



## Connecting Students to their DREAMS

FOSTERING CHANGE THROUGH CIVIL ENGINEERING

A PASSIONATE JOURNEY INTO ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

SCAN  
FOR ECOPY







# Fostering a Supportive Learning Environment at FNU



*Bula Vinaka!* I am pleased to write and discuss a theme close to my heart - connecting students to their successes and dreams.

The theme is befitting, as it is linked to our duty to placing our students on the right pathway to their ambitions through the courses and programmes offered at FNU.

I am certain that each of our current and prospective students envision the opportunity to widen your horizons, explore new fields of knowledge, and create your own journey to a future full of meaning and fulfillment. Your academic pursuits are driven by your dreams, objectives, and goals, and our educational institution is committed to fostering and supporting you in achieving them.

## Focusing on Your Goals

To help you achieve your goals, we've created a comprehensive support system that includes academic counselling, career counselling, and personal development programmes. We provide you with various platforms to explore your interests, find your abilities, and build the skills required to thrive in your chosen study area.

As the national University, we are aware of the significant role we play in fostering successful and skilled technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and Higher Education graduates. To ensure we meet your expectations, we continuously enhance our learning and teaching facilities so that you, our students, make the most of them in your learning.

We take immense pride in providing an educational pathway for anyone pursuing a trade or higher education qualification. We are committed to supporting you in attaining your goals.

You can begin with a Certificate (Level 3) programme and upskill to a Diploma or Degree. Students also have the opportunity to progress into postgraduate studies at Masters and PhD levels.

## Campus activities

Recently, the Office of the Registrar and Department of Student Services introduced the Feel the Vibe Initiative at different campuses to engage students in lunch-hour activities. The initiative's sole purpose is to provide students with a better environment where they can relax and be part of initiatives such as salusalu or mehndi activities, showing off different forms of art, and band groups performing live music and dance performances.

This is because you, the students, are at the centre of everything the University does.

Each of you is unique and talented in your own way. As the national University, we assist you in finding your true potential, polishing you into a gem, and

preparing you for your career, whether this be in Fiji or abroad.

We have highly trained and qualified lecturers and tutors who are always willing and ready to assist you in ensuring that you fulfil the dreams that you had when deciding to join FNU.

## Exams

We are nearing the end of Semester 1 studies and final examinations. Students have begun preparations and studies and I encourage every one of you to do your best in your exams, as this will help you achieve your dreams.

I've always believed that in order to achieve big goals, you must first set small goals and implement strategies to help you achieve those small goals and eventually you will reach your long-term goals.

To assist students with their financial arrangements, the University is allowing all students, including those with pending fees, to sit for their exams.

Arrangements will be made to release results once fees are cleared.

## Support Services

At FNU, we have support services available to the students, which include counselling services, mentoring programmes such as NoquBuddy, PAL Sessions, FNU's Sports and Wellness Centre, and bure facilities where students can relax and have group discussions.

Let us work together to build a lively, loving, and inclusive community where your dreams take flight. I believe in you and that you will achieve your goals with your hard work, devotion, and combined support of staff and your parents and guardians.

## National Celebrations

I am pleased to highlight that FNU students and staff successfully organised Girmit Celebrations and Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Celebrations. This included a Public Art Exhibition, dances, poetry competitions, and Public Lectures at different venues and campuses. It was a milestone achievement for the University to be part of the national celebrations to acknowledge our cultures and identity. I hope our young students learned a lot from these two events.

Finally, I wish you the best of luck in your academic endeavours and beyond!.

Vinaka

**Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba**

Acting Vice-Chancellor





FNU Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna organising Committee with the Chief Guest, Emitai Boladuadua and respondents at the Public Lecture.

# FNU celebrates Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna

Fiji National University (FNU) celebrated the legacy of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna through various activities in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions last month.

Art exhibitions, public lectures, poetry, songs, basket weaving, coconut scraping, and various other cultural practices were organised by the staff and students.

Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba challenged students to leave their differences aside to unite and grow together.

In a powerful statement she delivered to students, staff and guests on the final day, Professor Nabobo-Baba emphasised that FNU must have a legacy of excellence.

“The FNU has to have a legacy where the iTaukei

students are proud of who they are, where the Indian students are proud of who they are, the Muslim students, the Rotuman students, the Chinese students,” she said.

“In our differences we unite, in our differences, we will grow together. FNU is the university that has to look after that, I leave that challenge with you.”

She said the celebration was also a privilege for her to be part of as she had the opportunity to witness all cultures celebrate together all over again.

“I am particularly delighted as a Professor in Education that the Girmitiyas celebrated their leaders and their arrival, their heritages.”

“Today we celebrate Ratu Sukuna and all of us who are born off the land, who have no other home except this one,” she added.

The activities culminated in a public lecture hosted at the Nasinu Campus, and featured retired ambassador, Emitai Boladuadua as the Keynote Speaker. Boladuadua spoke on the life and legacy of the late Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.

The respondents were the Principal of the Pacific Theological College, Reverend Professor Upolu Luma Vaai, Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, Dr Jimaima Lako, Lecturer in Education, Sereima Baleisomi, and Honourable Filimoni Vosarogo, Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, who all spoke on the life of the father of modern Fiji, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.

Professor Nabobo-Baba also highlighted that good values were timeless and visionary leaders gave people good values.

“There are so many good leaders but visionary leaders actually have a vision for their people and the people that they serve.”

A two-day Public Art Exhibition was also held at the Nasinu Campus.



FNU staff and students during the Girmit celebrations.

## Girmit Day About Paying Deep Respects - Professor Nabobo-Baba

Girmit Day is about paying our deep respects, our homage to the Girmitiyas and their children.

This was the statement made by the Fiji National University Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba while speaking to staff and students when officiating as chief guest at the Girmit Day Celebration at Natabua Campus in Lautoka earlier this month.

The celebration was held to commemorate 144 years since the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers to Fiji.

Professor Nabobo-Baba shared that the Girmitiyas

were a fundamental part of Fiji’s society.

“Today we are to recognise this particular rich history of ours and celebrate this with pride and joy-that the continental canoes that made it through a number of oceans is a monumental feat and to have survived the years of Girmit is yet another feat,” she said.

She also shared that Fiji was about freedom.

“We sing this in our national anthem, it is a land of hope, it is a land of freedom,” said Professor Nabobo-Baba.

“Moving forward, I am hopeful that all of you will get

your qualifications, will write your stories of our past, of the Girmitiya, of the Fijian, of the Solomon Islander, the Melanesians, of the Rotumans – all of us who are now here. All our stories deserve some hearing and documentation.”

Department of Primary Education Lecturer, Naresh Chand said the celebration honoured the Girmit heritage and paid tribute to the Girmitiyas for their sacrifices and hard work towards nation-building.

“I would like to acknowledge the university for giving us the opportunity to celebrate Girmit Day,” said Chand.





Participants at the Ubercamp workshop.

## Singh wins top award

Academic Regina Singh pitched the idea of culturing sea grapes and oysters to supplement a cheaper, more affordable, and healthier protein alternative in comparison to the importation of meat.

If successful, the research will also contribute towards the fight against non-communicable diseases in Fiji as people will not have to rely on meat consumption for protein needs as they could move to alternative substitutes in sea grapes and oysters.

The idea presented by Singh (*pictured centre*) made her win the top pitch award at the Uber camp held by the Fiji National University's (FNU), Research Office.

Ubercamp is a global workshop where successful applicants are selected from undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and early-career researchers to pitch

their entrepreneurial ideas.

The aim is to capture the entrepreneurial mindset and explore young people's prioritisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). It promotes using technology and modern techniques while expanding and promoting new learning ideas to become successful entrepreneurs.

The participants involved in the Ubercamp are all early researchers and contribute towards the FNU's Strategic Plan on Research with Real World Impacts.

Singh, 28, had pitched that the Ocean is the solution for all. "The problem in Fiji is the high reliance on meat imports, which contributes to the trade deficit and non-communicable diseases".

"NCDs are a serious issue here in Fiji. My project topic is culturing sea grapes and oysters to supplement a cheaper, more affordable, and healthier protein," she said.

"Last year, I missed out on the three-minute thesis, and that is why I decided to come and attend the workshop this year and learn how to pitch, which is the most important thing when it comes to research or opening a business," she said.



"I was not thinking of winning as I came to learn, especially to gain knowledge on the three-minute thesis. I am thankful to the Ubercamp, Fiji National University, Fiji National University Student Association (FNUSA) and Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) with the facilitators who made us do our best in the two to three days."

The Ubercamp was attended by the early career researchers, postgrade and undergraduate students, FNU staff and early researchers involved in the Higher Degree by Research programme.

## Vehicles assist in practical learning

The shift to electric cars (EVs) has been accelerated by improvements in vehicle systems throughout time. Numerous technical advancements from the early days of automobile engineering to the present have prepared the path for EVs to become a viable and sustainable transportation option.

To ensure its students are aware and skilled on the latest technological developments, the Fiji National University (FNU) provides relevant training with practical experience components.

Recently, the University's College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) purchased two modern vehicles to assist Automotive students in their teaching and learning activities.

CEST Assistant Lecturer for Auto Electrical



and Electronic, Kite Lagicere (*pictured above*) said this prepared FNU students for current and future requirements of the automotive industry.

"FNU's School of Transport has two cars: an Electric Vehicle (EV) and a hybrid vehicle. The two vehicles were purchased by the University to empower the students to keep up with the growing demands of the industry," she said.

"Our students will not only read about these systems

and technologies but will also be able to test them out firsthand through these vehicles."

The EV is a new generation, 100 % Nissan Leaf vehicle with zero exhaust emissions.

Lagicere said that Fiji was in the process of obtaining electric vehicles to tackle climate change.

"These EVs have zero tailpipe emission, which is a better alternative for the environment compared to regular cars."





# A Passionate Journey into Animal Husbandry

Deepshika Neha Prakash’s heartwarming journey into the world of animal husbandry is rooted in her deep-seated passion for protecting and helping animals. The 23-year-old Bachelor of Science in Animal Husbandry student graduated from Fiji National University’s (FNU) College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF). Prakash is currently doing volunteer work at the Ministry of Agriculture under the Animal Health and Protection section. Prakash (*pictured above*) is originally from Field 4 in Lautoka and decided to move to Suva in 2020 with

a dream of pursuing her studies. “I came to know about this programme when I was in Year 13. It caught my attention as this was an area I wanted to establish my career in. After exploring the opportunity, I decided to enrol in the programme and I am fortunate that I excelled in my studies and managed to make a mark. Staying true to her love for animals, Prakash chose a Zebra-pattern inspired outfit to receive her certificate at FNU’s Graduation Ceremony earlier this year. Prakash’s biggest motivation is her parents, who

have been the lighthouse guiding her to the right path of prosperity. “I had a great experience studying at FNU. The lab and practical classes and attachment gave us hands-on practice,” she said. “I want to progress in my career path with more skills and experience to help animals and people’s lives.” Prakash said the interesting part of being in animal husbandry is that it is varied, challenging and rewarding as one makes a difference in the lives of animals. “Globally, the livestock industry is indeed very dynamic. It is evolving in developing nations like Fiji in response to increased demand for animal products,” she said. “My message to others is to take pride in how far you’ve come and have faith in how far you can go. But don’t forget to enjoy the journey.”

Having a family of musicians and singers is the greatest blessing Arieta Maibatiki has. From singing in church choirs and school choirs to being part of a sigidrigi group named Vua Ni Vatu Vola lead by her grandparents, young Maibatiki is living her music dream at the Fiji National University’s (FNU), Natabua Campus. To no surprise, the youngster is also part of the many angelic voices who make up the campus choir. The 19-year-old from Lutu Village in Wainimala, Naitasiri is a first-year student pursuing a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (Physical Education and Music) at the Lautoka-based campus. Being the eldest of five siblings is no easy task for her, but through her Catholic faith and upbringing by her grandparents, Petero and Alumita Low, she manages to fully concentrate on her goals and what she intends to achieve in life. The former Sacred Heart College student also comes from a family of teachers. “My mum is a primary school teacher, and my father owns a carrier that transports students to and from school in Naitasiri,” Maibatiki (*pictured below*) shared.



# Maibatiki pursues Music Dream at FNU

“I love spending time with my grandparents, my grandfather is a retired Head Teacher of Saint Thomas Aquinas Primary School in Lami and is also a musician, they brought me up since I was in kindergarten.” She was first introduced to playing musical instruments like a guitar and ukulele at the age of six and was keen to learn more about other instruments at FNU Nasinu Campus last year. “I first attended FNU’s Nasinu Campus last year, we played brass instruments, trombone, ukulele and guitar,” she said. “My future and long-term plan is to have my own studio and maybe have one abroad as well.” Maibatiki defines music as the ‘universal language where we can interact with other people from different nations and where we can express our feelings’.

# Fostering change through Civil Engineering



Akash Nath (right) with his father after the graduation ceremony.

Akash Ashitosh Nath’s dream is to be part of the change in developing a modern Fiji. This promoted his studies in the field of civil engineering at the Fiji National University’s (FNU), College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST). The 25-year-old has successfully completed a Diploma in Civil Engineering (Level 5) from the University and recently graduated with Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) with Honours (Upper Second Class). “I chose the civil engineering programme because Fiji is currently in a developing state in terms of buildings and infrastructure. I wish to be a part of this development and contribute my ideas towards it,” he shared. Nath is currently employed as a Project Officer at Cope Construction Limited, utilising his skills and knowledge in construction and engineering. “Civil Engineering is an interesting field where you can design, build, and supervise projects based on buildings, bridges, and roads,” he said. “My inspiration to join this trade is my father, as he is also a graduate in the building

and construction sector through FNU’s former Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT).” “I was an art student in high school, but I took this challenge to follow in his footsteps. There’s a huge demand for Civil Engineers locally and abroad due to the increasing demand for infrastructure and the need for qualified professionals to design and build. It was a smooth transition for me and with the assistance from the friendly lecturers and tutors, it was easier for me to adapt to the next journey.” In addition to focusing on his professional career path, Nath’s hobbies include researching building ideas related to engineering and playing FIFA games, PUBG, and football. “My experience as an FNU student was very rewarding and I enjoyed every bit of my learning years. The labs, equipment, and workshops are all up to par and very well maintained.” “The lecturers are also very helpful, and I, as a student, would like to thank all the lecturers for making efforts to teach the students even after their working hours.” Nath has set a goal of establishing his own engineering firm in the next five years.







Team Pasifika receiving their trophy and the prize money from the Dialogue Fiji Executive Director Nilesch Lal (second from left).

# Team Pasifika wins FNU Debate

Team Pasifika was crowned the winner of the Fiji National University (FNU) 2023 Debate Competition - University Debates on Democracy and Human Rights Debate Competition after beating the defending champions, Team Natabua.

The annual competition is organised by the University’s Office of the Registrar, Department of Student Support Services and this year Dialogue Fiji came on board to support the competition.

Debate is the activity that brings the art of reading, thinking and speaking together in one place. Debate programs are transformational experiences for students. In a debate program, students engage voluntarily in a social activity that reaps significant intellectual benefits, and rewards academic skills: quick thinking, sound argument, and confident speaking.

Team Pasifika members, Fatima Ahmed, Ravneel Singh, and Isabella Raidriwa argued on the affirmative side of the topic Should Voting Be Mandatory in Fiji.

“We did not expect to win, but we did win the national competition, and we are thankful to the team members for their hard work,” Raidriwa said.

Ahmed highlighted that given the limited preparation timeframe before debates, teamwork played a crucial role in overcoming the previous winners.

“Our arguments were based on the political landscape of Fiji, highlighting the fact that compulsory voting can help sustain democracy, especially when there is political instability. A quote used during the debate by the team was ‘Bad officials are chosen by good citizens who do not vote.’ Ahmed said.

“We performed exceptionally well, considering

the hectic schedules of exams, assignment deadlines, and other commitments. The synergy among our team members and our ability to work together really helped us achieve this far.”

Singh added that the team divided the tasks required and shared their research pieces with one another.

“We approached the competition with a strong mindset and executed our arguments really well,” Singh stated.

As a result of their win, Team Pasifika received a cash prize of \$500 a trophy while Team Natabua settled for \$300 and a trophy.

The participants underwent the Debate Coaching Workshop and Mock Debate Session prior to the competition. The teams have competed at the divisional level and the top teams made it to the final.

The Debate coaching workshop was organised for all registered teams at the central, western and northern divisions.

## FNU to embark on high school visits

The Fiji National University’s (FNU) Outreach Team will conduct nationwide secondary school visits from June to create awareness and inform the students about the various study and career paths available to them.

FNU Acting Manager Outreach, Ropate Robi said the team from the University was eager to meet with high school students and discuss their study opportunities at the University.

“Through outreach programmes, we can provide educational opportunities to those who may not have access or information to our services. We can also work closely with local businesses and organisations to address community needs and promote economic growth through our programme.”

“By connecting with people outside of academia, we gain valuable insights into their experiences and perspectives. This helps us create more inclusive



Acting Manager Outreach Ropate Robi presenting during the Primary School Awareness Programme.

learning environments that reflect the diversity of the FNU community.”

“Our team is gearing up for another season of nationwide campaigns and awareness activities. We work closely with College and Academic representatives to ensure all our programmes are highlighted, along with the entry requirements and application process.”

In addition to the school visits, the team will also be involved in various other programmes over the coming months.

“We are also preparing for a Cluster Career Expo in

the Central Division, which will allow us to speak with students, teachers, parents and the interested public about the University,” Robi said.

“The Expo is expected to be attended by 1140 students alone from Years 9 to 13.”

“Outreach programmes as such that are conducted by the University aligns with our commitment to leaving no learner behind and ensuring that everyone is aware that FNU is here to serve and train our communities to excel and contribute to the development and prosperity of the nation.”



## Breaking Barriers Through Education

Taiboria Tongare, a 39-year-old student with disability, proudly expressed his gratitude to the Fiji National University (FNU) for allowing him the opportunity to attain his inaugural tertiary qualification.

Tongare’s remarkable journey was marked by success as he graduated from the University’s College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS).

The determined Tongare (pictured left) was amongst the 76 students who completed the Basic Operations in a Call Centre (Level 3) course.

“FNU teaches us both practical and theoretical aspects of learning. It was a privilege to study at FNU, as the institution provides students with the right education and environment,” he shared.

“I am also grateful to the University’s Disability Centre for providing me with an opportunity to complete this short course.”

“This would not have been possible without the tremendous support from FNU’s Disability

Coordinator Fuata Faktaufon, Disability Assistant Kavita Singh and Ms Karalaini Tubuna.”

Tongare said this course allowed students to enhance their communication skills to be able to solve problems.

“The course taught me to be a better communicator and be able to solve problems; it allowed me to be more patient, to explain ourselves, and to apply empathy when dealing with customers who are temperamental,” he explained.

“I want to encourage students who love to study to continue upskilling themselves to be able to understand the world better and keep abreast of workforce needs and trends.”

Fiji National University is committed to providing a welcoming, encouraging, and empowering environment for students with disabilities to ensure equal access, full participation and reasonable accommodation for their academic pursuits.





FNU counsellor Varsha Naidu (right) conducting a counselling session.

# Enhancing Student Well-being: The Vitality of Counselling

Counselling services are an indispensable addition to tertiary institutions, as they contribute to the holistic development of students. Counselling programmes recognise and address the diverse needs of students, including those facing discipline-aptitude mismatches, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, or being first-generation learners. By providing support and guidance, counselling services help students adjust to the university environment, utilise available facilities, and seize opportunities more effectively.

Furthermore, counselling services are crucial in preventing issues that can lead to student dropouts. Problems such as low grades, indiscipline, absenteeism, and time mismanagement can significantly impact a student’s educational journey. By identifying and addressing these challenges, counselling services help students overcome obstacles and find solutions, thus reducing the risk of dropouts.

In a university setting, mental health is of paramount importance. The stress levels experienced by both students and staff can have a profound impact on their well-being. Stress is a natural response triggered by problematic situations, and while some levels of stress can be beneficial, prolonged periods of stress can negatively affect mental and physical

health. This is where counselling services become instrumental in supporting individuals’ mental health. By offering social support and guidance, counselling services help students and staff effectively cope with stress and its associated challenges.

The connection between counselling and mental health is evident. Counselling services provide a safe and non-judgmental space for individuals to express their concerns, process their emotions, and develop healthier coping strategies. The relationship between counsellors and their clients is central to the effectiveness of counselling services. Trust, established through a non-judgmental attitude and a confidentiality contract, is crucial in creating a supportive environment where clients feel heard, understood, and valued. By fostering a strong therapeutic alliance, counselling services promote positive mental health outcomes and empower individuals to navigate their challenges successfully.

Despite the significant benefits of counselling services, seeking and accessing such support can be hindered by the stigma associated with mental health issues. Many individuals feel hesitant and choose to keep their problems to themselves due to the fear of judgment or societal undesirability. Overcoming

this stigma is vital to ensure that students and staff can freely access the support they need. Education and awareness play a crucial role in challenging misconceptions surrounding mental health. By educating themselves and others, choosing self-empowerment over embarrassment, and joining support groups, individuals can help reduce the stigma associated with seeking counselling and to address mental health concerns.

Counselling services are vital to university environments, advocating for mental health and well-being among students and staff. Through holistic support, stress management, and efforts to overcome stigma, counselling services empower individuals to achieve academic success, personal growth, and a balanced, well-rounded adulthood. By providing valuable resources and a safe space for individuals to explore their challenges, counselling services contribute significantly to the overall welfare of the university community.

FNU provides free voluntary and confidential counselling services to the staff and students. This also helps individuals gain understanding and insight into the difficulties faced.

Staff and students can contact FNU Counsellors Varsha Naidu at [counsellor-vn@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:counsellor-vn@fnu.ac.fj) or mobile 896 0857 in the Central Division and Kantha Mani in the Western Division via [counsellor-km@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:counsellor-km@fnu.ac.fj) or mobile 891 0854.

Individuals and organisations must work together to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure that issues affecting communities are addressed appropriately.

In the University community, student associations can play a crucial role in mobilising peers to proactively engage in sustainable initiatives to improve the livelihoods of families.

Fiji National University Student Association (FNUSA) President, Mohammed Iqbal said his team implemented various initiatives throughout the year that were aligned to the SDGs. A recent project at the Naduna Campus in Labasa was in line with SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation.

“It is our duty to serve the students and our community through different means. This includes improving lives and positively impacting the nation,” Iqbal highlighted.

“At our Naduna Campus in Labasa, we undertook re-piping of the waterline and provided further access to clean water.”

“In addition to this, we also initiated the building

## FNUSA leads student initiatives

of a new bus shelter for the students under SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure. Students remain our main priority and will continue to be at the centre of everything we do.”

He added that the Association also conducted regular Tea Talk and Talanoa Sessions, allowing students to voice their issues and concerns.

“It is a platform where students can share their thoughts and insights on topics that will help them during their studies at FNU and well into their future.”

“During these sessions, we take note of the students’ matters and highlight these with the relevant sections so that it may be addressed and resolved.”

Another FNUSA initiative was the distribution of food to underprivileged people in the Suva City area.



FNUSA distributing food in the Suva City.



## Semester 2 applications open

Applications for Semester 2 at the Fiji National University (FNU) is now open! Current and prospective students can apply online for study courses or visit any campus for academic advice and assistance with the admission and registration process.

FNU provides various admission options that allow students to pursue technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes that

include Certificates and Diplomas. Higher Education (HE) programmes, which include Degree, Postgraduate, Masters, and Doctorate (PhD) courses, are also available.

This provides local, regional and international students the opportunity to pursue their academic goals at Fiji’s national institution.

FNU is a proud dual-sector University, and we recognise that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is as important as Higher Education for the future success of Fiji and other Pacific Island nations.

Students who wish to apply can visit our website at [www.fnu.ac.fj](http://www.fnu.ac.fj), email the Academic Team via [admission@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:admission@fnu.ac.fj) or Text (Toll-Free) 857 for Vodafone and Inkk users.



FNUNIKUA



Care | Honesty | Accountability | Service | Excellence  
[www.fnu.ac.fj](http://www.fnu.ac.fj)





# MY FNU

# Talanoa

## with our Alumni



## Underwood strives forward despite ordeals

Success does not come overnight. It requires years of hard work, dedication and commitment, and immense sacrifice.

This was the case for Maraia Tricia Underwood, who did not leave any stone unturned as she walked an obstacle-filled path towards her dreams of attaining academic and personal success.

She firmly believes that her success is attributed to hard work, sacrifice, obedience, and discipline. These were values Underwood clung to when undertaking her studies at the Fiji National (FNU).

The 28-year-old highlighted her gratitude for her mother, who had to take on the role of both parents when her father tragically passed away when she was two years old.

Years later, her mother married Isikeli Seva, a professional football goalkeeper.

### Education

Hailing from Kadavu, Underwood spent most of her life growing up in Ba and is the second eldest sibling of five. She attended St Teresa's Primary School and progressed to Xavier College and AD Patel College before deciding on tertiary studies.

In 2014, Underwood made the decision to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries from the University's College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF).

"My mum motivated me to pursue a career in fisheries. I was interested in aquaculture, ocean management, marine life conservation, and the development of Fiji's ever-growing demand for food security and sustainability."

"After doing some research, I decided on the course

at FNU as it provided the technical expertise and research skills in the areas of aquaculture, offshore and inshore fisheries, postharvest preservation, fisheries biology, conservation and management and fisheries administration."

A year into studies, Underwood fell pregnant with her first child. This was further motivation for the then-21-year-old to excel in her studies.

"My son, Zephaniah Roko Sarava, changed my perspective and outlook on things. He was also the biggest source of inspiration for me as I sat through my lectures, tutorials, and practical assessments," she shared.

"Growing up, I have always heard about FNU and its practical components, which I found interesting as it would make my transition from university into the workplace easy. When I studied at FNU, the industry attachments were instrumental in giving me the skills and knowledge I needed to retain and implement first-hand."

"There were various campus life activities happening around campus and we were always made aware of the support services the University had to offer students who needed assistance in our learning journey. This made it easier for us to cope with our academic obligations as well as enjoy the clubs and other activities that were organised for the students."

### Career

"I am currently a Fisheries Assistant with the Ministry of Fisheries, which entails administrative tasks such as making procurements, obtaining quotations and reviewing specifications of purchased goods," Underwood explained.

"My role includes overseeing breeding cycles, daily farm operations for freshwater species, and attending relevant training sessions."

"My studies have enabled me to travel and work in Fiji's various fisheries and aquaculture sectors. This is exciting for me as I love to travel and gain new experiences. I was based in Labasa for a few years and at the moment I am based at Naduruloulou Research Station."

### Motivation

Without a second thought, Underwood shared that the credit for her success was due to her faith.

She also acknowledged her family for their support as she juggled being a mother and a full-time student over the three years of her studies.

"My family is what I call my home. The Fiji National University also became my home and provided me with the best career paths and attachment components to ensure I was ready for employment," she said.

"My advice to all students is that with God, anything is possible."

"Remain focused and keep striving towards your goals until you achieve them. Sometimes achieving your goals takes longer than anticipated, but it's all worth it. So, continue to push on towards your goals."

### Alumni Connect

Graduates of FNU and its former institutions can register to be part of the exclusive Alumni Connect portal and remain connected to their classmates and the University. Registered alumni can receive news and updates on key University activities, read alumni success and feature articles, scholarship and upskilling opportunities, networking events and professional development and training seminars. To register, please scan the QR code at the top left corner of this page.



The **FNUNIKUA** is a monthly newsletter which aims to promote the University's activities to the wider community. This newsletter is produced by the Public Relations and Communications team at the Division of Marketing and Communications.

**Publisher:** Fiji National University | **Editor:** Charlene Lanyon | **Design & Layout:** Vetaia Dakua  
**Division Head:** Director Marketing and Communications, Karen Lobendahn  
**Writers:** Jennis Naidu, Pravin Narain, Nicolette Chambers  
**Contributors:** Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, FNUSA President Mohammed Iqbal, Varsha Naidu and Kantha Mani

**FNUNIKUA wants  
to HEAR FROM YOU**

FNUNIKUA welcomes submissions by staff and students for publication in the newsletter. Please send your suggestions, comments or articles for consideration to [mprc@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:mprc@fnu.ac.fj)

Published in partnership with



Follow us on

