



INVESTING

in *Excellence*

FNU RECOGNISES DR WILSON'S RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

GONDAR DRAWS INSPIRATION FOR AGRICULTURE FROM GRANDMOTHER

SCAN
FOR ECOPY





FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (centre) with FNU Chancellor and Council Chair Semesa Karavaki and Head of Campus Labasa Pardeep Lal at the Naduna Campus.

Investing in Excellence for National Development



MOU Signings

One of the hallmarks of excellence is our commitment to forging strategic partnerships with esteemed institutions worldwide. This month, I am thrilled to announce the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Beijing Normal University (BNU) and the Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) from Indonesia. By partnering with leading international universities, Fiji National University (FNU) is strategically investing in excellence for national development. These agreements facilitate academic collaboration, knowledge exchange, and research partnerships, enabling us to enhance its educational offerings, improve faculty expertise, and foster innovation. Ultimately, this investment in international partnerships empowers FNU, as the nation's university to cultivate a skilled workforce and advance research capabilities, driving socioeconomic progress and sustainable development in Fiji. By joining hands with these prestigious institutions, FNU reaffirms its dedication to fostering global connections and investing in excellence on an international scale.

Vice-Chancellor's Research Awards

Excellence in academia thrives on the foundation of groundbreaking research. Here at FNU, we are privileged to have a community of scholars and researchers whose passion for discovery knows no bounds. It is with great pleasure that I congratulate the recipients of the Vice-Chancellor's Research Awards which celebrated the years of hard work and commitment to new, excellent innovative ideas in various sectors. To the winners and nominees, your dedication to pushing the boundaries of knowledge inspires us all and reaffirms FNU's commitment to nurturing a culture of innovation and inquiry. These accolades not only acknowledge the dedication and ingenuity of our researchers but also inspire others to push boundaries and strive for greatness. Each award is a testament to our commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and scholarly pursuit, propelling us closer to our vision of academic excellence.

International Women's Day

Celebrating diversity and empowering women are integral parts of our institutional ethos. This month, we came together to commemorate International Women's Day, honouring the invaluable contributions of women in our community and beyond. From trailblazing leaders to unsung heroes, women continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the fabric of our society. At FNU, we

stand firm in our commitment to gender equality and pledge to create a supportive environment where every individual can thrive and succeed, regardless of gender. Through a series of events and initiatives, we honored the invaluable contributions of women in our community and beyond. As the first indigenous female leader of FNU, I was honoured to speak at various women's celebrations where I got the opportunity to encourage women, girls and of course our male counterparts about the importance of inspiring and investing in the inclusion of females to accelerate the progress of our communities.

Northern Tour

Investing in excellence means reaching every corner of our beautiful nation, from the bustling streets of Suva to the serene landscapes of Vanua Levu. This month, I had the privilege of embarking on a tour of Northern Fiji, where I witnessed firsthand the passion and potential that abound in our nation. From a vibrant cultural showcase during my traditional welcome at the Naduna Campus to engaging academic discussions with professional peers, district and provincial heads, and of course our wonderful Fijian people, it was truly inspiring to see the passion our people in rural and remote areas in Vanua Levu have towards pursuing their dreams. This endeavour allowed us to engage with communities, understand their needs, and explore opportunities for collaboration and growth. By bridging the gap between academia and society, we will ensure that our efforts are not only impactful but also aligned with the aspirations of the communities we serve. We are hoping to ensure that the transformative impact of education reaches every corner of our country because as we continue to expand our footprint internationally, let us never forget to invest in the excellence of our people and the importance of inclusivity and accessibility for our fellow Fijians living in rural, remote, and maritime areas of Fiji.

Career Teachers' Workshop

Education is not just about imparting knowledge; it is about empowering the next generation with the skills and confidence to chart their own paths. This month, we had the honour of hosting a nationwide Careers Teachers Workshop, where educators from across the country came together to exchange ideas and insights on preparing students for the future. By equipping our teachers with the tools, they need to inspire and guide our youth, we are laying the groundwork for a future filled with endless possibilities. By providing valuable insights and resources to educators, we empower them to guide and inspire students towards fulfilling and meaningful career paths. Through education, mentorship, and opportunity, we turn aspirations into achievements, together, we are turning dreams into reality, one student at a time.

As we reflect on these milestones, let us be reminded of the power of collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity in our journey towards excellence. Together, we can transcend boundaries, defy expectations, and transform aspirations into accomplishments. Let us continue to dream boldly, aspire relentlessly, and work tirelessly to create a future where excellence knows no bounds.

Together, we will continue to invest in excellence and pave the way for a brighter tomorrow for Fiji!

FNU Recognises Dr Wilson's Research Contributions



Dr Wilson at the Vice-Chancellor's Research Awards Night.

Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences (CMNHS) Acting Dean, Dr Donald Wilson, was awarded the prestigious Research Excellence—Staff award during the Vice-Chancellor's Research Awards this year.

Dr Wilson's path exemplifies dedication and perseverance. After his parents separated, he spent his formative years living with his grandmother under modest conditions. Despite the challenges, Dr Wilson excelled academically, eventually graduating from FNU, then known as the Fiji School of Medicine's, Bachelor in Medicine and Bachelor in Surgery (MBBS) programme in 1997. "I am grateful and humbled by this recognition," said Dr Wilson. "Research has the power to transform

lives, and I've always believed in paying it forward."

He pursued further education in Japan, earning a PhD in Medicine (Epidemiology) and later working as an assistant professor focused on toxicology, public health, and environmental epidemiology.

Returning to Fiji in 2016, Dr Wilson joined FNU and was instrumental in establishing the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR), overseeing its strategic plan, and contributing to the recognition of its C-POND research centre as a WHO Collaborating Centre.

Through his leadership, the College has secured significant research funding and facilitated important publications, staff qualification upgrades, and capacity-building activities. "Building a strong research culture

takes collaboration and a belief in the potential of our people," Dr Wilson remarked. "This award is a testament to the hard work of our entire team at CMNHS."

In addition to the recognition, Dr Wilson received \$10,000, which he has pledged to use to support a needy student's educational aspirations.

"Over the years, besides conducting research and capacity building, I have been helping students who are in need of education expenses, and I am grateful that this prize will be able to help another student achieve his or her dreams through education at CMNHS," he said.

"I am grateful to be nominated and thankful to the assessing Committee and to Madam Vice-Chancellor for the recognition and this award."



Dr Ravita Prasad at the Pacific Women in Power (PWIP) event earlier this month.

Inspiring the Next Generation of Women in STEM

She holds a PhD in Physics from the University of South Pacific, having completed her undergraduate and postgraduate studies from the same university.

Beyond the classroom, Dr Prasad actively engages in research, in critical areas like long-term energy planning, clean energy access, and sustainable energy solutions. Collaborating with fellow academics, she tackles real-world challenges, with their research projects having a positive impact on Fijian communities.

Dr Prasad is a strong advocate for women and girls in STEM fields. Her recent participation as a panellist at the Pacific Women in Power (PWIP) event exemplifies her commitment to inspiring young girls to pursue STEM education and careers.

"With the disparity in the number of females holding positions related to technical work in the power and energy sector, it is imperative to raise awareness and motivate young girls to take up STEM courses," said Dr Prasad.

"To women and young girls in particular, if you are interested and are passionate about STEM related subjects, I encourage you to pursue your interests."

"Do not be discouraged by perceptions of overcrowding or male dominance in the field. Work in your area of interest and you will have much greater success and fulfilment in your work."

"To parents, trust the choice of courses that your daughter has made. Support them in their studies and see them become a leader in their chosen field."

Dr Prasad draws inspiration from a multitude of women, including her mother, who showed women can achieve leadership roles while balancing various responsibilities.

"Female leaders, our Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, heads of schools, at Fiji National University show me that women can achieve leadership roles while being daughters, mothers, sisters, wives, and carry out multiple significant roles."

A working mother herself, Dr Prasad emphasises the importance of support systems.

"Having supportive partners, families and understanding supervisors is essential to achieve a healthy balance between work, life, and well-being."

Engineered for Excellence



Samisoni Finau Baleinuku.

In the world of aviation, where precision and safety reign supreme, a Nakelo native's educational journey at the Fiji National University contributed immensely to his success as an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer.

Samisoni Finau Baleinuku's dreams of joining the aviation industry seemed close to reality when he stumbled upon an FNU prospectus in high school.

"Ever since I was a child, I dreamt of joining the aviation industry, I was always drawn to the sky. At first, I wanted to become a pilot, however, due to financial challenges, I decided to join aircraft engineering after finding out about the programmes on offer at FNU through the prospectus," said Baleinuku.

His journey officially began in 2015 when he enrolled in the Certificate 4 in Aircraft Engineering (Avionics) programme at FNU. Reflecting on his first semester, Samisoni recalls how lecturers emphasised the importance of safety, a cornerstone of engineering ethics. "Safety is paramount in our field," he explained.

"Safety isn't just a word, it's a commitment, especially in aviation. FNU has instilled in us the importance of prioritising safety in everything we do something I practise to date."

Transitioning from the confines of high school to the dynamic environment of FNU presented its challenges.

"Understanding aircraft systems, hands-on practical experience, and getting acquainted with new tools were hurdles," he admits. "Coming from a background of theoretical learning, the emphasis on mandatory

practical was both new and challenging. However, with determination and perseverance, I quickly acclimated to the dynamic learning environment with support from my lecturers and peers." Baleinuku affirmed that the assistance provided by lecturers was invaluable.

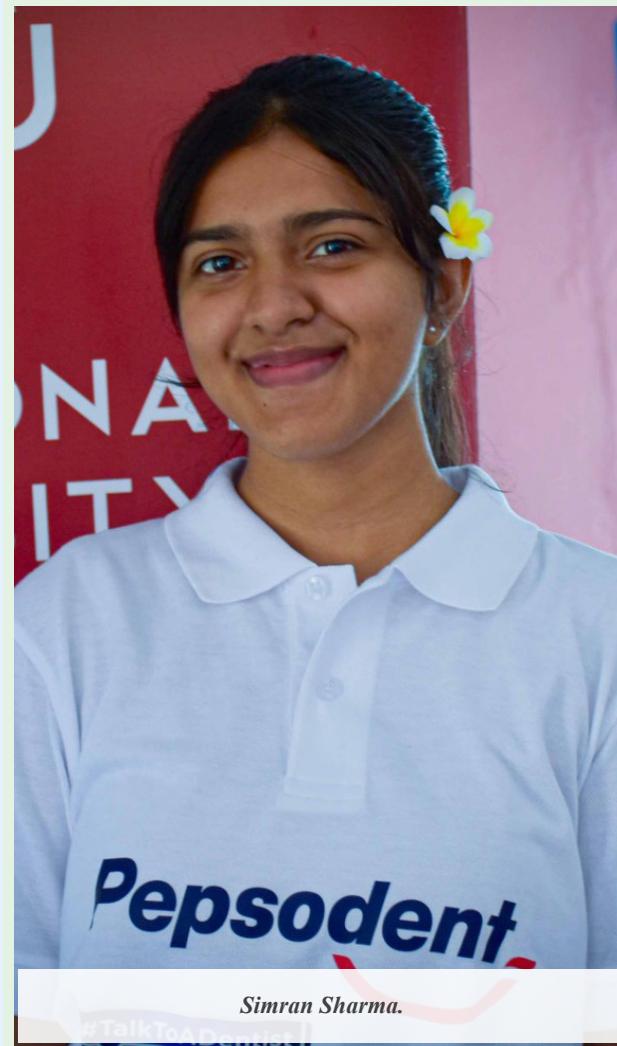
"They created an environment where students could thrive and grow, equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the aviation industry. They provided the assistance we needed, particularly with practicals, which were integral to our learning experience."

Coupled with state-of-the-art facilities, FNU equipped him with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the aviation industry. "Every lesson and every skill learned at FNU has directly contributed to my career advancement. The programme opened doors to better employment opportunities and paved the way for my professional growth."

Beyond academics, the study environment at FNU fostered lifelong friendships and collaboration among peers. "Communication with lecturers and fellow students was easy." "Even after graduating, we stay connected, sharing our experiences and supporting each other along our respective journeys." "Teamwork and environmental awareness are just some of the invaluable lessons I learned at FNU," he shared.

Currently employed by Advanced Aviation, Baleinuku is pursuing further studies to become a licensed aircraft maintenance engineer.

Sharma on a journey to become a guardian of smiles



Simran Sharma.

Simran Sharma, a dedicated Bachelor of Oral Health student at Fiji National University's College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences, believes it is time to redefine how people perceive dentists. In recognition of World Oral Health Day marked on March 20, Sharma wants to dispel the misconceptions that lead to widespread dental anxiety.

"Dentists are more than technicians; we are your friends and more like a guardian of your healthy smile," Sharma explained.

"We play a vital role in preventive care and identifying potential health issues early on. By forming a positive relationship with your dentist, you take a proactive step towards lasting wellness."

"People have been taught for a long time that going to a dentist means extracting teeth and having injections with the other equipment used. However, people should not be frightened of this, as oral health is an important topic for discussion. We conduct an extensive investigation of their oral health and teach them about preventative measures and how they can manage their oral health."

The 21-year-old, who is originally from Suva, said the Bachelor of Oral Health programme is very interesting for her because it equips her with the knowledge and skills needed to turn her dreams into reality.

She revealed that she initially wanted to become a doctor but found dentistry more interesting and is the first in her family to pursue a career in oral health.

"This year, I am pursuing the oral health programme, but I plan to study for a Bachelor of Dental Surgery in the future. After gaining my experience for three years, I will join the Bachelor of Dental Surgery programme offered at CMNHS," Sharma said.

Goundar Draws Inspiration for Agriculture from Grandmother



Riya Risha Goundar.

Riya Risha Goundar has always been fascinated by farming. This was because of the endless teachings and witnessing the hard work displayed by her grandmother on their farm.

The 18-year-old first-year student at Fiji National University's Ba Campus joined the College Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF) pursuing the programme, Certificate in Agriculture (Level 3).

This is one of the pioneer programmes for CAFF offered at the FNU's Ba Campus.

Goundar completed her secondary school education at Tavua College last year.

She shared that it was a blessing in disguise for her to see her grandmother out on the field daily.

"My grandmother was the first person who got my attention in this field of work," she said.

"I have spent years learning from her and now I plan to do this programme. She became my inspiration because she is a farmer and does interesting work in the field."

"I get my inspiration from watching her skills and talents as a female farmer."

Her goal is to become a successful woman in agriculture and become an inspiration for others just like her grandmother.

Goundar highlighted that her choice of becoming a student at FNU was the only avenue for her to have her dreams turned into reality.

"I must say that FNU brings our dreams to reality and gives us success, choosing FNU was the best decision that I have ever made," she added.



FNU is Now Home for Vanuatu Friends



Friends, Selwyn Leo (closest to camera) and Joe Buleuru at the FNU Namaka Campus.

Travelling many kilometres away from their homeland in the Korman Area in Port Vila, Vanuatu, was the sacrifice two friends had to make to pursue their dream of becoming engineers.

Selwyn Leo and Joe Buleuru are currently enrolled into the Fiji National University's engineering programmes, where Leo is pursuing a Certificate in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (Mechanical) (Level 4) while Buleuru has joined the Certificate in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (Avionics) (Level 4) programme.

Fiji will become their home for the next three years away from their families and friends.

"We are here to study hard and make our families proud. Our programme will last for a total of three years so we are not sure whether we will return home during that period or wait till we graduate," said Buleuru.

"Our main aim is to complete our studies, and also my personal aim is to secure my aircraft maintenance license."

Being raised by his father, Buleuru also has a goal to make him proud.

His mother passed away in the year 2022.

"I am grateful to FNU, because it is helping me achieve my dream of becoming an engineer," he added.

Leo, arriving in Fiji for the first time, shared that his family had mixed emotions when he departed the shores of Vanuatu.

He highlighted that it was always his dream of being in the field of engineering. "Ever since I was a child, I wanted to do this programme, so when I saw the opportunity offered by FNU, I took the chance," he said.

"My goal is to go back and give back to the people of Vanuatu."

Aiming for the Skies: Ambitious FNU Student Eyes Fiji Airways

In Fiji's Suncoast town of Rakiraki, amidst the hubbub of daily life, 24-year-old Matthewsela Ravulo Cornelius Waqawai found himself at a crossroads.

Like many young individuals, he harboured dreams and aspirations but was unsure of the path to realise them. Little did he know that a chance encountered would be propelling him towards a future he once deemed unattainable.

"I first came across FNU at their Rakiraki roadshow, a good friend of mine and employee of the university persuaded me to browse through the programmes which motivated me to continue further studies by pursuing a Diploma in Front Office Operations (Level 5), with the College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies," said Matthewsela as he recalled the pivotal moment vividly.

"Honestly, I never imagined being a student again after choosing to pursue a career at Volivoli Resort to be able to support my family after COVID but deep down in my heart I did not want to give up on my dreams."

As a working student, the prospect of balancing work, family, and studies seemed daunting. Yet, the Ra native embraced the challenge with unwavering resolve, knowing that with proper time management and steadfast prayer, anything was possible.

The journey through his studies was not without its trials, but Matthewsela found relief in the supportive environment cultivated by his lecturers.

"The support extended by FNU's staff is beyond comparison. The lectures are so flexible, and the staff are attentive and always ready to guide us in the right direction," said Waqawai.

"The support provided by the staff at FNU is helpful especially for us working students. The course coordinators are supportive and understanding, in terms of uploading recorded lectures, assignments, and tutorials online for long-distance and working students which is a huge sigh of relief."

Behind every success story lies a source of inspiration, and for Matthewsela, it was his family, particularly his mother, who stood as his beacon of hope.

"Things have been tough after losing my father, yet it did not stop my mother from providing for me especially playing the role of a mother and father in the family making sure that we are strong enough to take on the world." His mother's resilience in the face of adversity instilled a profound sense of purpose for Matthewsela – to provide for her and honour her sacrifices.

As he envisions his future, Matthewsela remains steadfast in his pursuit of a career with Fiji Airways.

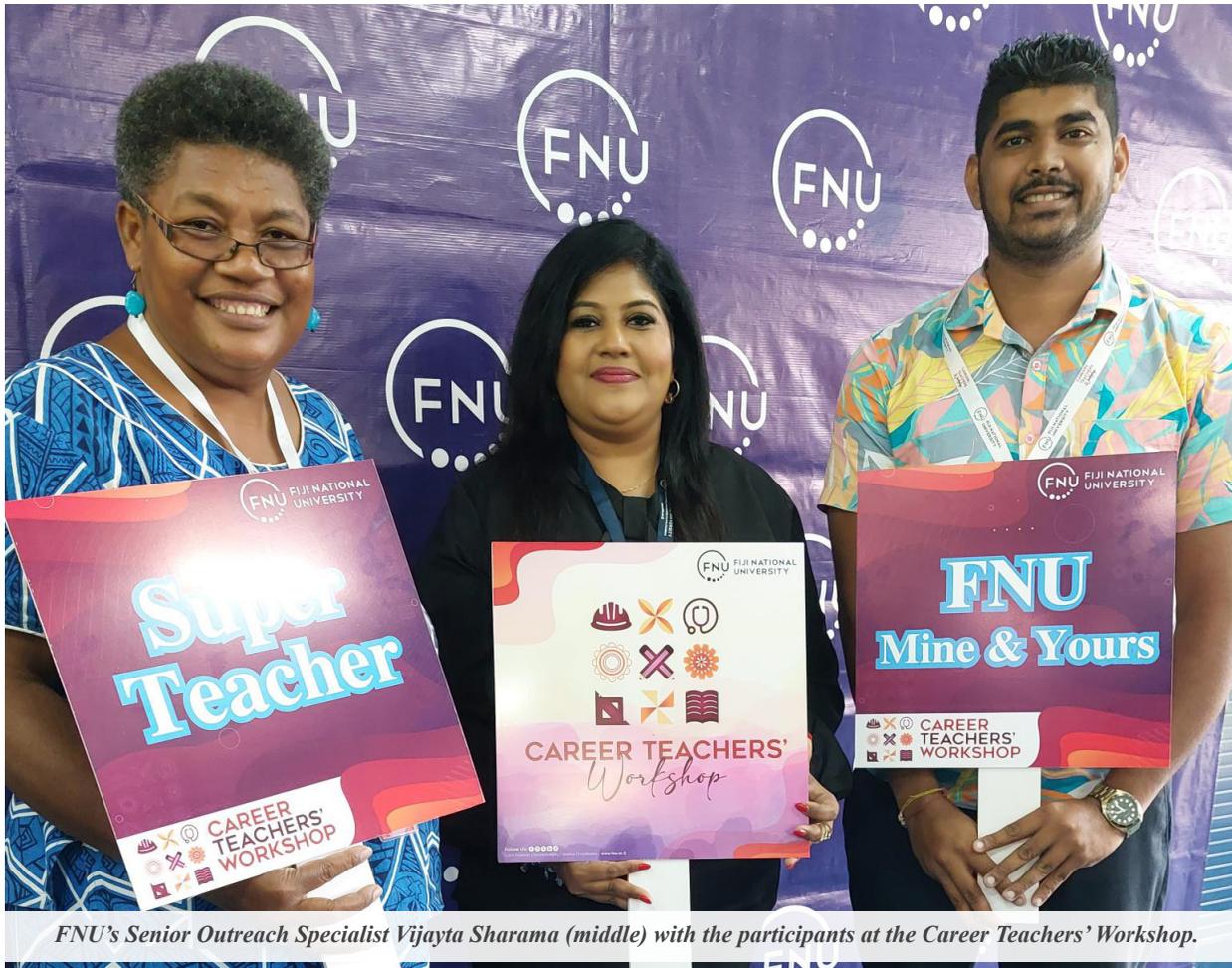
"I always dreamed of joining Fiji Airways and I am hoping I get that chance after completing my diploma so I can provide for my amazing mother," stated Matthewsela.

"If you are a tourism worker who is double minded about studying further, I would like to encourage you to just take the first step and come on board with FNU. Get your qualification and get that position you deserve or have always been dreaming of."



Matthewsela Waqawai presenting in his class at FNU.

FNU Launches 2024 Career Teachers' Workshop



FNU's Senior Outreach Specialist Vijayta Sharama (middle) with the participants at the Career Teachers' Workshop.

The Fiji National University (FNU) hosted the first Career Teachers' Workshop (CTW) at its Ba Campus this month.

The launch of the first CTW brought together teachers from the various secondary schools in the Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki areas.

Dedicated teachers turned up to the different venues around Fiji which included FNU's Namaka, Nasinu and Labasa Campuses.

The CTW is an annual initiative of the FNU designed to equip secondary school career teachers with the latest information and resources about FNU's academic programmes, application processes, and student support services.

The workshop aims to empower educators with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively guide their students towards technical vocational education training and higher education opportunities at FNU.

Torika Turagakece of Nakauvadra High School said the CTW would benefit her students and the school.

Ms Turagakece teaches the subjects of Accounting, Economics and Careers Education.

"I find this CTW hosted by FNU beneficial to us teachers because we are not only going to teach them about our subject 'Careers', but now it will help us guide

them into the future that they are hoping for," she said.

"They will have to know why they are taking all the subjects." "This workshop has equipped us and enabled us to let them soar to greater heights, from the classroom to the field and to the world in this era."

Alvin Kumar who is a teacher at Penang Sangam High School said he could not wait to share the exciting information with his students about the different career pathways they can choose from.

He teaches Accounting, Economics and Careers Education subjects.

"I am very happy and have immense pleasure in acknowledging FNU for organising this great workshop that has provided me valuable guidance and clarity about the career paths for my students to invest in," said Mr Kumar.

"I cannot wait to impart the information to our students and will ensure that they use the information wisely to choose their career path."

FNU outlined that the objectives of the CTW's was to equip secondary school teachers with comprehensive knowledge about FNU's programme offerings, admission requirements, application procedures, and career pathways.

FNU to Collaborate with Universitas Negeri Malang of Indonesia



FNU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (Left), H.E Dupito Simamora (centre) and Universitas Negeri Malang Rector, Professor Hariyono.

The Fiji National University (FNU) is looking forward to strengthening collaborative ties between Fiji and Indonesia through the signing of a historic Memorandum of Understanding with the Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) from Indonesia earlier this month.

The event was attended by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, various members of the FNU Senior Leadership Team (SLT) including Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, Professor Paul Iji, Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning & Teaching, Dr Jimaima Lako, Pro Vice-Chancellor TVET, Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata together with other staff members of FNU.

Universitas Negeri Malang was represented by their Rector, Professor Hariyono, Inbound Mobility Co-ordinator, Office of International Affairs, Muhammed Aris Ichwanto, Outbound Mobility Co-ordinator, Office of International Affairs, Nohan Arum Romadlona, Head of Research Institute and Community Engagement, Professor Markus Diantoro as well as other representatives from the prominent Indonesian University.

The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Fiji, Mr Dupito Darma Simamora was also present at the notable MoU signing and gave his assurance that his team will provide their full support to see that the key aspects of the MoU are implemented.

Under this Memorandum of Understanding, FNU and Universitas Negeri Malang commit to several areas of collaboration in academic and research activities.

These include the development of collaborative research projects, the organisation of joint academic activities such as courses, conferences, seminars, and symposia, the exchange of research, administrative, and teaching staff, the exchange of students, and the exchange of publications and other materials of common interest.

FNU Targets Community Needs in Tailevu Meetings

The Fiji National University (FNU) is reaching out to grassroots communities through provincial council meetings with the aim of raising awareness on educational opportunities to address community development needs.

The meetings spearheaded by the Tailevu Provincial Council were facilitated at district level and brought together village and district representatives, government departments, civil society, and key stakeholders to discuss community development challenges and social issues affecting villages and districts.

FNU's role at the meetings were to enlighten villages and districts of educational opportunities available through its technical vocational education and training (TVET) programmes and higher education programmes.

At the Bau district meeting, Ratu Apenisa Seniloli, highlighted the potential of FNU's programmes to tackle youth unemployment by equipping young people with trade skills and certifications.



FNU Team leaving Viwa Island after the Bau District Meeting.

"This would help build capacity amongst our youth and enable them to find employment in the formal sector. This can also steer them away from social problems impacting them today," said Ratu Seniloli.

"While some already have skills in plumbing or carpentry, they lack official certification. FNU's programmes can bridge this gap." Amele Naiqame, a women's representative from Mokani village, expressed her appreciation for FNU's initiative. She spoke of the despair felt by parents of students who had dropped out of high school. "FNU's visit, along with the presentation of diverse programmes offers new hope for our children, youths who have dropped out of school," said Naiqame.

"The community policing officers had shared the dangers of social issues plaguing our youths today. Your programmes can play a role in keeping them safe by providing them with positive opportunities."

FNU hosts ACIAR Induction



Students with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, Professor Paul Iji and FNU staff members at the induction.

A new cohort of postgraduate students from Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu were challenged to conduct research with tangible benefits for their respective countries.

The Fiji National University's (FNU) Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Iji made these remarks at the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) Induction hosted by the Fiji National University (FNU) at their Nasinu Campus on Monday 26 February this year.

The induction was for students who are pursuing masters degree and PhDs in Agriculture through ACIAR-funded scholarships, a programme designed to foster agricultural research and capacity building in the Pacific and other developing regions.

"Research and innovation are vital to the economic progress of Fiji and other Pacific nations. Fiji National University leads in developing a globally connected research community. With government and industry support, FNU's research focuses on issues critical to transforming Fiji's society and economy," Professor Iji said.

"Train yourself to question assumptions, challenge prevailing theories, and explore the unexplored. The pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong endeavour. Maintain discipline, seek out continuous learning, and remain dedicated to the highest standards of research excellence."

FNU's College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Acting Associate Dean Research, Dr Mereia Fong, said new researchers follow in the footsteps of those who strive to shape the Pacific.

"The scholarly community awaits your contributions. Strive for research that is both insightful and impactful to the organisation you will work for and the country you are from," Dr Fong said.

"FNU provides a robust foundation for your research endeavours. Utilise the resources and expertise available

to you. Represent FNU with excellence as you engage in the scholarly discourse of your field. The research community at FNU offers opportunities for collaboration and mentorship."

Tongan national, Semi Hausia, who works for the Ministry of Agriculture as a Biosecurity Officer, is pursuing his master's degree qualification through research work.

"I am fortunate to be the recipient of the ACIAR Scholarship with the Fiji National University (FNU). The knowledge that I will attain from this research will help me in protecting my country's vegetation from new diseases. It will also enable me to look for solutions for the diseases that are already affecting the plants," Hausia said.

In alignment with the FNU Strategic Plan 2024 - 2026 FNU is undertaking research with real-world impact, aligned to national priorities and with global relevance.

FNU's plans are aligned with the National Development Plan which notes that innovation, research, and implementation of new ideas will also be incentivised where a facilitative environment will be created to assist the importation of new and modern technology.

FNU will continue to develop the research capacity through training and mentorship programmes for research supervisors and early career researchers.





Matthew Taitusi Saukuru.

Forests and Innovation

events to raise awareness about the critical role forests play in Fiji's ecosystem.

Forests are an essential part of Fiji's ecosystem, providing homes for diverse flora and fauna, regulating the climate, protecting soil and water resources, and supporting the livelihoods of local communities. Forests also have significant cultural and spiritual importance for indigenous Fijians, who maintain a strong connection to the land and its resources.

The International Day of Forests celebrations in Fiji highlight the need for forest conservation and sustainable management practices to ensure the long-term health and well-being of both the environment and communities. These efforts focus on promoting reforestation, reducing deforestation, and encouraging sustainable forestry practices that benefit both people and the planet. By working together, we can protect and preserve Fiji's forests for generations to come.

In my capacity as a teacher of forestry, I often reflect on the pivotal role that forests play in our environment. The importance of forests to our planet cannot be understated, as they provide a multitude of essential ecosystem services necessary for our survival.

Forests help regulate the climate by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which mitigates the greenhouse effect and helps to maintain the delicate balance of our planet's atmosphere. Additionally, forests contribute to the water cycle by capturing and releasing moisture, which helps to maintain the water table and

prevent soil erosion.

Furthermore, forests provide habitat for countless species of plants and animals, many of which are threatened or endangered. These ecosystems also offer recreational opportunities for people, such as hiking, bird watching, and camping. The maintenance and protection of forests are crucial to ensuring the provision of invaluable ecosystem services and preserving the planet's biodiversity.

Sustainable forestry practices and responsible land management can help achieve these goals. Forests play a vital role in carbon sequestration, reducing global warming, maintaining the water cycle, preventing soil erosion, and providing habitat to a diverse range of plant and animal species. Moreover, they offer many essential resources, such as timber, food, and medicine, that are fundamental to human health and the livelihoods of many communities worldwide.

Notwithstanding their importance, forests face several challenges, including deforestation, habitat destruction, and climate change. Therefore, concerted efforts are necessary to protect and preserve these resources for future generations.

As a forestry instructor, I aim to instill a deep appreciation for forests in my students and promote sustainable forest management practices. By imparting knowledge and enthusiasm to future forestry experts, we can contribute to ensuring an efficient and prosperous future for our forests and the planet.

The Fiji National University's (FNU), College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF) have helped spread the word about forest significance and the necessity for sustainable management practices.

As a Forestry Instructor at FNU's Koronivia Campus for the last seven years, I passionately affirm that past International Day of Forests observances have played a vital role in this mission.

This year, the theme of Forest and Innovation is especially timely- innovation is crucial in developing fresh solutions to today's forest-related challenges.

Fiji celebrates the International Day of Forests every year on March 21, with a range of activities aimed at promoting the importance of forests. These include tree planting, educational programmes, and community

Fiji National University's Leadership Pledges Service to the North



Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and Chancellor Semesa Karavaki during discussion on FNU's Northern Tour.

In a momentous occasion marked by traditional ceremonies, the Fiji National University (FNU) welcomed its newly appointed Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba to the Naduna campus in the North.

This event not only symbolised a new chapter for FNU but also underscored the university's commitment to serving all regions of Fiji, particularly the Northern Division including Taveuni.

Accompanying the Vice-Chancellor were key members of FNU's Senior Leadership Team, including the Chair of Council, Semesa Karavaki, and Deputy Chair of Council, Dr Alisi Talatoka Vudiniabola, along with other council members. Their presence signified a strategic effort by FNU to strengthen ties with the North and reaffirm its commitment to serving communities in Northern Fiji.

During the Northern tour, the Senior Leadership Team and Council Members also revealed FNU's plan to restart the development of the Northern Naiyaca Campus.

"Naiyaca Campus represents a significant leap forward in providing quality educational opportunities to the people of Macuata, Bua, Cakaudrove provinces, and beyond," said Professor Nabobo-Baba.

"FNU is dedicated to making higher education and



Chancellor Karavaki with Votua Villagers in Lekutu, Bua.

TVET more accessible and aligning our efforts with the government's commitment to equitable resource distribution."

Under the auspices of the Fijian Government's Look-North Policy, Professor Nabobo-Baba asserts that the new campus is a strategic move by FNU to extend its educational reach and support equitable resource distribution.

"The FNU leadership's visit to the North was not merely ceremonial; it was a declaration of intent. They pledged to enhance the delivery of FNU's services to the North, promising unprecedented levels of support and engagement. This pledge aligns with the university's broader mission to foster academic excellence, innovation, and community development across Fiji even in the furthest regions," declared Professor Nabobo-Baba.

Earlier on the tour, Chancellor Karavaki also visited the Roko Tui Bua and his people at Votua Village in Lekutu, Bua.

Two of FNU's colleges, namely the College of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF) and the College of Business Hospitality & Tourism Studies

(CBHTS), will be offering a diverse range of classes in Votua Village. This strategic decision aims to bridge the gap between traditional educational practices and the evolving needs of remote communities.

Chancellor Karavaki highlighted the significance of this shift, emphasising the departure from the conventional practice of students having to travel to Viti Levu for education.

"We are entering a new era where education comes to your doorstep, making it accessible for everyone in rural areas," he stated.

"This approach marks a departure from the challenges rural students often face, such as leaving their villages or relying solely on distant relatives for sustenance during their educational journey."

As FNU embarks on this new journey under its refreshed leadership, the North can anticipate transformative changes in education, research, and community outreach. The commitment to inclusivity and service echoed by the Vice-Chancellor and FNU's Senior Leadership team signals a promising future for the region and reinforces FNU's role as a catalyst for positive change in Fiji.





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with our Alumni

Soaring Beyond Limits: The Journey of Tevita Rakula

Tevita Rakula's tale of determination, resilience, and unwavering dedication began even before he joined the Fiji National University. It started in the shadows of a hardworking and determined single mother, whose resilience shaped his future and gave him the inspiration and drive to join the Fiji National University to pursue his dreams.

Background

Tevita's educational journey began in Taveuni, Fiji, under the loving guidance of his devoted mother, Lusua Milika Siliadre. Starting at Salialevu District School and transitioning through Taveuni Central Indian School and South Taveuni Indian School, Tevita flourished academically, driven by his mother's encouragement. Relocating to Sawani Village marked a new chapter, where Tevita completed his primary schooling at Sawani Village School.

"I am always grateful to my mother for her unwavering support and sacrifices," said Tevita.

Education

For his high school education, Tevita enrolled at Dilkusha Methodist High School, thriving in its dynamic environment. His quest for knowledge continued at Nabua Secondary School, where he reflected on his journey from the island of Taveuni to the hustle and bustle of Nabua. Tevita's graduation from high school marked the beginning of a promising future, fueled by the transformative power of education, resilience, and family support.

Tevita's journey commenced with a vision fuelled by a passion for Environmental Health. With limited options available in Fiji, FNU became his beacon of hope, offering the programme he longed for. Stepping onto the FNU campus grounds, Tevita felt an instant connection, not just to his studies but to the supportive community that would shape his future.

Education

As he immersed himself in his coursework, Tevita discovered the boundless opportunities within the realm of Environmental Health. His thirst for knowledge led him beyond the classroom, participating in international conferences and competitions, even representing his institution on a global stage.

"I chose to pursue my studies at FNU because Environmental Health wasn't offered anywhere else in Fiji," he said.

"I graduated with a Bachelor of Environmental Health from FNU's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences in 2020."

Upon graduating from FNU, Tevita's thirst for learning remained unquenched. He embarked on a journey of continuous education, honing his skills

5) from the College of Engineering, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CETVET)."

Career

His career trajectory saw him traversing various roles, from serving as a WASH co-ordinator to championing customer wellness at Fiji Airways. However, it was his current role as a Workplace Safety Coordinator that truly resonated with his passion for safeguarding lives and promoting a culture of safety.

In the corridors of Fiji Airways, Tevita found not just a workplace but a platform to make a difference. He embraced each day as an opportunity to instil the values instilled in him by FNU: care, integrity, respect, and accountability. His dedication did not go unnoticed as he became an inspiration for his colleagues and peers.

Outside of his professional endeavours, Tevita found solace in his family. With a loving wife and two children by his side, he discovered the true essence of happiness. Their unwavering support propelled him forward, even in the face of adversity.

Tevita's story is not just about personal triumph; it is about giving back to the community that nurtured him. Through initiatives like Fiji Airways' re-use project, he extended a helping hand to those in need, embodying the spirit of compassion instilled in him by his upbringing.

As he reflects on his journey, Tevita acknowledges the pivotal role FNU played in shaping his destiny. From the camaraderie of his peers to the guidance of his mentors, every experience has been a stepping stone towards his ultimate goal: becoming a proficient safety expert at Fiji Airways.

Words of Wisdom

Tevita Rakula stands tall as a testament to the power of perseverance and the boundless potential within each of us.

"Despite facing challenges, including limited familial support, and being raised by a single parent, I remained resilient, refusing to let negativity hinder my progress. I urge all students to continue to be resilient and if you have a dream, work hard, and continue to strive for success in everything you do," encouraged Tevita.



Tevita Rakula (right) with his beautiful family.

in occupational health and safety, aviation risk management, and leadership. Each course was a stepping stone, paving the way for his ascent in the professional world.

"I am always looking to upgrade my training and experiences, and I continued to choose FNU to enhance my knowledge in the field that I am passionate about. I have completed short course trainings, such as the Trade Diploma in Occupational Health & Safety (Level

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

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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

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