



FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# FNU

# NIKUA

ISSUE NO. 2 | FEBRUARY 2024



**NEW SKILLS,**

**BRIGHTER**

*Future*



**PASSIONATE SISTERS PURSUE** HEALTHCARE FUTURE

**NADIR PIONEERS** AGRICULTURE MASTERS

SCAN FOR  
ECOPY





*Students at the Fiji National University Orientation Programme.*

# Discover Your Potential

## *Bula Vinaka!*

As the Vice-Chancellor of the Fiji National University (FNU) it is an honour to connect with our students, staff and communities through the FNUNIKUA.

As Semester 1, 2024, started, the air crackled with a sense of renewal and determination as students set forth on their academic journeys. To our new students, a warm welcome to the FNU family. You have chosen a university dedicated to fostering your growth and empowering you to shape the future of our nation. To our returning students, it is a genuine pleasure to have you back on campus, refreshed and eager to continue your pursuit of knowledge.

### **Forging Partnerships**

As we navigate this new semester, let us recognise and celebrate the power of partnerships. At FNU, we believe that collaboration is the key to unlocking the full potential of our students and propelling Fiji forward. Recently, Fiji National University and Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) of Japan formalised a multi-faceted partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing held at the FNU Campus in Nasinu.

The partnership will allow us to explore student exchange programmes, and work together on joint research and publications.

This strategic alliance underscores our commitment to bridging the gap between academia and industry, ensuring that our graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge demanded by today's evolving workforce.

The benefits of such partnerships are far-reaching. Students will gain invaluable exposure to real-world challenges and cutting-edge technologies. Our faculty will have the opportunity to engage in collaborative research projects that address pressing societal needs. And ultimately, Fiji will benefit from a highly skilled and adaptable workforce poised to drive innovation and economic growth.

### **College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education Training (CEVET)**

I am immensely proud to unveil the new brand of our College of Engineering, Science, and Technology. In recognition of the vital role of technical and vocational education in Fiji's development, this dynamic college will now be known as the College of Engineering and Technical, Vocational, and Education Training (CETVET).

This rebranding underscores our unwavering commitment to providing comprehensive educational pathways that meet the diverse needs of our students and the nation. It reflects a renewed emphasis on

empowering individuals from all backgrounds to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Students within CETVET will find a wealth of programmes designed to prepare them for fulfilling careers in high-demand fields. Whether your passions lie in engineering, the sciences, skilled trades, or the transformative power of education, this college offers cutting-edge curricula, hands-on learning experiences, and state-of-the-art facilities to help you achieve your aspirations.

Moreover, the inclusion of education training within CETVET highlights the interconnectedness of these disciplines. In the 21st century, educators play a pivotal role in shaping the minds of future engineers, technicians, and tradespeople. This synergy between technical expertise and pedagogical excellence will create a vibrant learning environment where innovation and collaboration thrive.

As your Vice-Chancellor, I envision FNU as a catalyst for individual and national transformation. It is my resolute belief that by providing comprehensive educational opportunities, fostering strong partnerships, and relentlessly pursuing innovation, we can unleash the extraordinary potential of our students. Remember, your success is intertwined with the success of our nation. Dream boldly, embrace challenges with unwavering determination, and let your passion ignite a brighter future for Fiji.

### **Semester 1, 2024 Orientation**

To our outstanding faculty and staff, you are the unwavering backbone of Fiji National University. Your expertise, dedication, and unwavering support for our students are invaluable. Let us continue to work together to create a learning environment that is not only academically rigorous but also nurturing and inclusive. Your guidance and mentorship will undoubtedly leave an enduring mark on countless lives.

Finally, to our valued students, the heart and soul of FNU: This university exists to serve you. Seize every opportunity that crosses your path. Engage in active learning, ask questions, challenge perspectives, and broaden your horizons. Participate in extracurricular activities, connect with your peers, and cultivate friendships that will enrich your university experience and beyond. Make the most of the resources available to you—our exceptional faculty, our supportive staff, and our inspiring learning spaces.

It is a privilege to be part of your journey. May this semester be filled with personal growth, academic achievements, and lasting memories.

*Vinaka Vakalevu!*



**Professor  
Unaisi Nabobo-Baba**  
FNU Vice-Chancellor



*Acting Dean of the College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education and Training (CETVET) Salabogi Mavoia.*

# FNU Announces College Transition for Skilled Sector Advancement

The Fiji National University (FNU) is proud to announce the transition of the College of Engineering, Science, and Technology (CEST) into the College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education & Training (CETVET).

This strategic transition, effective this month, highlights FNU's commitment to aligning with the goals of the Fiji Government outlined in the Fiji National Education Policy Framework 2024-2033.

FNU's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba stated that the transition underscores the University's commitment to providing quality and accessible education in both TVET and higher education streams of learning.

"To further emphasise the University's priority of providing TVET education, the FNU Council has approved the transition of the College of CEST into the College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education and Training (CETVET) this month," said Professor Nabobo-Baba.

"This change allows the University to align itself more closely with the Fiji National Education Policy Framework 2024-2033 and allows the University to support the Government's quest for a skilled and future focused TVET workforce."

As part of this transition, the University welcomes Mr Salabogi Mavoia as the Acting Dean of CETVET. Mavoia is a senior academic staff and once served as the Acting Dean of the former CEST.

"The College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education and Training (CETVET) is dedicated to assisting the nation's economic and social development by providing relevant, high-quality education and training and applied research with a beneficial societal impact," said Mr Mavoia.

"The College's goal is to produce graduates who are qualified with the right skills and are ready to be engaged in whatever field of work that they have been trained in."

Additionally, this transition will help progress the University's five-year plan to train 100,000 people through TVET by 2027.

The five-year plan, according to Pro-Vice-Chancellor TVET, Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata, would assist the local workforce with the provision of skilled workers through TVET.

"FNU responded to the government's concerns of the skills gap issue and developed a five-year strategic plan to train 100,000 people through TVET. This strategy would assist the government of Fiji in training the right type and the right number of skilled people through TVET to work in the local industry."

"We have been working in collaboration with industry stakeholders to understand their specific needs and working with our team in FNU to come up with relevant, competency-based programmes that will uplift the standard of the workforce."



*Students during their practical class.*

## Friends become part of Natabua Campus family

Leaving their families and friends many miles away was a tough decision Elenoa Keresi and Ruci Motomoto had to make to pursue their dreams.

The 19-year-old girls attended Savusavu Secondary School and Navatu Secondary School respectively in the Northern Division.

They were part of the thousands of first-year students that attended the Semester 1, Fiji National University (FNU) College of Humanities, Education & Law (CHEL) Orientation at the Natabua Campus.

Keresi, a first-year student, enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (English and iTaukei) programme while Motomoto opted to focus on teaching primary school students in the future.

"We are so happy to be accepted at FNU's Natabua Campus, especially coming all the way from Vanua Levu, this is our new home," said Keresi.

FNU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba graced the occasion and highlighted that FNU was a family.

"The Pacific Ocean has brought you here," she said.

"Natabua, in particular, is a family. Here in FNU we believe new students, that when you walk through the door we make sure that you walk out making your parents happy, it is really up to you of what you make of this experience."



*Friends, Elenoa Keresi (left) and Ruci Motomoto.*



## Narayan Sets Goal Amid Grief

Vinen Shankar Narayan (with the offer letter) at the Roadshow booth in Navua with his family.

Vinen Shankar Narayan, a 19-year-old student from Navua, recently enrolled in the Certificate in Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (Level 4) programme at Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Engineering and Technical, Vocational, Education and Training. This achievement comes after Narayan faced the devastating loss of his father during his Year 13 examinations. Despite the profound grief, Narayan persevered and completed his exams. "I attended Lomaivuna High School, and after the

passing away of my father, we moved to Naitonitoni Navua to stay with my grandmother," Narayan shared. "I couldn't meet the cut-off mark for nursing, so my next option was the trade field because it is highly recognised locally and internationally. I'm also part of the apprenticeship programme with FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre, working for Aqua Heat." Narayan, who was also the Head Boy of the secondary school, believes hard work and commitment are the ingredients for success.

"In our lives, things will not always work the way you want, but you have to adapt to what life offers you. I truly wish my father were here to witness my success. Yet, I know I am going to make him proud, and FNU is going to help me reach my goals." His mother, Anjani Lata, said she was proud of her son for becoming part of the FNU family. "Vinen is a very hard-working and dedicated son. I will always support him and stand beside him to see his dreams come true."

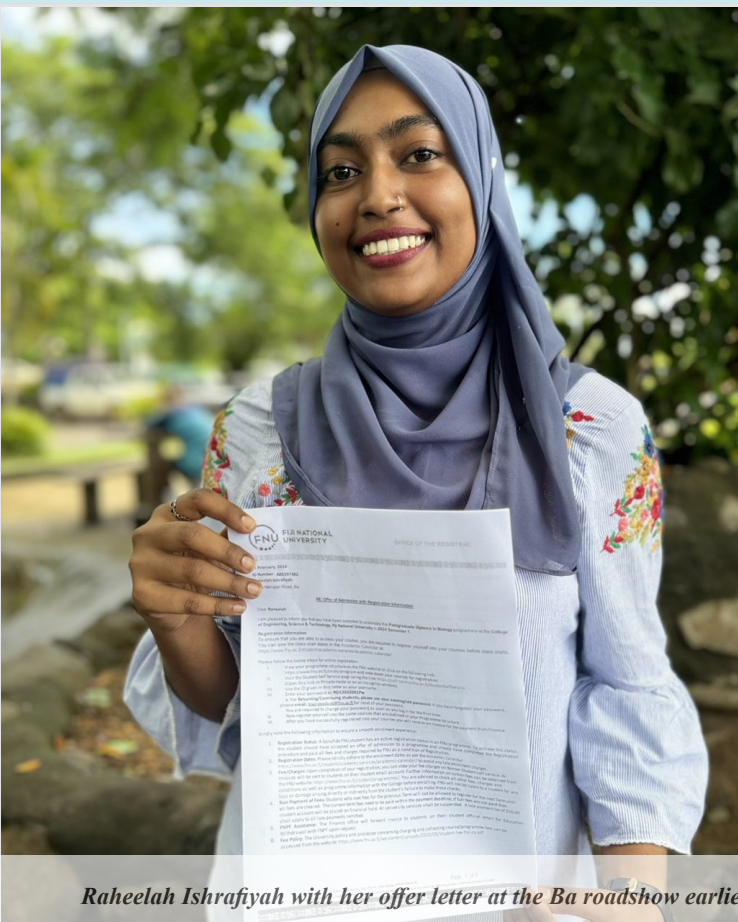
## There is No Limit to Learning - Naisau

In the ever-evolving context of career opportunities, it takes courage and a sense of adventure to step out of one's comfort zone and explore a career change. Savenaca Naisau, a proud alumnus of the Fiji National University's (FNU), Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA), personifies this spirit as he begins another academic chapter with FNU. Naisau, who graduated with a Certificate 4 in Shipbuilding from the Fiji Maritime Academy in 2018, is now enrolled in the Diploma in Engineering (Civil) (Level 6) program for Semester 1, 2024. His decision to transition from shipbuilding to civil engineering stemmed from the desire to challenge himself and venture beyond his comfort zone. "I believe we need to continually challenge ourselves and explore opportunities beyond our comfort zones. I am the first in our family to pursue a blue-collar profession, with the rest of my family

being in white-collar professions," said Naisau. "The field of civil engineering has always interested me, and I believe it is an in-demand profession and offers rewarding opportunities." Since graduating in 2018, Naisau has worked with local shipping companies and currently works as a welder and fabricator at the Pangea Gold Mine in Vatukoula. Naisau added that learning is a lifelong journey, and one should never shy away from pursuing new passions. "As long as you have breath in your body, continue to learn; there is no limit to learning." "Do not limit yourself to one profession; challenge yourself, research the job market, and look into other opportunities. Anything is possible with a positive mindset and the willingness to learn," he added.



Savenaca Naisau with his offer letter.



## Aspiring Lecturer Pursues Postgraduate Studies in Biology at FNU

Raheelah Ishrafiyah, a 22-year-old from Nailaga, Ba, dreams of becoming a lecturer at the Fiji National University (FNU). To achieve this dream, she has enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in Biology programme at the College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education & Training (CETVET). Her passion for biology and her desire to become a lecturer is the driving force behind her decision to pursue further studies in this field. "Biology is my main interest in comparison to chemistry. I would like to enhance my knowledge in this field, which is why I am pursuing further studies in this programme," said Ishrafiyah. "The ultimate goal is to join FNU one day to teach biology." Ishrafiyah is an alumna of FNU, having graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Chemistry & Biology) in March of 2023. Since then, she has been applying her knowledge and skills in her professional capacity as a Quality Coordinator in Ba. Through FNU's flexible learning approach, Ishrafiyah will be able to pursue her studies and maintain her current employment. "I had reservations about continuing my studies, particularly if it meant sacrificing my job. Fortunately, FNU provides this programme in blended mode, allowing me to balance work and studies," added Ishrafiyah. "Do join FNU; it's a great platform to start your career."

Raheelah Ishrafiyah with her offer letter at the Ba roadshow earlier this month

# Cooking is a Life Skill - Arav Prasad

In a world where gender norms often dictate career choices, one young man is defying stereotypes and pursuing his passion for cooking with unwavering determination.

Arav Prasad, a former student of Rakiraki Public High School, has embarked on a remarkable journey to turn his culinary dreams into reality.

Prasad's journey began when he attended the FNU Roadshow in Rakiraki, where he successfully enrolled in the Certificate in Cookery (Level 4) programme at FNU's College of Business, Hospitality, and Tourism Studies (CBHTS).

His fearless decision to break away from traditional expectations highlights his courage and commitment to follow his passion.

Reflecting on his journey, Prasad expresses gratitude for the support he received from his family towards achieving his goals.

"I am grateful to the FNU Roadshow team for bringing the opportunity to turn my dreams into reality to my hometown," Prasad shared.

"It was such an easy and smooth enrollment and registration experience," he shared.

"I know that professions in the food industry are in high demand both locally and internationally, and the joy of pursuing my passion fuels my determination to break gender stereotypes."

Prasad's aspirations extend beyond

acquiring a Certificate in Cookery; he harbours ambitions of owning his restaurant one day.

Inspired by renowned chef Gordon Ramsay, Prasad looks up to him as a role model whose culinary expertise and entrepreneurial spirit he admires.

"Chef Ramsay's journey from humble beginnings to culinary stardom resonates with me," Prasad explained.

"His dedication and drive motivate me to strive for excellence in my culinary endeavours."

Prasad's story serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of breaking gender norms in the culinary world.

Cooking has long been associated with traditional gender roles; however, Prasad's passion for cooking defies these stereotypes, emphasising that culinary talent knows no gender boundaries.

In a message to aspiring chefs, particularly those who may face societal pressure to conform to gender norms, Prasad offers words of encouragement.

"Cooking is an important life skill! Don't let anyone dictate what you can or cannot achieve based on your gender," he asserted.

"Follow your passion relentlessly, and never be afraid to challenge stereotypes. The world of cooking is diverse and inclusive, and there's room for everyone to shine."



Arav Prasad receives his offer letter at the FNU Roadshow in Rakiraki.

## Passionate Sisters Pursue Healthcare Future



Second from left Khushi Riya Reddy and Krishi Diya Reddy from left with their parents.

In a heartwarming display of shared passion and ambition, twin sisters Krishi Diya Reddy and Khushi Riya Reddy have embarked on a new journey together.

The dynamic duo has enrolled in the Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Sciences programme at Fiji National University's College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

Spotted in matching outfits at the CMNHS orientation, the Reddy sisters radiated excitement and determination. They see this field as the perfect way to channel their shared interests and help others.

"We have chosen this field of study because this is where our interest lies, and we both are pretty much alike when it comes to studying and doing things," Reddy said.

"The advantage of doing the programme together is that we would be able to help one another, learn from one another, grow together,

and make our parents proud.

"Both of us think alike, and that is the most common thing among us."

While acknowledging that there may be a bit of healthy competition, they envision their twin connection as a powerful source of motivation.

Coming from Votualevu, Nadi, and accompanied by their supportive parents, the Reddy sisters understand the important role they will play in the future of healthcare.

"This field is very demanding, and it is also important in terms of the work it involves," Khushi explained.

"Our message to others is to keep your focus."

"Through dedication and mutual support from one another and our parents, we are ready to make our mark on the field of medical laboratory science."

## The Pursuit of Education: From Naivibuli to Derrick

In the early morning hours of Friday, 9 February, before the sun had even whispered its first light, two brothers of Naivibuli village in Nadroga stirred, with one purpose in mind- the Fiji National University Orientation.

The two brothers, Waisea Turaga Senisacau and Daniele Natavo, set out from their village at 2am for the College of Technology and Technical Vocational Education and Training (CETVET) orientation.

The orientation marked a new chapter for Natavo, who is pursuing a Diploma in Agricultural Engineering (Level 6) under CETVET.

Older brother Senisacau shared that the orientation provided the opportunity to familiarise themselves with necessary information about the university and its support services that will aid Natavo's journey.

"It was important for us that Daniele attend this orientation, especially as we are from Sigatoka, and we needed to familiarise ourselves

with FNU and its services," said Senisacau.

Natavo is not alone in his FNU journey, as he is accompanied by his niece, Senisacau's daughter, who is pursuing a Diploma in Nautical Science (Level 5) at the Fiji Maritime Academy.

"I am so happy that they have both reached the tertiary level and that all the support (through small-scale farming) put towards their education is not in vain," added Senisacau.

"Like many parents, we have been laying the foundation for our children's education since the beginning of primary education."

"We will continue to support and encourage them and drive them towards their personal and professional development for their future."

"I am happier that they are pursuing further education and are closer to achieving their dreams."

The FNU recently announced the transition of the College of Engineering, Science, and Technology to the College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education & Training.



Waisea Senisacau (left) and younger brother Daniele Natavo at the CETVET Orientation programme.



**FNUNIKUA**



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# Paralympian works on Perfecting her Skills

Selina Seau is no stranger to the sporting field in Fiji. The Rakiraki native is a member of the Fijian Paralympic team and a well-known athlete.

After finding astounding success in sports, Seau had the desire to learn more about the field that she is passionate about by pursuing a Diploma in Sports Science (Level 5) at Fiji National University.

“I chose this particular programme due to my athletic background and my love for sports,” said Seau.

“I have always had a desire to know more about sports and fitness, and this programme offered at FNU will allow me to increase my knowledge, enhance the skills I already have, and allow me to help other sportspeople who are living with disabilities.”

She recently attended the FNU Orientation Week and was glad that the university offered dedicated services and has a disability centre that caters to the specific needs of differently-abled students.

“WOW!” said Seau when she was asked to describe the FNU orientation in one word.

“This is my first time in university, and honestly, I am glad I chose FNU because of the amazing support services. After such an informative orientation session, I know exactly where I need to go when I face any difficulties, whether it’s IT-related or when I am struggling with a particular subject. I know where I can turn for help.”

During the orientation session, Seau and other students with special needs were provided sign language interpreters as well as student guides who were ready and happy to assist them with orientation as well as the campus tour.

“FNU is an inclusive university, and it ensures that their students living with disabilities are well taken care of,” Seau said.

Seau is hoping to empower other people living with disabilities to aim high and know that nothing is impossible for them if they set their mind to it.

“Whether it is sports or studies, if you have the determination and the passion, nothing is impossible.”



Selina Seau at the Orientation.

# Nadir Pioneers Agriculture Masters



Suhayl Nadir.

In a milestone achievement for the College of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (CAFF) at Fiji National University (FNU), Suhayl Nadir proudly stands as the first student to complete the Masters programme in Agri-Business.

Reflecting on his journey, Nadir expressed gratitude for the opportunity to realise his academic aspirations.

“Today is my lucky day; this is a memorable moment for me to be here and graduating as a Masters student,” the 26-year-old exclaimed.

Hailing from Nadi, Nadir’s passion for agriculture began early in life, and with determination and perseverance, he turned his sights towards higher academic pursuits, envisioning himself as a Masters student.

“After completing my primary education with a focus on agriculture, I pursued my undergraduate studies at FNU, earning a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture.”

Throughout his academic journey,

Nadir found guidance and inspiration from his mentor at CAFF and from the Department of Agri-Business Consultant, Dr Salesh Kumar, at FNU.

Under Dr Kumar’s tutelage, Nadir delved into agricultural economics, laying the foundation for his Masters specialisation.

However, Nadir’s path to success was not without challenges. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic posed obstacles, particularly in conducting research.

While his mother’s recent passing cast a shadow over his graduation, Nadir found solace in her memory, carrying her spirit in his heart.

“Despite all these challenges, the support from my family fueled my determination to achieve my dream!”

“I want to encourage aspiring agriculturalists and others to choose FNU for its specialised programmes and expertise, I would recommend FNU’s Koronivia campus as it is the best and the heart of Agriculture in Fiji.”

# Tabuakula Embarks on Educational Journey at FNU

Vilimaina Tabuakula’s passion for animals has given birth to her dream of working in the animal sciences field.

Enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Animal Science programme at FNU’s College of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (CAFF), Tabuakula radiates excitement as she prepares to dive into her studies this semester.

Hailing from Drekeniwai Village in Savusavu, accompanied by her grandmother, the young lady participated in the College’s Orientation session at FNU’s Koroniva campus at the beginning of the semester.

“I really enjoyed CAFF’s orientation programme, it was nice! The session really motivated me, and the encouraging words from the college staff have ignited my anticipation for this semester,” she said.

“I cannot wait to start my studies at FNU this semester,” Tabuakula said.

With a passion for animals driving her choice of programme, she eagerly embraces the opportunity to explore Animal Science at FNU.

“My grandmother has always encouraged me, and without her, I would not be here today!” she shared.

“I chose FNU to further my education as it is local, and I can stay in my home country to study my dream.”

As she embarks on this new chapter, Tabuakula extends her heartfelt wishes to her fellow students, rallying them with a message of encouragement and faith.

“I am wishing all the students this year all the best in their academic year! Go with God.”



Vilimaina Tabuakula (left) with her grandmother.

# Komaisavai Acknowledges FNU



Mereseini Dabuli Komaisavai.

Mereseini Dabuli Komaisavai was always passionately driven towards agriculture.

The 18-year-old's goal was to complete her secondary education at Khalsa College in Ba and become part of the Fiji National University's (FNU) Koronivia Campus family to pursue her dream.

However, since the introduction of eight new programmes to the FNU's Ba Campus this year, Komaisavai was fortunate to secure a place in one of the programmes under the FNU's College of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry—Certificate in Agriculture (Level 3).

"Thank you, FNU, for bringing the programmes to our doorsteps," she said.

"I am sure I have made my family proud."

The Beqa native is the eldest of two siblings and looks forward to commencing her journey at the FNU Ba Campus.

Meanwhile, former Mulomulo Secondary School

student Praveen Prakash is pursuing a Certificate in Joinery and Cabinet Making (Level 3) this year at FNU's Ba Campus.

"I chose FNU because they offer relevant programmes for me to become a perfect joiner and cabinet maker in the future," he said.

FNU's Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching, Dr Jimaima Lako, acknowledged the students for trusting FNU.

"Many talented and hard-working students who come from farming backgrounds will greatly benefit from our newly introduced and continuing programmes under the three Colleges - College of Engineering, and Technical Vocational Education and Training, the College of Business Hospitality and Tourism Studies, and the College of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry," she said.

## 'Believe in your Dreams'



Eighteen-year-old Adbur Rahman always dreamt of pursuing his studies at Fiji National University's, College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies.

That dream became a reality when Rahman (pictured above) joined the group of students at the FNU Semester 1 Orientation at Ba Campus earlier this month.

He said it was only the start of his long journey to becoming a future businessman.

He is a former student of Kamil Muslim College.

"I am more interested in the business side of things," he said.

"I chose FNU because of its prestigious

name and because it offers programmes that are suitable to the needs of all Fijians."

His advice to youth is – to work hard and believe in your dreams.

Head of Campus, Ba Niraj Dharmendra, shared that FNU was committed to putting all students at the centre of everything it did.

"Your experiences here at FNU's Ba campus will demonstrate that it is important to every member of staff who works here," Dharmendra highlighted.

"You will have the opportunity to learn new things, acquire new knowledge, develop new skills, and enhance your attributes in profound ways that will equip you for the rest of your life."

## Chand's Journey of Leadership and Inspiration

Rotishma Jotika Chand's journey is one of determination, inspiration, and the pursuit of leadership excellence.

At 38-years-old, she travelled from the Cook Islands to Fiji National University's (FNU) December 2023 graduation ceremony to receive her Advanced Diploma of Leadership and Management (ADLM) qualification, marking a significant milestone in her career.

The Advanced Diploma of Leadership and Management course, offered by FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) in collaboration with TAFE New South Wales, equips individuals with the skills to become strategic and influential leaders in their workplaces.

Originally from Nadroga, Chand credits her sister, Sonia Shivagani, a Senior Instructor at NTPC, for inspiring her journey.

"My sister motivates me as she shows a lot of commitment and dedication towards her studies, which also motivates me to do well." Chand shared.

Inspired by her sister's teachings and leadership qualities, Chand seized the opportunity to pursue the ADLM programme virtually.

"If I had not done this programme, I would not have gone this far in my career," she reflected.

Chand's dedication to her professional growth bore fruit when she transitioned from her role as a hotel manager at Smuggler's Cove Resort in Nadi to an opportunity in the Cook Islands.

"We want to build the future leaders of tomorrow, and this is just the beginning, and I would love to climb up that ladder."



Rotishma Jotika Chand (third from left) at the December 2023 Graduation ceremony.



SCAN TO REGISTER

# MY FNU

# Talanoa

with our **Alumni**



*Kirti Swastika Lata.*

## Lata's Journey from Struggle to Success

“As time went by, my mom decided to move from being a housewife to a babysitter, ensuring that the family’s financial needs were met.”

Later, she decided to work at a restaurant so she could earn some extra money for the family.

“I am always grateful to my parents for the sacrifices they made in order to give me a good life.”

### Education

Lata’s journey from her early education at Bhawani Dayal Memorial Primary School and Bhawani Dayal Arya College to her career as a Safety, Health Environment, and Quality Coordinator is a testament to her resilience and dedication.

In 2019, Lata took a significant step in her educational path by enrolling in a Trade Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety at the Fiji National University’s College of Engineering, Technical Vocational, and Education Training.

“I made the choice to attend Fiji National University as it was the only institution providing that programme, and I was interested in the mandatory practical component. My lecturers were very helpful and patient when dealing with students. I also enjoyed the practical component of my studies as I was able to learn new things, making my transition into full-time employment easy,” Lata said.

Graduating in 2020, Lata emerged from the academic realm equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for a career in occupational health and safety.

### Career

After graduating, Lata delved into the professional world, gaining diverse experiences that further molded her expertise. Starting as a pharmacy assistant at Suva City Pharmacy, she transitioned into roles such as quality insurance associate and OHS representative at Flour Mills of Fiji. These experiences laid the groundwork for her eventual breakthrough in 2022, when she secured the position of Safety, Health, Environment, and Quality Coordinator at the Oceania Gas Limited.

“I navigated the dynamic and ever-changing landscape of the gas industry, where I embraced the challenges that came with the role. As a female OHS officer in a male-dominated industry, I faced challenges and overcame unique challenges, showcasing resilience and breaking barriers,” she said.

“The importance of safety is the main priority in my line of work. The daily shifts and evolving priorities in the gas industry keep me engaged and constantly challenged, making my professional journey both interesting and fulfilling.”

### Words of Wisdom

From her humble beginnings, Lata has come a long way in her career, overseeing the OHS of Oceania Gas Limited.

She has acknowledged the support of the Fiji National University in assisting her to secure employment and support her family.

“I made the choice to attend the Fiji National University, and I am happy with where I am now,” she said.

“When you are at the Fiji National University, ensure that you work hard and pursue your goals so that you are able to repay your parents for all the sacrifices they have made for you.”

Financial challenges can become a powerful source of motivation. With big dreams fueling your ambition, you’ll find the drive to work tirelessly, dedicating yourself wholeheartedly to making those dreams a reality.

For Kirti Swastika Lata, this has served as the motivation to do well and achieve her dream by successfully completing the Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety (Level 5) at the College of Engineering and Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (CETVET), formerly known as the College of Engineering, Science, and Technology (CEST).

Lata, currently, works for Oceania Gas Limited as the Safety, Health, Environment, and Quality Coordinator.

“I have always viewed my humble beginnings as a beacon of inspiration, propelling me to work hard to ensure I can repay my parents for all the love and sacrifices they have made for me,” Lata said.

In the face of adversity, Lata drew strength from her upbringing, using it as a driving force to overcome obstacles and strive for a better future. The quiet yet determined alumna embraced the challenges presented by her early life, transforming them into stepping stones towards success.

### Background

She grew up in Nakasi, where her father, Deo Chand, is a skilled carpenter, and her mother, Roshni Kumar, is a dedicated housewife.

Today, Lata is proud that she is able to support her parents, who have supported her throughout her life and sacrificed a lot to ensure their daughter excelled at every stage of life.

Deo’s carpentry work was often hindered by unpredictable weather conditions, casting a shadow of uncertainty over their humble abode.

“Although financial struggles were a constant companion, my parents prioritised my needs over their own desires,” she said.

“During the primary school days, my mom dedicated herself to ensuring I was well looked after. My parents are the pillars that supported me.”

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