English. Therefore, I even had to fine-tune my English speaking skills, which I must admit, has improved vastly."

"I have learnt how to adjust being under the same roof with other students from different

backgrounds and cultures. This experience has also taught me to better understand the Pacific culture and traditions."

"Therefore, my stay in Fiji has not only given me the best University experience, but has also made me a better person."

An Accountant by profession, Louis wants to go back to his country and venture into the teaching profession.

He studied under the Education for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (ECCAM) scholarship. ECCAM promotes mobility of students at Master and Doctorate levels along with mobility of staff, both academic and administrative.

"This qualification has given me the necessary expertise needed to better serve my people. I acknowledge ECCAM mobility project for giving me this opportunity and supporting the development and training of high-level professionals in the Caribbean."

Although he was eager to meet his family back at home, he admitted that he will miss 'Fiji – the home of friendly and hospitable people.'

"I spent my school breaks exploring the largest island of Fiji – Viti Levu. It is a very beautiful island with a lot of soul soothing places."

"I would also like to thank the Fijian people and my friends for being there for me whenever I needed any support. Because of their sincere nature, I felt very comfortable seeking assistance from them."

"This gesture really touched my heart and I feel fortunate to have stayed among such people."

Louis hopes to return to Fiji with his family for holidays in future.

Setting foot in Suva City for the first time was an incredible and overwhelming experience for Lusiana Ledua, one which she says she will never forget. It was the same day that she made a personal goal that she will attain a tertiary qualification.

Born and raised in the island of Rabi, Ledua said she would often wonder how life in the city would be and when she arrived in Suva four years ago, it was a bit of a culture shock as everything was beyond her imagination.

Ledua described island life as calm and enjoyable where being barefoot at all times was acceptable and that one was never too far from a beach or even the jungle.

City life, however, was at a different pace altogether for soft-spoken Ledua.

"For a moment it felt like I have made a big mistake by choosing to move to Suva but at the same time I was eager to join the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF)," said Ledua.

"I came across challenges such as finding a suitable and affordable accommodation. Adjusting to this new environment was a major

struggle for me."

"Like many people, occasionally I was also tempted by the bright lights of Suva."

Although Ledua came across many alluring and exciting aspects of a city, her first priority was completing her studies.

"I got married whilst completing my studies and had a baby as well. I still prioritized completing my studies."

Glowing with pride, the 23-year-old said three years of struggles and hassle was worth it when she walked onto the graduation stage to receive her certificate in Bachelor of Science in Forestry.

"I am glad I came to city to further my education. I have learnt a lot about life by moving here – adjusting to a new home is one of them."

"I am grateful to my family and my husband as well as his family for supporting me and making this day possible for me."

Ledua also acknowledged the Forestry Training Centre in Colo-i-Suva where she completed the compulsory industrial attachment requirement of FNU in order to graduate.

Always respond positively to problems says new FNU graduate



If we face our problems and respond to them positively, then the adversities that come along to affect us usually have within them the potential to benefit us.

This message was shared by 28-year-old Sweata Mala who graduated from the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS) this month.

Mala also won a special award from the Office of the Auditor General (Fiji) for the Best Postgraduate Auditing student.

The senior accountant who stood steadfast in times of challenges said years of struggles and hard work had finally paid off.

"I remember using candles to study at night when we did not have electricity for almost four years when I was in high school. It did not discourage me, but I took it as a challenge."

Originally from Saweni, Lautoka, Mala attended Viseisei Primary School and then attended Tilak High School.

"I took accounting as a subject in high school and my accounting teacher was an inspiration to me.

I was passionate to become an accountant. I worked towards it every day hence it became my career path," said Mala.

"I never used to take any pocket expense to school and when students used to photo copy past years' papers or notes for revision I used to wake up at night and write them in books for my revision," she said emotionally.

"At that time, my parents could not afford to buy a computer and having internet was unthinkable for me, therefore I used to go to my relatives place to use a computer for my research and assignments" she continued.

"So I have learnt that in order to achieve your desired goal, one should never lose hope. Work towards your dream and a time will come when you will achieve it," said the new FNU graduate.

Mala started her career as a graduate accountant in 2004. She is currently a senior accountant and associate manager at Hodgson Landau Brands (HLB) Mann Judd – Fiji, a global network of independent accounting and consulting firms who provide

assurance, tax and advisory services.

She works as an external accountant to various private companies that are HLB's clients.

"I am responsible for preparing year end financials, tax return providing financial advice in terms of business or tax related matters," she said.

Mala now plans to pursue Certified Public Accountant (CPA) studies and become a member of the professional body.

She dedicated her success to her parents who she said have sacrificed a lot in life to make ends meet.

Her father Shiu Rattan said his daughter is his pride.

"As a father, it is a very proud moment for me to see my daughter succeed in life. I am glad she achieved such a milestone in her life. I have seen her hard work from her primary school days until now and I only wish her more success in future," said Rattan.

Mala said the motto "when there is a will there is a way" has always been an encouragement in her life.



Friends graduate with Hospitality and Hotel Management degree

Being in the tourism and hospitality industry requires one to have a friendly demeanor, smiling faces and a warm and approachable attitude that makes it easy to interact with visitors.

This was certainly the case for four female students of the Fiji National University's (FNU), College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS) who graduated earlier this month from the Bachelor of Hospitality and Hotel Management programme.

Sitting in the crowd of students amongst 329 other graduates, four friends, Selita Lalakitoga, Vatiseva Loko Kiliraki, Viviane Sera Naidrua and Vonobula Nataba, stood-out with their bubbly personality and friendly smiles.

Lalakitoga, 25, said graduating after four years of studying was a testament to the perseverance from each of the females to make themselves and their family proud.

"Graduation day is truly a special occasion because it is not only us the graduates who are celebrating, but it is also a time when our parents, families and friends celebrate with us," she shared.

"Achieving tertiary qualification is certainly a journey one does not go through alone and I am truly grateful that I've had my support system motivating me along the way."

"I have always wanted to work in the tourism industry because I love meeting new people and I know how important this industry

is to Fiji and our people because it employs us both directly and indirectly."

Lalakitoga, who is from Tobuniqio village in Vugalei, Tailevu said she was also grateful to the Fijian Government for allowing her to study through the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS).

Vanua Levu native Viviane Sera Naidrua said attaining her degree was only the first step as it would propel her to excel further in the workplace.

"This is just the beginning for me and right now I will focus on performing to the best of my abilities at the organisation I will work for and continue progressing in my career," Naidrua said.

"I would like to acknowledge my parents, family, son and partner for being my source of strength through my studies as I had to balance all my responsibilities and ensuring I completed my assigned tasks."

"I love socialising and I currently live in Nadi, which is like the tourist hub as that is where international visitors arrive into Fiji, so I always knew I wanted to work in this sector."

The 26-year-old said despite the challenges one may encounter along the way, achieving academic qualification was a goal anyone could achieve once they set their mind to it.

Vonobula Nataba, from Nadroga, said the industrial attachment component of the programme also helped the group gain first-hand

experience of the demands in the hospitality field.

"I believe the attachment provided us with the exposure we needed so that we could understand better how we can use the theory and skills we had acquired to better serve our employers and our visitors," the 24-year-old said.

"I feel so blessed to be graduating today because of all the lectures, tutorials, assignments and attachment I had undergone throughout the four years of study."

"Having my family in the crowd as I graduated is truly a memory I will cherish greatly."

Vatiseva Loko Kiliraki, 23, echoed sentiments of the group, saying that they were confident that their qualifications acquired at FNU would enable them to become productive members of the industry.

"In addition to our family and friends that have supported us along the way, we will never forget the lectures we have had throughout the programme who have been nothing but supportive and have addressed every issue we have raised," Kiliraki said.

"I know that I can now go into the workforce with the knowledge that I am capable of meeting the objectives of any hotel I work for."

"I encourage everyone to continue chasing your dreams because although it may seem impossible or irrelevant to others, only you will know how much it means to you."

'Chosen by God' Lawanivalu dedicates life to Nursing



She stood quietly in front of a long queue that displayed exuberance, blended with ear to ear smiles and colorful Salusalus (traditional Fijian garlands).

Her eyes trying to make peace and lips barely moving when she gets a little scuff on her shoulder by someone moving hastily among the hundreds of ecstatic graduands lining up to attend the ceremony they all had worked immensely hard for—Fiji National University graduation 2019.

While everyone cherished their success, for the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences' Master of Public Health graduate, Melaia Lawanivalu, everything seemed to have stopped in its path when her best friend passed away two days before her graduation.

The graduation ceremony appeared as much incomplete as it was a sign of completion of all the hard yards Lawanivalu had put into, from going back to school after 36 years to living up to the expectations of the entire Marshall Island's nurses.

"I don't know what to say, I guess excited. I would like to dedicate this graduation to two of my friends," she spoke with a heavy heart.

"I had two friends, the first one encouraged me to pursue my studies and the other one wanted me to go further and complete my Masters but both have passed away before I made their wishes come true."

Even though her friends were not present physically to witness

one of the most accomplished moments of Lawanivalu's life, "I think I represent all three of us," she said.

Such is the level of positivity she has always believed in, which contributed to completing her programme successfully.

After graduating with a certificate in Nursing in 1983 from the then Fiji School of Nursing, Lawanivalu went on to be a Nurse in Marshall Islands where she has been working since.

Originally from Nakelo Village in Nausori, the proud graduate, has dedicated all her life to the profession of nursing—one she believes is her spiritual calling.

"I strongly feel that I was chosen by God to be in this profession and I think I am married to nursing."

Such is her passion that Lawanivalu chose to stay single so she could devote her life to the profession.

For someone who feels so loyally towards Nursing, there could only be one plan after graduation—to serve the people in her community.

"Now, I want to go back to the Marshall Islands where I can use my expertise to help the people there."

With her mind firmly set on her professional goals, Lawanivalu hopes her achievement will be an encouragement to all entire Marshall population.

"I hope I can be a role model for all the nurses and the people back home, that they can do it too."



Mother of five graduates to serve her people

Thirty-three-year-old, Puaese Falavi believes that her confidence was the driving force that assisted her in overcoming the challenges of being a mother and full-time student.

Falavi, from Tuvalu, graduated with a Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Sciences from Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) graduation ceremony held in Suva on May 3.

For the mother of five, adjusting to life in Fiji was difficult but one she was able to master over time as she was driven with the passion to serve her country.

"Today, I am really proud to have this qualification and I would like to thank the lecturers and coordinators who helped me reach my aim."

"There were times when I was down but they continued to guide me to help me reach this day today," an emotional Falavi added.

According to her, the plan has always been to serve the people back home.

"I want to go back to my Island and use the skills and knowledge gained from this programme to improve the lives of the people there."

However, things did not come easy for Falavi and she had to turn to her better half for support.

"My husband was very helpful and he had confidence in me."

An excited Lauina Pulusi said that his wife's qualification will translate to a better life for their family.

"It was a tough journey but we knew she was going to make it. I tried to support her in whatever way I could which also meant taking care of our children," Pulusi highlighted.

Falavi, now hopes she will be able to motivate more students on the Island of Tuvalu to work hard and attain a formal qualification.



Tuvaluan Primary school teacher graduates with IT qualification

Christopher Fanoanoaga believes that changes in life do not necessarily mean that your deepest passions have to alter as well. The 33-year-old shared these sentiments after graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Information Systems from FNU's College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST).

Fanoanoaga is a primary school teacher at Nauti Primary School in Tuvalu. This, however, was not his first career choice as he was always fascinated with computers, storing, sending and retrieving data through information technology (IT).

"Being an IT professional was always my dream. But fate had other plans for me and I became a qualified primary school teacher after completing my studies at Kiribati Teachers College," he said.

"I got an opportunity to manage the IT needs of one of the biggest schools in Tuvalu where I teach as well. Never had I thought that this would be my break to get a formal qualification in this field but it proved to be the turning point of my career."

Fanoanoaga successfully obtained an DFAT scholarship to pursue IT qualifications in Fiji.

"I go to the class everyday as a teacher but I came back to the classroom as a student after a lapse of seven years which proved to be a real problem for me."

"When I attended the first class at FNU it felt like my brain is rusted. Another major hurdle was the difference in the field of studies – teaching is completely the opposite of IT."

"Nonetheless, this never got the better of me. With an optimistic mindset, I started this journey by doing my own research before the classes. I was always ready to go an extra mile to be able to cope with my studies."

Originally from Nukufetau in Tuvalu, Fanoanoaga was pleased that the Fijian environment was similar to that of his home.

"Surprisingly, I did not feel homesick. I made a lot of new friends not only from Fiji but from across the region. Three years just flew by with these friends who are now more like family."

Fanoanoaga acknowledged the assistance and accommodating nature of the staff at CEST, who according to him, played a significant role in his academic success.

Singh achieves dream qualification in HR

Human Resource (HR) officers are an integral part of any organisation as they recruit, train and develop staff, manage the needs, health, safety and welfare of all employees, maintain positive working relationships internally and externally, develop strategic plans and minimise company risks, amongst other functions.

It was for these reasons that Avikash Adeep Singh enrolled in the Fiji National University's (FNU), National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) Diploma of Human Resource Management programme.

Singh earlier this month and said in addition to celebrating his success during graduation, it was also a time to reflect on his academic journey during the course.

"I am so honoured to have graduated today alongside other students of FNU and I must say I am grateful I took up this opportunity to attain qualifications," Singh said.

"Despite working for the past decade, I never had the opportunity to attend university and receive a certificate so today feels like a dream come true for me."

"Today I also reflect and acknowledge all those at FNU who have made an impact in my studies and who have been helpful in attending to our queries. The lecturers have been very helpful and should also

be thanked during these times."

"I have never graduated from any university and so to have my partner and my family here today makes me so proud and I am sure that they are also beaming with joy."

Singh, who currently works at ATS Pacific in Nadi, said his previous employment at a bank cemented his decision of studying in the field of human resources.

"I was the supervisor of a bank and when I was there people used to listen to me and take my advice regarding work issues they would raise and since this was something that I loved doing, I decided it was time for me to enroll in a programme."

"Being part of the HR field is about listening to your colleagues and other workers in the organisation and attending to their issues and giving advice accordingly so that they become more productive and are happy doing their work."

The 29-year-old encouraged those in the workforce who may not have qualifications to consider enrolling in short courses or diploma and degree programmes to receive their tertiary credentials.

"I know that experience counts for something, but it doesn't hurt to combine that experience with qualifications on paper as this will enable you to progress further in your professional career."

Singh plans to upskill his qualifications with a degree in the HR field soon.



Rokoveti follows her dad's footsteps

It was an emotional moment for Mesese Tawake, a former Fisheries Officer, to witness his daughter Kerela Rokoveti graduate in a field of work dear to his heart.

Rokoveti graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries from the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF).

While growing up, Rokoveti used to hear endless stories about the fisheries industry from her father who was a Fisheries Project Officer at the Lami Fisheries Station. The interesting work experiences of her father greatly influenced the 23-year-old to choose this as her career path.

Originally from Vadravadra, Gau in Lomaiviti, retired Tawake said the fisheries industry is a significant resource for Pacific Island countries in terms of food security, livelihoods as well as economic prosperity.

Tawake said the increased demand for seafood, overfishing, pollution and change in climatic patterns has led to a dramatic drop in fish stock adding there was an urgent need to educate people on the importance of sustainable fishing practices for the future generation.

"It is a blessed day for me to see my daughter follow my footsteps and take into consideration my advice and

teachings."

"Although I teach my children the traditional ways to preserve our food security, I feel they also need to be on par with the latest advancements in the industry through formal qualifications."

Beaming with pride, Rokoveti acknowledged the support and guidance from her parents throughout her studies.

"I feel fortunate to hold this certificate in my hands and become the first in my family to graduate with a formal qualification," said cheerful Rokoveti.

The fresh graduate said the highlight of her student-life was the six months practical component at Lami Fisheries Station, which she enjoyed the most.

"I got to travel a lot – visited places like Kadavu, Lau group and the province of Rewa."

"It was a great learning opportunity where we actually applied what we learnt during our classes and practical sessions either on campus or at Naduruloulou Research Station."

Rokoveti described the late night study sessions with her friends as the best memories of her University days.

"I will forever treasure the days when my friends and I had to study from evening to daylight. For the exam tomorrow, we used to discuss everything the previous night."

"We had both fun and stressful days," she added.



My Journey as a working student



Being a full time student while working is no easy feat. However, with perseverance and determination all is possible. Nafitalai Vuli is an example of what a person can achieve despite difficulties – if they set their mind firmly on their goal.

As a young boy, he was always fascinated with computers. Seeing him clicking away on his father’s computer was a common sight. Vuli would spend a considerable amount of time in the computer labs in school as well. This interest led him to want a career as an Information Technology (IT) Technician.

Born and raised in Nausori, Vuli is the eldest of three siblings. He has two younger brothers.

Vuli attended Classes One to Six from Suva Methodist Primary School, Class Seven at Dudley Intermediate School and completed his primary education at Krishna Vedic Primary School in Nausori. He attained his secondary education at Vunimono High School from 2003 to 2007.

In high school, he took up Computing as one of his subjects and began work on his plans to becoming an IT Technician.

Unfortunately things didn’t work out as he had hoped. He realised that due to financial constraints, he would have to fund his own education. Thus, after completing Form Seven, he joined the workforce to save for his education.

School and Work Journey

Vuli joined Pacific Pipelines & Roadcare Equip Limited’s Sales and Administration team in 2008 on a full time position and started to save money to enroll in university courses in IT. After working for one year his interests changed. The timetable for the IT courses were also not convenient for him, therefore, he decided to pursue a different field.

The following year, in 2009, he enrolled as a part-time student at Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) in the Bachelor of Commerce programme majoring in Management and Public Administration.

“Being a working student was difficult. I found it very challenging juggling work and studies and I had to pay for it myself too so it was even harder,” said Vuli.

He was not able to afford Semester Two fees straight after Semester One, therefore, he decided to work and save money and resume studies later.

“I decided to take a longer break and go back to studies when I was financially ready,” he said.

Again, things did not go as planned for Vuli. “Once I was in the workforce fulltime, I found it hard to get the motivation to go back to studies,” he added.

In 2014, he left Pacific Pipelines & Roadcare Equip Limited and joined Digicel Fiji Limited as an Inventory Officer for the Pacific Group.

His new job involved organising logistic services for both import and export from overseas and local vendors, organising repair and return items to Huawei Incorporation Pty

Ltd for all telecom hardware and tracking record for receiving and return of items after repair, maintaining inventory control of Sky Pacific equipment and conducting monthly audit for reconciliation with installation report, providing reports on inventory of stock, providing assistance to Sky Pacific and Unwired customers, maintaining record of receipts as well as issuance of items that are going out of the warehouse to ensure proper record management.

His job took up most of his time.

Completing his Studies

In 2016, newly married, Vuli decided to go back to school with a lot of encouragement and support from his wife. By this time, FIT had merged with other colleges to form Fiji National University (FNU). Vuli had to enrol into a new programme; Bachelors of Commerce programme majoring in Management and Human Resources Management and Industrial Relations.

He enrolled as a full time student and continued working full time as well.

Vuli says that it was challenging to juggle work, studies and personal life however, his lecturers were very supportive and assisted him a lot.

“I am very grateful to my lecturers who were always supportive and provided continuous support over the years,” he said.

Vuli achieved his aim and graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce in Management and Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations from the Fiji National University (FNU) during the May 2019 Graduation.

Personal Life and Words of Wisdom

Vuli dedicates all his achievements to his wife to whom he proposed and got married to in early 2016 while he was working and collecting money for his studies. According to Vuli, this was the best decision he had made.

“All the credit for my achievement goes to my wife, Archana. She has been my strength and my guiding light,” said Vuli.

They have a son who is 18 months old. “My world comprises of my wife and my son. Everything I do is for them,” Vuli added.

“This is the best decision I had made. My life started changing for the better. I am very lucky that I had Archana. Once we got married, she influenced me to go back to school,” he said.

His advice to students is to never give up on education and keep working hard to achieve what they want in life.

“Never give up on education. Even if you are facing financial constraints, it is not the end of the world. If you set your mind to it, you can achieve it. You will need to work hard and have the right support. With the right influence, your hard work, perseverance and dedication you will succeed in your endeavors,” said Vuli.