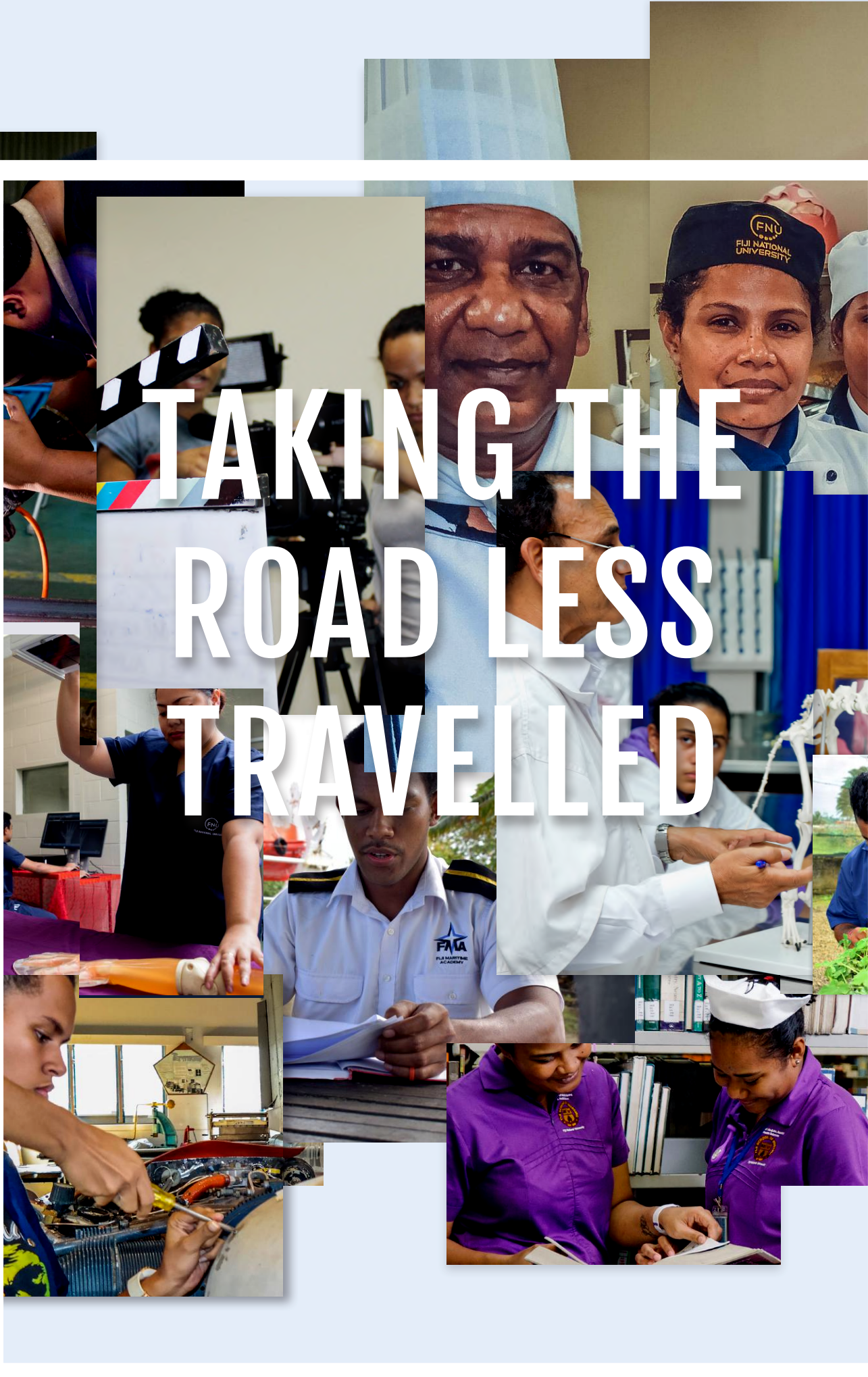




FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# FNUNIKUA

## TAKING THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED



ISSUE NO. 08

SEPTEMBER 2018

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAREER IS KEY  
- PROFESSOR HEALEY

SHATTERING GLASS CEILINGS

## Choosing the right career is key – Professor Healey



**L**ife is a balancing act. There is no magic formula to a happy and successful life. Every individual is unique which means that different things make them happy and the definition of a happy and successful life differs from one individual to the next. But the foundations of a happy and successful life have common characteristics which individuals acquire as they develop in life. These include hard work, dedication, education, developing your talents, learning to adopt, goal-setting, honesty, pursuing your passion and so on.

In today's society, having a steady career is often seen as a platform for a successful life. Yet in our rapidly-changing society, where the nature of work is being constantly reshaped by technology and globalisation, the era of a 'job for life' is fast disappearing.

Given the dynamics that are at play, it is more important than ever to better plan on the broad career path you would like to pursue.

### Career selection

To enjoy career satisfaction, professional development and advancement, one of the most important steps is to select the right career.

If an individual ends up in the wrong job, this is a recipe for frustration, disillusion and unhappiness. Unnecessary energy will be wasted on struggling through each working day, leading to frustration and, in time, damaging to person's professional career or even their life.

Wrong choices will see you being stuck in a difficult place and doing something uninteresting, so, you need to be smart when you are deliberating about your career.

Fiji National University Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey believes taking small and simple steps will lead individuals to making correct decisions that lead to satisfying careers.

Professor Healey says over-thinking or over-complicating your objectives can make it harder to attain your career goal.

"Start with the three basic questions: Do I love the subject? Am I good at it? And does it lead to a job? Then accept that you cannot plan the future. We change as we grow up. And the world of work is changing all around us. We need to accept that we need to be flexible, to change career direction over time and reskill as necessary. I started my professional life as a macroeconomist and today I am a university administrator," said VC Healey.

### Starting early

Similar to a 100m track race, getting off the block is key to how well you will perform further down the track. Given the availability of information, students need to start research early about the opportunities out there and map this with their talents and subjects they excel in at school.

Technology and structural economic change are continuously reshaping the labour market. Most of the things that dominate our working lives today, like smart phones and tablets, did not exist 15 years ago.

As more technological and scientific advances are made, jobs will become more complex. Professor Healey said it's important to keep in mind that education truly never stops and everyone needs to embrace change.

"In the next 15 years, artificial intelligence and robotics will eliminate a huge swathe of current jobs. Constantly upskilling and reskilling will be essential to succeed," said the VC.

### Positive influence

Parents, guardians and school teachers are seen as great influencers for youngsters in

choosing their careers.

The availability of information in the palm of your hand also provides students an avenue to explore the pros and cons of the career choices they intend to pursue.

"My advice to parents and guardians is the same as the advice I gave to my own children, two of whom are presently at university and two of whom have recently graduated. Encourage your children to choose a subject that a) they love and find fulfilling; b) they are good at; and c) has promising job prospects. All three are necessary conditions," advised VC Healey.

### Study choices

The two popular streams students have are either to go into higher education and end up with a white collar job or pursue Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and follow a career in the blue collar industry. There's no denying that over recent decades, higher education has been seen as the superior career path by many, but Professor Healey challenges this view.

"The notion that higher education graduates are superior to TVET graduates is clearly absurd. Ask me if I feel superior to a car mechanic when my car has broken down on the way to Nadi. Ask me if I feel superior to a plumber when my flat is being flooded by a broken water mains pipe. Ask me if I feel superior to an electrician when my lights have shorted out," said Professor Healey.

"Society only functions because some of us have practical and technical expertise and some of us are so-called 'knowledge workers'. Without both TVET and higher education graduates, we would have a very lopsided, dysfunctional society."

### Employment prospects

Fiji is an upper-middle income country with a booming economy, now in its tenth year of unbroken economic growth. The construction and service sectors are leading the charge and they are hungry for skilled carpenters, plumbers, electricians, cooks and front office hotel staff – all TVET graduates.

"As our economies develop, there will be a growing need for both TVET and higher education graduates. In developed economies, there is very little demand for unskilled, unqualified people. Germany is one of the best examples of a high productivity, high income country, where young people decide at school whether to go into TVET or higher education. Germany has some of the highest paid graduates from the TVET stream in the world, because they are so technically skilled and well-educated," added VC Healey.

### FNU advantage

FNU is a dual sector, vocational university, which offers a growing range of part-time postgraduate degrees, to allow graduates from one discipline area to develop new expertise and competencies in another.

"We are focused on the developing both the technical skills and competencies, as well as the 'soft skills' like critical thinking and team-working, to enable our graduates to succeed in a fast-changing labour market. We are focused on ensuring that our students are not just highly employable the day after graduation, but that they have the capacity to continue learning during their working lives," said Professor Healey.

### Making the right career choice

To ensure you are on the right path, do an honest evaluation of your skills and interests. Then consider your planned career goal and ask yourself whether this will allow you to take advantage of your strengths and whether you would find this work fulfilling.

Always remember that your chosen job should not only make use of your talent, but enhance it. Look beyond the glamour a career might seem to have, as this will quickly fade if you find the job difficult or uninspiring.



## Atalifo's Television Journey from a 6 month attachment to Studio Director

**Y**ou are now live on air are the words spoken by Mua Atalifo to the host of the popular music television show, 2Day FM hit list, which airs from 5:30pm to 6pm on weekdays on Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Television (FBCTV).

32-year-old Atalifo is the Director of this program and her role is to ensure that the broadcast quality standards are maintained before it goes on-air.

Television direction is a high pressure role. It needs a person with a lot of experience and one

who is familiar with production of television programs.

The Director's role is to double check camera placements, lights, audio, scripts, ensure the recording facilities are operational and ready before a show commences. The person is also in-charge of directing the television presenter on when to speak, how much time is remaining and when the program will be paused to allow for breaks.

The Director liaises with the camera, sound and graphics crew on the types of camera angles is required, when the commercials are aired and whether

the sound is to be adjusted.

Atalifo, who is a graduate of the Fiji National University (FNU) is also one of the few female directors in the local television industry.

"It's a high pressure job, but I love what I do," said Atalifo.

"Sometimes you will see us rushing and talking loudly especially when it's close to going on air. Everyone in the team is familiar with their roles and it makes working at FBCTV exciting."

Atalifo's journey into the television industry was an unexpected one but it has been nothing short of exhilarating.

"Eight years ago, on a bright Saturday morning, I saw a camera crew shooting a video in Suva City. It was at this moment I knew what I wanted to become," she recalled.

The Rotuman native said from that day there was no turning back.

"I was fascinated and curious and wanted to learn more about camera operators. I was fortunate enough to obtain a camera and I started recording videos at family functions. I also love the outdoors so I spent a lot of time filming outside as well. That's how I learnt about the importance of lighting and taking the best videos and different angles," she added.

Seeing her interest in videography, Atalifo was encouraged by her father to enrol in Certificate IV in Film and Television offered by FNU's College of Humanities and Education.

"I joined FNU in 2014. This programme laid the platform for my career today. I learnt all the basics and it opened my eyes to a whole new world. I learnt to channel my creativity in a single frame. We learnt how to handle camera equipment, the right way of filming

and how to edit videos," she continued.

"Prior to graduating in 2015, I spent six months doing my attachment at FBCTV. I accompanied Journalists for news shoots and also assisted the camera crew for production shoots. It was an awesome experience and I gained valuable experience," she expressed.

Her commitment and dedication was recognized by the company and she was rewarded with a full-time contract to work as a Production Assistant and a Camera Operator.

In her early days she worked under senior members of the team learning more about production of television programs.

"I was also tasked to edit Television shows and check for quality of the news items before it was aired on FBCTV daily," Atalifo added.

Three-years later, Atalifo is a Senior Production Assistant and Studio Director at FBCTV.

"Being a camera person you need to be all-rounder as the job is varied. My daily challenges as Senior Production Assistant is when I'm on Studio Directing a shift, I have to delegate work to the production team and make sure it is all done before deadline," she said.

Like any other camera operators, Atalifo also spends most of her time in the field. This profession itself requires individuals to be always on the go.

"Our shiftwork varies and we have to be prepared to film anything and everything whether it is a parliament session, an accident or fire. We have to have a thick skin as well but I have learnt to overcome it all by taking every day as a challenge and tackling it to the best of my ability," she said.

Atalifo believes there is nothing too big or small that one cannot achieve. She hopes to operate her own production company in future.



## Sky is the limit for aspiring Agriculture expert

**N**ividita Varun Chand has always aspired to be an expert in Agriculture. This desire was instilled in her mind early by her grandparents who encouraged her to pursue a career path that was dear to their daily lives.

While growing up in Mulomulo village, outside of Nadi, Chand said she used to accompany her grandparents to their family farm and assist them with weeding and planting cash crop. She picked up the basic gardening techniques quickly and soon realized that her career journey was going to be out in the farm fields.

"In secondary school when I had the opportunity to choose my subjects, I chose Agriculture mainly because of my grandparents. They were my inspiration as I would see them working in the farm whether it was sunny or raining," said Chand.

"The other advantage that I saw in agriculture is that it is a large sector and it is a source of long-term employment given the different specialist fields."

"Growing up on a farm, there was no doubt that I would enjoy working outdoors whether it is a farm field or with animals."

Chand's determination strengthened when she taught by a female Agriculture teacher in secondary school.

"Sabina Maramaniqo continued to motivate me to further my studies in this field. She was amazing in all sorts of agricultural work and became the driving force for me to continue with agriculture."

There was no stopping the 25-year-old after she got enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at FNU's College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF).

"I really enjoyed my student life at CAFF. I have a lot of fond memories of the practical classes," said soft-spoken Chand.

"The dearest ones are cultivating plots and planting rice in the paddy, lab classes especially that of entomology and plant pathology, making friends from different countries and collecting insects for our assignments."

As part of the programme requirement, Chand completed her six months internship with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nadi Division where she was tasked to assist in data collection through National Agricultural survey conducted by the Ministry.

She also assisted farmers who visited the extension office with advice on best farming practices.

After graduating from FNU Chand secured employment as a Biosecurity Officer at Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF).

"I was part of a team that inspected and certified foreign materials coming in of going out of country. We issued certificates for meat products being exported overseas."

"Furthermore, I also carried out photo sanitary certification for products leaving Fiji, to determine whether it was in compliance with the importing countries quarantine."

Chand didn't lose sight of her teaching goal. In 2016 she joined CAFF as an Assistant lecturer in Agriculture Extension Education.

While at FNU, Chand was constantly applying for international scholarship to pursue Masters Studies in Agriculture.

It wasn't long before she got the opportunity to further her studies in 2017 under the Chinese Government scholarship; Masters in Agricultural Economics and Management at Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences in the Institute of Agricultural Information.

"Winning a scholarship to study abroad for a villager is one of the greatest achievements and my parents were delighted to hear this news. They have been so proud of my achievements and I will continue to work hard in order to strive in this field of work."

Chand's thesis is "Determinants of participation for women farmers in agricultural training programs in improving production in central district of Fiji in efforts of poverty reduction."

The research is based on finding reasons why women farmers are unable to participate in training programs which would otherwise assist them to contribute towards improvement in agriculture production and assist on other crucial fronts.

"Providing training to women is one of the main goals in agricultural development towards poverty reduction efforts. The research is based on Fiji and plans are to return to my home country with innovations that can help improve the agricultural sector while empowering more women to join the agricultural workforce where their contributions can be recognised."

Chand is currently on study leave and plans to continue to teaching when she returns.

# I Travel the world with a career in the maritime industry



**“Over the years, the demand for seafarers has outpaced the supply.”**

**M**arisilino Tabakanaca Tikomairaki always desired to explore the world so he searched for a career that would fulfill this dream and the youngster found the perfect opportunity!

Tikomairaki, originally from Qeleni village, Taveuni frequently travelled to Suva by boat and it was during these visits he developed the desire to travel overseas.

“My father fell ill and for his treatment we had to travel frequently to Suva. I used to follow my dad everywhere and this is when I developed an interest in travelling,” said Tikomairaki.

“I enquired with my teachers and they advised that I take up a career as a seafarer.”

“In 2001 my dad passed away and we moved to Suva where I completed my secondary education at Nasinu Muslim College.”

He enrolled in the Diploma in Nautical Science programme at the Fiji National University’s (FNU) Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA).

“The programme requires us to complete certain sea time before we can move to the next stage which actually tests us on whether we are competent to continue further into our studies.”

Tikomairaki’s first attachment at sea was with South Seas Towage Ltd as a Deck Cadet for a period of seven months. His duties were revolved around maintenance and navigation.

“This was a big opportunity as this was my first experience with real industry work. It gave me a sense of pride and strengthened my desire to continue on this journey.”

There was no looking back for Tikomairaki after his internship. He successfully applied for another seven month internship with Blight Water Shipping.

He was attached with the MV Fiji One ship as a Deck Watchkeeper inshore and territorial Fiji Water voyage.

“The second attachment gave me further hands-on experience. I gained experience in performing the duties of a Watchkeeper – who is a deck officer assigned to the duties of watch keeping and navigation on a ship’s bridge and while keeping a watch on the bridge. This person is the representative of the ship’s master and has the total responsibility of the safe and smooth navigation of the ship.”

After the successful attachment Tikomairaki returned to FMA in 2016 to complete his third year of studies.

He then applied for an internship with Captain Cook Cruises

Fiji where he spent four months.

While working in Nadi, Tikomairaki received a phone call from FMA and was advised that he has been selected for an interview conducted by global company Swire Shipping.

Swire Shipping is the brand name for all liner shipping services operated by The China Navigation Company, which operates a global network of multi-purpose liner services, drybulk and bulk logistics services through its three business divisions: Swire Shipping, Swire Bulk and Swire Bulk Logistics.

The China Navigation Company is the largest trainer and recruiter of professionals in the maritime industry.

Tikomairaki was successful at the interview and this opened the doors for a new contract.

“I was so excited when I received the call from Alpha Pacific Navigation Ltd, who is the recruiting agent for Swire. Gaining foreign sea time while still at work is seen as one of the biggest achievements in this industry. It increases the ratings to become a crew.”

Tikomairaki fondly remembered the 2nd of February, 2017 when he boarded the Siangtan Singapore (Container Ship) at the Suva Wharf for a seven month stint as a Deck Cadet.

“Being a seafarer isn’t easy. There are a lot of challenges but it’s a rewarding career.”

“The pride of being at the forefront in the global trade arena, holding international recognition where most officers are qualified to work for the thousands of international shipping companies around the world is simply amazing.”

“Working on board a ship is unique as most of the time served is restricted to the people you work and they eventually become more your extended family.”

“Everyone on board has to follow a strict schedule which I believe is a great tool to prepare us cadets for the challenges that lie ahead in our careers. The day begins with a meeting at 7.45am and finishes at 5pm after which we have to get dressed in our uniforms and head to the Bar for socializing.”

To be able to have a successful career in the maritime industry, socializing is as important as having the right skills for the job.

Tikomairaki was the only Fijian on the ship with other nationals from Ukraine, Croatia, Philippines, China, Russia, Scotland, Ireland and Britain.

After completing his seven month contract overseas,

Tikomairaki returned to Captain Cook Cruises to continue with his internship.

Given his outstanding work ethic, Tikomairaki was re-called by Swire Shipping to undertake a four month Cadet Training Programme. Four cadets are recruited at one time under this program and Tikomairaki was the only Fijian selected.

He flew to Shanghai, China to attend this program me.

“It felt as if I was dreaming. Everything was happening so quickly. I just thanked the Lord for all my achievements.”

Tikomairaki travelled to Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, South Korea, China, Canada and the United States of America (USA) during the course of his attachment with Swire Shipping.

“The career opportunities in this field extend to many shore-based management jobs, which require people with maritime experience. Over the years, the demand for seafarers has outpaced the supply,” said Tikomairaki.

According to Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO is the world’s largest international shipping association, with around 2000 members in more than 120 countries) and International Chamber of Shipping Manpower Report 2015, the recruitment and training of seafarers will probably not satisfy future demand for officers, leading to a worsening officer shortage.

The report contains nine scenarios for future supply and demand of seafarers; the basic model forecasts demand for officers exceeding supply and the shortage of officers growing from 16,500 in 2015 to 147,500 by 2025.

Tikomairaki encourages youths to take up a career in the maritime industry as it has many lucrative benefits.

“This career will take you places without paying travelling expenses from your own pocket. It provides you an opportunity to experience interesting countries and their cultures,” said the young seafarer.

“It has good wages and there are opportunities for accumulating savings, even when young.”

“There are good long term prospects as there is a great need for more qualified ships officers to meet the skills required by the international shipping companies,” he added.

Tikomairaki will complete his Diploma in Nautical Science at the end of this year after which he plans to join Swire Shipping for further training.

## Shattering Glass Ceilings

No job comes with a tag and this is what has been the driving force behind young Sheemal Nadan. Brimming with confidence, passion and a desire to break stereotypes, Nadan made up her mind early in life to pursue a career in Engineering.

"I always had a keen interest in the design and construction of every object, be it roads, bridges, houses or pipelines. I was eager to learn the skills and techniques behind constructing these things. So when the time came, I chose a path that would allow me to contribute towards the development of our community," said Nadan.

Today, she thanks her family, especially her father, Vishwa Nadan for encouraging and supporting her to achieve her dreams.

"My father inspired me a lot. He encouraged me to take Technical Drawing as a subject while in school and that's when I started to gain interest in this field. Later on he encouraged me to study Civil Engineering at the Fiji National University," she said.

Nadan graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering: Civil Engineering last year and landed a job as the first female Engineer at Housing Authority, based at the head-office in Valelevu, Nasinu.

Reflecting on her four year study, Nadan said she was exposed to various specialties that fully encompass the field of Civil Engineering.

"When I was studying, we had a total roll of 80 students. Out of this, probably 20-30 students were females so it was not difficult adapting to the environment," she said.

"My studies gave me a basic understanding of most of the important principles, which I now apply to my current role," she expressed.

On the work front, Nadan is involved in civil aspects of development on projects carried out by the Authority.

"At the moment I am gaining field experience and knowledge which will enable me to handle projects competently in the future. It is very challenging but I love taking challenges. I am constantly faced with new problems which provide me an opportunity to



apply my knowledge obtained at FNU, gain experience and expand my skill set even further," she said.

The new kid on the block believes considering Engineering as a men's job is an old train of thought and this mindset needs to be changed.

"There are quite a few female engineers out there, throughout history, who have actively contributed to global advancement and I hope to do the same for Fiji. My family has never supported this outdated mindset and have always supported and encouraged me to do what I enjoy," she stressed.

Being the only female Engineer at her workplace, Nadan does not feel that there is a gender discrimination and nor has she been treated differently as a woman in this field.

"The staff at Housing Authority are very supportive and I learn from them each day," said Nadan.

"When it comes to doing something I love and enjoy, I tend to give it my all. I carry out my assigned work in the intended work hours, but there is much more to learn and experience so even in my time off I tend to go through materials to gain more knowledge," she said.

Nadan hopes to see more females taking up Engineering as their profession.

"Studying engineering is challenging and demanding, there are many sleepless nights but it's an amazing field. There's always something new to learn every day in this work field," she said.

## Climbing the ranks from apprentice graduate to operations manager



Hard work, commitment and perseverance are three key pillars that Lopeti Yabakitolu Radravu follows in his professional work career which he believes has led him to become the person he is today.

Radravu believes in making the best of opportunities in life and that is exactly what he did as a youngster and it steered him towards becoming the Operations Manager at Fiji Ships and Heavy Industries Limited based at Walu Bay Industrials Area in Suva.

As a youngster studying at Lelian Memorial School, Radravu said he always wanted a career as a seafarer. He joined the National Apprenticeship Scheme to undertake a Trade Certificate in Shipwright.

"I was in Form Five when the apprenticeship scheme was advertised so I applied and was selected," recalled Radravu.

"My parents were craftsman from Naroi Village in Moala, Lau and they always told me to use my talents and follow my dreams. They told me that the Apprentice Scheme was a better option than going to do foundation and struggling. I was not a bright student but I had taken a liking to the brown uniforms worn by the Shipyard managers in those days. So I had already envisioned that one day I would be a manager of the ship yard," he added.

Radravu joined the Apprenticeship Scheme in 1985, which back then was offered by Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) and the Fiji National Training Centre (FNTC) based in Narere.

Three years into his studies, the Lau man knew that studying engine and parts of a ship was his true calling.

"In our group there were nine of us, and during the course of our studies we became very close like a family of brothers," said Radravu.

"The best thing about the apprenticeship programme is that we went through everything to do with being a tradesman. In our programme we studied a bit of everything like electrical, plumbing, wood work/carpentry, machining to welding. We

covered all the basics from Stage 1 to 3 and from Stage 4 we moved to our core area of study. The rationale behind it was to know the basics of what existed on the vessel."

"After completing my training I had the opportunity to either go on to do my Diploma in Mechanical Engineering or do my Diploma or Degree in Naval Architect. My aim was to attain a degree in Naval Architect but I had to take up extension classes in Math and Physics," Radravu said.

In 1993 an opportunity arose following vacancies within the School of Maritime studies to join the teaching profession as an assistant lecturer.

Radravu was seconded by the then Principal of the School of Maritime, Netani Sukanaivalu. At the same time he undertook studies in tertiary teacher training.

Entering the lecture room, the Naroi man thought he knew everything there was to know about ship building, only to be challenged by his students.

"The amazing thing was that I thought that I knew everything in regards to ship building. So the Head of Department at that time arranged with the Department of general studies to get me enrolled in the tertiary teacher training course. After completing the first module, I realised that teaching was a different profession as it required special skills and I guess that's why it's said that being a Teacher is a calling," he said.

Later on Radravu had the opportunity to go to Australia to pursue his Degree in Naval Architect at the Australian Maritime College. He spent 5 years in Tasmania before returning to Fiji in 2008 to complete his contract with FIT and also as a part-time trainer at Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF).

Radravu joined Fiji Ships in 2009 as the Works Manager where he had to ensure that the ISO standards and the Marine Regulators requirements were followed.

As team leader he worked closely with departments under him- marine engineering, ship's hull fabrication and repair, water blasting and painting and slipping/docking of vessels.

He also managed projects for ship repair, special ship refits, and ship repair for hull structures, shell plating, piping systems, and underwater gears. The role was complex as apart from ensuring that the standards were adhered to, Radravu also managed the Quality Management systems of the projects.

In 2012 Radravu was promoted to his current position of Operations Manager overseeing the daily operations of Fiji Ships and Heavy Industries and its ship yard.

This meant more responsibilities, from preparing the organisation's annual budget (Capital Expenditure) with Repair and maintenance, advising the Industry Advisory Committee, through the Fiji Higher Education Commission to name a few.

With more responsibilities come new challenges and expectations. So in keeping up with the current changes in global technology in the Maritime Industry, Radravu pursued his Master's in Business Administration and also became a member of the United Kingdom's Royal Institute Naval Architect.

In June this year, Radravu was part of the 20 member Fiji Senior Public Delegation cohort who attended the China Executive Leadership Training in Pudong, Shanghai – China. "The journey of learning never ends."

As the saying goes, never forget your roots, and so Radravu believes that the Apprenticeship Scheme together with professional work ethics have propelled him to become a leader today.

The proud Lauan says he constantly encourages young men and women to pursue their dreams and goals as nothing is impossible in life.

"You have to take your chances and give it your best shot. That's the only way to learn and grow," said Radravu.

"Undertaking the Apprenticeship programme laid the foundation in my career growth. I gained a broader foundation of knowledge and when it comes to leadership, I can fit in anywhere now."



## ■ Desire to excel always triumphs failure – Dr Koraii

**D**octor Jack Koraii from the Solomon Islands, dreams of making the world a better place and he lives his life by the motto “no mountain is too high and no trouble too difficult to overcome.”

Originally from Seisei village located in the Malaita Province, Solomon Islands, Koraii describes his life as a roller coaster filled with lessons, challenges and meaning.

The 43-year-old was not born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth. Life was a struggle growing up in a village with no electricity, proper sanitation and modern facilities.

The soft-spoken Koraii said despite the daily struggles, he thoroughly enjoyed the village life as a child.

“I do not have any pictures, it’s all in my memory and those were the best days of my life. Spending time outdoors playing with the other kids from the village was exciting and fun unlike today’s generation who are more addicted to their technological gadgets.”

“When I started attending primary school I realised how difficult life was. My other two siblings and I used to study under a kerosene lamp,” said Koraii.

“I am forever grateful to my parents for my strict upbringing and their sacrifices towards our education. They always made sure there was enough kerosene in the lamp every night as we completed our homework.”

“My parents valued education but they could not afford to attend school. To them, the highest education qualification was being a Nurse, because of which I decided that I will pursue a career in the medical field.”

With a positive and ambitious mindset, Koraii joined the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM) in 1995, which now is known as the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

Koraii enrolled in the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme, a journey which started his medical career.

“There weren’t many students at FSM back then and we basically knew every student from Year 1 to 6. We were like a big extended family. We still remember our colleagues and talk about our University days when we meet during conferences and seminars.”

Koraii tied the knot while completing the MBBS programme. After graduation, Koraii returned to the Solomons to complete his two-year internship and become a registered practitioner while his wife stayed back to complete her MBBS programme. He worked at a hospital in Kulfi for three years. He and his wife had a child and Koraii took leave from work to return to Fiji and be with his family.

“It was a very devastating moment for me when I went to visit my parents and found out my salary was seized. With a heavy heart I decided to leave that phase behind and come to Fiji and continue babysitting my daughter.”

Koraii did not lose hope. He kept applying for positions in Fiji and finally got a breakthrough when he was offered the Medical Officer position at Nausori and Wainibokasi Hospital.

“I was there for about eight years until my wife got posted in Labasa Hospital at Emergency and Outpatients Department. There was a shortage in Internal Medicine specialists so I got the opportunity to join the Internal Medicine team.”

Koraii said “the beauty of Internal Medicine was that you are always learning no matter how experienced you may be.” While at Labasa Hospital, he came across an Echocardiography machine (scanning of the heart) which was not being used because there were no trained personnel to operate this equipment.

“It so happened that specialists from Australia were visiting Fiji and they conducted a workshop where my wife was a participant. I also joined and learnt on how to operate that machine.”

“The visiting specialists needed to collect data on patients

before they can carry out their treatment. I had carried out my own readings of the patients in that machine. While the Australian specialists were in the country to conduct their readings, their machine broke down and it was not practical for them to go back, repair the machine and come back to take the readings. This was my chance to present my work to them but I told them my data may have discrepancies as I am not a specialist in this area.”

“To my surprise, after assessing the data, they offered me the competence in using the Echocardiography machine.” This unfolded another chapter in Koraii’s education and work arena.

“The certification by Australian specialists boosted my confidence and interest to further my studies. I returned to Suva and straight away got enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in Internal Medicine programme at CMNHS.”

Currently, Koraii is an Internal Medicine specialist at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital (CWM) and a part-time final year student at CMNHS pursuing Masters in Medicine – Internal Medicine.

His Masters research is based on Pancytopenia cases in older persons – abnormal or low blood cells in the body. Through this research, he aims to find out if the infections such as typhoid, dengue fever are treated in a timely manner to prevent End Stage Organ Diseases such as kidney diseases and other different cancers.

Today, Koraii proudly says that he has the expertise in fields such as Public Health, Echocardiography and Internal Medicine.

“I will forever be grateful to this institution for giving me a wonderful journey of equipping myself with necessary knowledge to fulfill my parents dreams and be able to pursue a career so noble and even to continue my studies at this age.”



## ■ Creativity opens doors to Entrepreneurship

Be-coming an entrepreneur is about taking a leap of faith and maintaining a strong belief in one’s ability and talent. This is just what two best friends Benita Prakash and Sylvia Lata did when they started their own designing and photography company called Greyscale Mode – a Mint of Creativity.

Both Prakash and Lata are graduates of the Fiji National University (FNU). They duo studied Certificate in Graphic Design. Prakash graduated from the Fiji Institute of Technology in 2008 while Lata graduated in 2013 from FNU’s College of Humanities and Education.

They became close friends while working as graphic artists for a company based in Suva. Lata and Prakash are like two peas in a pod; both have bubbly personalities and always enjoyed art and craft while growing up.

“I believe because of our common interests we became good friends and then sharing our passion we have become quite close,” said Lata.

“I always had this passion of putting colors, fonts and pictures together since my primary school days. I had this craze of drawing, painting and designing my very own greeting cards, artworks and wall hanging. I did a lot of art and craft at home using recycled packaging, bottles and cartons,” Lata shared.

During the weekends and breaks the two made creative designs and turned this into greeting cards and shared this with their family and friends.

Given its popularity the two were soon being encouraged by their family to market their craft online through social media platforms.

“Benita and I used to design personalized birthday cards for immediate family and friends in our free time at home. We received a lot of encouragement and appreciation from them and they encouraged us to use social media to show our talent,”

Lata recalled.

The two created a page on Facebook and shared their artwork. To their surprise, just within days, they started to receive enquiries and orders for personalized greeting cards.

“It was overwhelming and we were fairly excited. I think it was at that moment that we knew that what we were doing could have the potential of turning into a business,” said Prakash.

The two friends said it was difficult for them to a make their next move.

“It was a do or die moment for us. Whether to continue our job or enter into business,” Prakash said.

After much discussion they eventually entered into business.

“We started talking about starting a business in the second half of 2017. We sketched out a business plan but we did not fully start business operations until February this year,” Lata commented.

“February because of Valentine’s Day was a good month to launch our business. We received lots of requests for personalized Valentine’s cards and it has been a steady road from there on,” continued Lata.

As weeks passed the two continued to research about other opportunities and expanded on the range of their services they could offer to clients.

“We started providing services such as photography, designing and printing product flyers, billboards, labels and brochures. While studying at FNU we learnt a lot of things and we decided to put this into practice,” said Prakash.

“I am able to create visual concepts, using computer software, communicate ideas that inspire, inform, and captivate my clients. Also developing the overall layout and production design for various applications such as advertisements, brochures, magazines, and corporate reports,” she said.

Lata shared similar sentiments adding this led to growth in

their business.

“FNU provided me the best educational foundation that I could ask for. It did not only bring my dreams come to reality but has given me a bright future,” she said.

Today, the successful young entrepreneurs do not regret leaving their full time employment. To them it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

“It’s actually way more fun to bring our creative ideas to life rather than stare at the computer whole day. We have a lot of projects that we are working on. Our clients come from all walks of life. We started with designing cards, now we have a lot more for our customers. The only thing is that the transition from graphic designing to entrepreneurship came with a lot more responsibilities,” shared Lata.

“We allocate normal eight hours for all our designing jobs, however, photography is always during odd hours. We both work as a team have always placed great emphasis on customer service because when they are happy they refer us to their family and friends and our business grows further,” added Prakash.

“We have done early morning shoots from 5am so that we don’t miss out on sunrise shots and wedding shoots until 2am just to cover the last bit of rituals,” she said.

Reminiscing her tertiary life, Lata said many people dream of a career in the creative industries, but far less people actually do something about it.

She encourages students not to skip classes, have a positive attitude and take advantage of the resources available to them to excel in their studies.

Prakash advises students to have self-belief as this will help them succeed in life and overcome any obstacles.

The best friends currently operate their business out of their homes and hope to set-up a common office by next year.

## MY CAREER



Penioni Kolinisau

Certificate IV in Film and Television Production

I have always been interested in learning the mechanisms involved in film production. I am glad to have enrolled in this programme, as it covers basically all aspects of film and television production; camera operations, lighting, production and direction. Later, we can specialise in any

area that may interests us. It is a one year programme with compulsory attachment component. I have been fortunate enough to be part of the production of the film “The Other Side of Heaven 2.” My classmates and I have been fortunate to be part of such production through the Fiji Film Production. The knowledge acquired from studying at FNU enabled me to well execute my part in the lighting section. The Film industry is rapidly growing and it presents many job opportunities both locally and internationally. This course has also changed the way I watch films as most of the time I am thinking of the angle they shoot the scenes, how the lights must have been set, the atmosphere set to bring about the emotions in the characters. Another reason I chose to study this programme is that you get an opportunity to travel unlike most other career paths where you are stuck at your desks.



Shinal Kumar

Bachelor of Pharmacy

Pharmacy is one of the most trusted professions in the world as we are the custodians of drugs and the main link between doctors and patients. My perception of Pharmacy changed after I joined the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) as there is so much more to

this programme other than just compounding medicines; we get to learn about so many ailments and the mechanisms of how each drug works to effectively cure patients. The Pharmacy profession has developed rapidly over the years and is more than just dispensing drugs to patients, we now have procurement, distribution, specialized services such as oncology pharmacy, pediatric pharmacy and so on. We get the opportunity to become professionally trained and competent pharmacists working in either retail or the public sector and make a difference in the community through the health services we provide. The thing I like most about studying Pharmacy is that it contains solutions to so many health related problems faced on a daily basis by the people. So with my knowledge I am able to suggest medications or solutions to these problems and make them feel better.

## Dr Reddy - Fiji's only female Emergency Specialist



Dr Shivani Reddy (second from left) during her Master of Medicine (Emergency Medicine) graduation ceremony.

There is nothing such as an ordinary day in Dr Shivani Reddy's calendar – each day comes with its unique opportunities and challenges for the country's only female Emergency Specialist.

Dr Reddy is a medical officer in the Emergency Department (ED) at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital (CWMH) who also mentors young aspiring medical students.

"I generally provide a consultant cover on the floor. I work as a Clinical Consultant but I do some administrative work as well in terms of running the Department, attending meetings and organising workshops," says Dr Reddy. "On a day to day basis I need to have an overall picture of the Department, which includes clinical consultations, providing supervision and training to the Registrars, interns and students; facilitating referrals and managing patient flow in the department."

### Studying at FSM

It was her dad's dream for Dr Reddy to become a doctor and she managed to land an AUSAID scholarship which allowed her to join the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme at Fiji School of Medicine (FSM), which now comes under the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

Studying at FSM was different since she had not expected smaller classes which provided individual attention.

"FSM had smaller classes than I expected and I also had classmates from other countries. Here, when you are part of a class, you are part of a family not just from Fiji but from other Pacific Islands as well. I did not expect to meet so many people and forge friendships with students from different countries," said Dr Reddy.

"Our lectures would have around 60 people and practical sessions would be even smaller but this resulted in classes being more interactive. Lecturers and tutors were inspiring and made learning fun. They were always there for support and guidance."

Being from Suva, Dr Reddy did not stay on campus for the entire duration of her study. She only stayed on campus in Year 4 as she had to spend more time in the hospital being on-call.

After completing her MBBS, Dr Reddy undertook her internship in CWMH for a year before being transferred to Kadavu in 2011 as part of her rural posting.

"Kadavu was interesting. Being an intern at CWMH meant that there were a lot of senior people around for supervision and support. That is no longer there when you are in a rural setting. Kadavu was a great learning experience."

"At times I had to take up multiple roles. There was no Pharmacist on the island at the time so sometimes I would see patients, prescribe medications and then run to the Pharmacy to dispense them."

This allowed Dr Reddy to become more aware of and appreciate different peoples' role in a hospital setting.

There were also those experiences which can not be forgotten.

"The power would go off at midnight which made things interesting. If I had to go to the Hospital in the middle of the night, I would be juggling in the dark with my torch and the keys to get into the building and attend to patients using a hurricane lantern."

Dr Reddy believes very strongly that every doctor learns a lot from rural experience.

"You learn so much more than you would in a central hospital with all the facilities readily available. In a rural setting you learn to be innovative and more patient. You are involved with

community outreach programmes, attending community meetings, looking after the resources, ordering supplies, writing reports – and organising workshops along with your usual duty as a Doctor."

"Serving people in the rural areas allows you to feel what it means to be 'outside' with limited resources unable to do certain diagnostic testing. Later, it makes you more understanding."

Although her initial plan was to do Internal Medicine after returning from Kadavu, she first had to complete a brief stint in ED at CWMH.

### Taking the unique path

Dr Reddy took the road less travelled in the Fiji medical scene and joined Emergency Medicine (EM). FNU launched the EM programme in 2012, which Dr Reddy decided to pursue.

"Consultants started coming over and talking about it and I saw how good Emergency Medicine was. The biggest difference you can make is in the first couple of hours when a patient is brought in and Emergency Medical staff are the ones they meet first. Another reason I was interested in EM was what I witnessed when my dad was presented to the ED in cardiac arrest. During the time one of the visiting emergency consultants attended to him. I saw the support, understanding, sympathy and compassion with how he treated my father," she said. Sadly, her dad passed away.

Dr Reddy completed her Diploma in Emergency Medicine in 2013 and then went on to do a three-year Masters in Emergency Medicine. She graduated from FNU in 2016.

### Being the only Female Emergency Specialist in the Country

"Being the only female Emergency Specialist is a blessing and struggle because you have to work harder to prove yourself and females tend to be more critical of themselves. The Medical field in general has been male dominated. I was greatly influenced by Associate Professor Dr Anne Creaton who was the Coordinator of the Emergency Medicine programme at FNU at the time. She's a great role model as a clinician and a leader. Working with her made me realise that my gender is not a barrier to succeed in this specialty. Also my colleagues are very supportive," said Dr Reddy.

In 2016, Dr Reddy was awarded the inaugural Mika Ah Kuoi Award for Excellence on completion of her Master of Emergency Medicine in Fiji.

While making progress in her career, Dr Reddy has noticed how FNU has been changing over time as well.

"FNU has changed for the better in terms of facilities and amount of support given to students. For example, when I was attached to the Emergency Department as a student there was just a logbook to fill with no support classes and very little supervision. Now, students have classes, more support and the Emergency team of FNU is young, approachable and dynamic. There's also been development in terms of research. More emphasis is placed on the value of research and that's the way to go."

She encourages students to appreciate the time they have at university. "It is important to live in the moment and savour your life as a student. The future will come soon enough. You will not get to experience this again. There will be a lot of difficulties as you progress through your career and your studies. Always remember why you are doing what you are doing and this will help you overcome whatever challenges you face."