



INSIDE FNU

DREAM IT, WEAVE IT, ACHIEVE IT

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By **SELITA BOLANAVANUA**



FNU Leads Government's 350 Homes Project

Fiji National University Senior Lecturer Viliame Sakiti with his students displaying the Eco-Bricks during the FNU Open Day.

The Fiji National University (FNU) is at the forefront of a groundbreaking 350 Homes project, aimed at addressing the urgent housing needs in Fiji.

Currently in the consultation phase with the Government through the Ministry of Housing, this partnership project is set to create sustainable housing solutions for low- and middle-income earners, especially those living in informal settlements.

A key component of the project is the development of Eco-Bricks, which were invented by Mr Viliame Sakiti, a Senior Lecturer at FNU, as part of his

PhD research.

These bricks are made from a type of clay found in certain regions of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. When mixed with sand and cement, they yield building blocks with excellent thermal insulation and compressive strength ranging from 15 to 23 MPa.

Eco-Bricks offer a viable alternative to traditional timber and concrete houses.

Meanwhile the 350 Homes project is spearheaded by Sakiti Investments PTE Ltd, a company specialising in brick production and construction, with support from the NGO COM TRADE

and AID, as well as FNU's Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CET-VET).

Mr Viliame Sakiti said the project aligns with Fiji's housing development strategies, including the Fiji Low Emissions Development plan for 2018-2050 and the National Development Plan, which emphasises affordable and sustainable housing solutions.

It also aims to develop tool-kits for regulating the growth of Green Cities and generate training curricula to support the uptake of green building systems in the country.

With a projected budget of FJD

\$50-100 million, Mr Sakiti said that FNU plans to involve its students and staff in construction efforts.

Five Year Project

The 350 Homes project is expected to be completed within five years, while the Eco-Brick Model house will be ready for scientific analysis in December.

Mr Sikiti added that this initiative would impact local communities providing affordable and resilient housing options, improving living standards, and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.

The Eco-Brick technology

promises to enhance the quality of housing and serves as a rapid response solution for natural disaster recovery.

Dreketi Pilot Project

Currently, a pilot Eco-Brick Model house is under construction in Dreketi, Macuata, and is expected to be completed by the end of November.

This model will serve to test the bricks' performance against local climatic conditions.

For those interested in Eco-Bricks, they will be available for purchase from Sakiti Investments PTE Ltd starting in November 2024.

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International Accreditations Extended

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL & CLINICAL SCIENTISTS ACCREDITED CMNHS FOR ANOTHER 4 YEARS

By WATI TALEBULA

The Fiji National University’s College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences (CMNHS) is committed to ensuring that its programmes are recognised internationally.

This is evident through the continuous international accreditations received and sought by CMNHS.

CMNHS Acting Dean Dr Amelia Turagabeci emphasised the importance of international accreditation for its programmes.

“We recently had our laboratory science accreditation extended for another four years. This is a significant achievement not only for us but for the University,” Dr Turagabeci said.

“Our pharmacy programme is leading the charge in terms of accreditation for CMNHS, along with our medical science programme, including the MBBS programme.”

She said that a team from the Australian Institute of Medical and

Clinical Scientists (AIMS) visited CMNHS last month.

“They were reviewing the laboratory programme, and we were expecting them. They provided us with a checklist before their visit in September, and we managed to address much of it,” Dr Turagabeci said.

“Although our accreditation has been extended for another four years, there are still areas we need to improve.

“Accreditation isn’t just a checkbox for the College but it’s about our students. It makes our graduates marketable not only in Fiji but internationally, as the programme is recognised globally.”

“Being recognised by AIMS is a significant achievement. It means our graduates are not only acknowledged in Australia but by similar bodies for laboratory scientists around the world, which is a major milestone for us.”



College of Medicine , Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS)
Acting Dean Dr Amelia Turagabeci.

Nacolase Model for Navy personnells

By WATI TALEBULA

The Fiji National Universtity’s Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies (PCMS) has developed a comprehensive proposal, the Nacolase Model, for the naval branch of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces.

Currently, 30 navy officers form the first group to implement the Nacolase Model which will be done in batches.

PCMS Acting Director Captain Tevita Robanakadavu said that the initiative aimed to enhance the skills of all deck officers, engineers, and ratings through specialised maritime training courses.

“This initiative has been approved and designed in alignment with the standards set by the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF),” Captain Robanakadavu said.

“The initiative by PCMS, supported by the Chief of Navy, represents a significant step towards building a skilled and competent workforce within the Fiji Navy.

“This training programme will not only enhance operational readiness but also contribute to the overall safety and effectiveness of maritime operations in the region.”

He emphasised that the Nacolase Model is specifically designed for navy personnel.

Navy Commander Humphrey Tawake noted the importance of collaboration with FNU.



Navy Officers at the Pacific Centre of Maritime Studies in Nasese.

“We will be putting more of our officers through this program to enhance our training in the navy, especially with our new headquarters,” Commander Tawake said.

“This is not the first time we have had navy personnel undertake courses at FNU, and it will certainly not be the last.”

Key Highlights of the Proposal:

1. Training Courses Offered:

- A range of maritime training programs tailored for deck officers, engineers, and ratings.
- Emphasis on practical skills and theoretical knowledge necessary for effective maritime operations.

2. Approval and Support:

- The training model received approval from MSAF, ensuring compliance with national and international maritime standards.
- Special acknowledgment to the Chief of Navy for providing tuition support, which makes these training opportunities accessible to all personnel.

3. Mandatory Training Pathways:

- All personnel are required to obtain a Safety Certificate prior to attending further specialized courses.

- The following Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) and Certificates of Competency (CoC) are included in the training pathways:
- CoP:** Deck Watch Rating, Engine Room Ratings
- CoC:** Class 5 Master, Class 5 Engineer, Class 4 Master, Class 4 Engineer

4. Sea Service Requirement:

- To qualify for the CoC, personnel must complete sea service on vessels outside of the Fiji Navy, following the Nacolase Model approved by MSAF.



Veresa Sokosoko receives a bravery medal from the President Ratu Wiliame Katonivere at the State House on October 7.

By WATI TALEBULA

Veresa Sokosoko, a groundsman at Fiji National University’s Nasinu Campus in Valelevu, was awarded a Bravery Medal at the State House on October 7. The Bravery Medal is given for acts of courage in hazardous circumstances.

In 1995, the Fiji Government established the Order of Fiji to recognise outstanding achievements, meritorious service, and acts of conspicuous courage and bravery by Fijian citizens, occasionally honorary

appointments for non-citizens.

What Happened?

On August 4, 2019, a crash claimed the lives of six men and a 16-year-old.

Sokosoko was wrongfully accused of stealing from the victims of the tragic Nabou three-way accident.

A video of the accident circulated online, showing Sokosoko collecting personal items from the scene.

As the video went viral, people began swearing at and threatening Sokosoko, falsely accusing him of stealing the belongings.

However, Sokosoko was collecting the items to hand them over to the first police officer who arrived. He also ensured the comfort of the accident victims

while others were taking pictures and videos.

Trauma

While receiving the medal was a proud moment for Sokosoko, the memories of that day continue to haunt him.

“It’s hard, and sometimes I can’t sleep at all,” Sokosoko said.

“My family has been supportive, and I’ve been advised to seek counseling, which is the next step for me.”

He explained that the trauma from the event still affects him, and staying busy helps him cope with the difficult memories.

Bravery Medal

Sokosoko was originally supposed to receive the award in 2019, but he declined due to the

emotional toll of the incident.

“At that time, it didn’t feel right. The accident had just happened, and I was still reeling from what I witnessed,” Sokosoko said.

“As someone who was there, it was something I had to do. My parents raised me to be honest and trustworthy.”

He emphasised the importance of honesty, no matter the situation.

“One should always be honest, whether the issue is big or small. No parent wants their child to fail in life, so children should value the lessons taught by their parents.”

Sokosoko also stressed that people should help those in need rather than take pictures or videos in such moments.

He thanked his wife and three children for being his anchor in life.

Patrick Learns the Danger of Drugs at Open Day

By SELITA BOLANAVANUA

For Patrick Masiwala, attending the Fiji National University Open Day was an opportunity to learn about his career path and also his future.

Patrick is a Year 10 student of Ratu Kadavulevu School.

The Open Day highlighted the university’s various academic programmes and addressed critical topics, including the dangers of drug use among teenagers.

At the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences booth, Patrick learned about the negative effects of drugs on physical health, mental well-being, and

future opportunities.

“I learned that drug use can seriously affect my future, and it’s something I need to avoid,” he said. While he hasn’t chosen a specific career path yet, he now recognises the importance of prioritising his health.

Patrick highlighted that peer pressure sometimes drives teenagers to drug use.

“Peer pressure is everywhere, and it can push you to make bad choices. I want to be strong and make better decisions for myself,” he said.

Patrick thanked his school, Ratu Kadavulevu School, for the chance to attend the Open Day.

“This opportunity has opened my eyes to



From left: Patrick Masiwala, Inoke Delana, Kinijoji Tuinilotu, Cyrus Vela, Ropate Seru and Josua Naivalu during the Open Day.

many important issues that I need to think about as I grow up.”

He now recognises the importance of staying committed to his health and future.

Students Utilise Recycled Materials for Teaching Resources



Dr Sofia Ali with the FNU students displaying their teaching resources.

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

Teaching resources were created using recycled materials by students at the Fiji National University.

Third-year Bachelor of Education (Primary) students are part of the University’s College of Humanities and Education, Department of Primary

Education.

They are pursuing the unit - EDU735: Numeracy and Mathematics Education, a course offered to in-service and preservice teachers.

FNU’s Assistant Professor in Mathematics and Coordinator for Mathematics Education, Dr Sofia Ali said this was part of the students’ revitalising Mathematics Education through

creative resource development.

She said this initiative was also assisted by FNU’s JICA Volunteer, Amano Hisau from Japan, and FNU academics, Dr Taraivini Raiula, Atendra Kumar and Peters Tauleka.

“In this course, they engage in developing innovative resources across the five strands of Mathematics for Years 5 to 8 using a variety of recycled materials,” said Dr Ali.

“As mathematics is a key component of STEM education, this assignment and display not only promotes sustainability but also provides future teachers with practical skills in creating cost-effective and environmentally friendly teaching aids.”

She said the students used recycled materials like cardboard, plastic bottles, egg cartons, scrap paper, shells and seeds.

“By crafting hands-on, interactive materials from these readily available items, student-teachers made abstract mathematical concepts more tangible and accessible,” she said.

“These sustainable resources support diverse learning styles and enhance understanding of key topics such as geometry, number theory, measurement and problem solving.”

She added the initiative highlighted that effective Mathematics resources could be both affordable and eco-friendly, contributing to high-quality education and sustainable classroom practices.

“These materials will be utilised during their second six-week teaching practicum, preparing them for graduation and their future roles as educators,” Dr Ali added.

FNU Hosts Successful Open Day Corporate Night



A FNU student modeling during the 2024 Open Day Corporate Cocktail and Fashion Show Night.

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

The Fiji National University successfully hosted its 2024 Open Day Corporate Cocktail and Fashion Show Night at Nadi's Namaka Campus.

This followed the 2024 FNU Open Day on October 4, culminating with a fashion show organised by the FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre, the College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies, the College of Humanities and Education, in collaboration with the Fiji Fashion Week.

The corporate night was attended by the FNU students and staff, FNU alumni, FNU Senior Leadership Team, corporate partners, including renowned designers, like Tracey Farrington and Eleganza Fiji.

Officiating at the event, the Pro Vice-Chancellor TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) Pasifika and NTPC (National Training and Productivity Centre), Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata highlighted in his opening address that the corporate night stood as a testament to the remarkable collaboration between the two worlds of academia and industry, coming together to shape a brighter future for all students, communities, and the nation.

"FNU is not just any institution, it is a dual-sector university that seamlessly merges higher education and TVET education," said Dr Tagicakiverata.

"This ensures that students are not only equipped with knowledge but are armed with practical skills to step confidently into the evolving workforce. This is a game-changer, and I believe it sets FNU on a transformative path of empowering future leaders, thinkers, and innovators.

"The importance of the synergy between education and industry cannot be overstated. At FNU, this synergy isn't just a goal, it's a commitment. By remaining relevant, responsive, and future-focused, FNU is producing graduates who will not only survive in this changing world but thrive.

"Graduates who are adaptable, competent, and driven to make significant contributions to both the workforce and society at large."

He also acknowledged all corporate partners for their constant support during the journey.

"FNU's partnerships, from the Fijian Drua to Air Terminal Services, Unit Trust of Fiji, and Aspen Medical, are wonderful examples of how industry collaboration can benefit not only the university but the broader community," he said.

"These collaborations open doors to exciting new possibilities, helping us to shape a future workforce that is innovative and highly skilled."

Dr Tagicakiverata encouraged the students to take on more opportunities that would come before them.



The FNU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (fourth from left) with the FNU Pro Vice-Chancellor TVET Pasifika and NTPC, Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata, FNU staff and corporate partners at the 2024 Open Day Corporate Cocktail and Fashion Show Night

FNU Open Day: A One-Stop-Shop

By WATI TALEBULA

The Fiji National University (FNU) Open Day 2024 was described as a "one-stop shop" by Lomary Secondary School teacher Seini Tawake.

Tawake had accompanied 142 students and eight other teachers to the event, marking the largest group from the school so far.

She said the students were in awe as they moved from one college booth to another.

"The setup for the FNU Open Day this year was very convenient for everyone. We took our students to the registry which also had a booth at the open day because some needed to get their birth certificates for their enrolment," Tawake explained.

"We hope that next year's event will be even bigger and better. Vinaka, FNU. The students have gathered as much information as they could, and we look forward to seeing our final-year students apply to FNU."

Tawake believes that FNU is a university where students can upskill and engage in hands-on activities.

"We brought students from Year 11, 12, 13, and vocational levels. The objective was to expose them to the various fields of study and disciplines available at FNU, and we are grateful for this opportunity," she said.



Lomary Secondary School students during the FNU Open Day at the Nasinu Campus.

"Our school is located outside of Suva, displays at the different colleges and the so we are not always exposed to the two centres."

More than 20,000 people attended the Open Day across the four locations.

Opportunities at Open Day



Clayton Murikanaka (right) with the students and teachers of Vatukaloko Secondary School.

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

The recent 2024 Fiji National University Open Day was a resounding success which allowed students to grab many opportunities. This was the comment made by Clayton Murikanaka, a teacher at Vatukaloko Secondary School located in the Ra Province. Murikanaka shared that the 2024 FNU Open Day was one of the most successful

trips for the students and teachers. He said the school enrolled more than 80 students and he was grateful that the more senior students had the chance to be part of this year’s Open Day. “We came this morning all the way from Ra to explore the FNU Open Day here at the FNU Natabua Campus in Lautoka,” said Murikanaka. “The tour around this campus was really interesting visiting all the stations, it was a really enjoyable tour especially for the students coming all the way from the Ra Province, they got to see all the different schools and the many opportunities offered for them.” He said the trip was also an eyeopener for the students as most of them were already preparing to make decisions on the programmes they wished to pursue at the FNU in the future. “My students really enjoyed it a lot. I can say that some of my students are not good academically in the classroom but getting

to see some of the experiences in practical work here at FNU, it really boosted them to grab opportunities and make decisions for their future,” he said. Murikanaka also applauded the tour guide that led the students and teachers around Natabua Campus. “The tour guide also for our school was amazing, she did a really good job in touring our school all over the campus and explaining to us everything we needed to know about FNU,” he added.

Local Farmer Learns New Techniques at FNU Open Day

By SELITA BOLANAVANUA

Three weeks ago, farmer Jone Mataku attended the Fiji National University (FNU) Open Day, curious about what was being showcased. While at his home in Nakasi, he decided to visit the Nasinu Campus. Surprisingly, Mataku walked away with valuable tips, including how to raise pigs without creating bad smells, a common problem for many livestock farmers. “I left feeling happy and excited,” Mataku said. “The Open Day isn’t just for students; it’s for everyone, especially us farmers.” Mataku highlighted the challenges of maintaining a pigsty, saying, “Washing it is a lot of work, especially in the village or farm, because sometimes the water source can be very far. And this needs to be done at least every two days. But with this new method, I don’t need to wash the pigsty for at least up to four or six months.” After learning these new techniques, Mataku plans to return to his farm in Vanua Levu and start a new pig farm. He also plans to teach villagers these methods to prevent unpleasant smells in their community, contributing to a healthier living environment. “Sometimes, these smells can cause health problems and sickness in the village, so this will help prevent that.” Meanwhile, the piggery technique was showcased by FNU’s College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF). It involves the use of sand and sawdust.



Local Farmer, Jone Mataku at the FNU Open Day.



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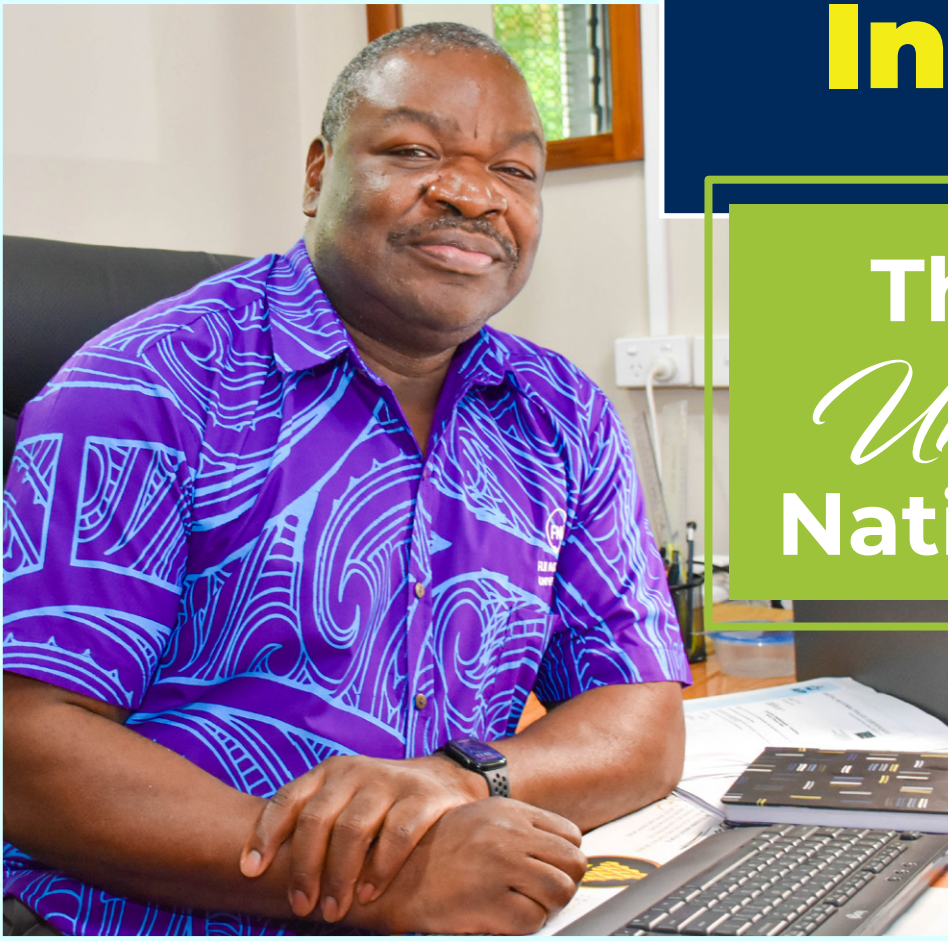


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Inside Story

The Importance of University Rankings to National Development

"Fiji should hold its head high. FNU is the only ranked national university in the South Pacific islands."

BY PROFESSOR PAUL IJI

Although university rankings have been with us for only about half a century, they have come to stay as a feature of the modern university system.

Some people rightly regard them as a competition league but they need not be seen in this light. In my personal opinion, universities should use ranking results to guide their delivery rather than as competition tools.

Compared to the existence of the modern university system, rankings are quite recent. The University of Al-Karaouine, also known as al-Quaraouiyine and al-Qarawiyyin, established in 859 AD in Fez, Morocco, is generally believed to be the oldest university in the world. Universities were not ranked until 1970, and that was only a limited exercise in the USA.

The All Updates and Books for Students and Professionals (AUBSP), an online resource, currently records nearly twenty-nine thousand universities in the world.

There are several agents which rank universities. Typically, none of them ranks more than one-sixth of the total number of universities in the world. There is a limited number of ranked universities because universities only voluntarily enter these ranking exercises.

This is one of the reasons that many question the value of the ranking exercise. Some authorities also question the reliability of the rankings because they are often dependent on the data provided by the institutions themselves or data that are available to the agents who conduct the ranking.

A university needs to have a good presence online to be fairly ranked, particularly as some of the agents begin to use artificial intelligence in the exercise.

There are only a handful of

authoritative agents, which rank universities. They use a large number of metrics, to the extent that the results they produce are not often directly comparable. Institutions, therefore tend to use rankings that are favourable to them, and ignore those that are not so good.

Times Higher Education of UK

The aim of this article is not to compare the agents but to look at the relevance of the university ranking and what they actually mean for national development. For this purpose, I am going to focus on one of the rankings conducted by the Times Higher Education (THE) of the UK.

This is not because it is the only one that Fiji National University (FNU) has used to rank itself but because THE is globally accepted as one of the most authoritative ranking agents. This is not surprising; THE is a subsidiary of the reputable and authoritative UK Times newspaper.

Times Higher Education began higher education ranking in 2004, with its famous World Universities Ranking (WUR). It added the Impact Ranking in 2019, and the Online Teaching Ranking in 2024. Its various ranking results are largely revered by the global academic community. This was what informed FNU to enter one of the ranking streams of the THE, the Impact Ranking.

For the record, FNU went into the Impact Ranking when it was only eleven years old. That was an audacious decision.

Why would a university submit itself to ranking at such a young age? The University of the South Pacific, a regional university where most of the staff of FNU were trained, was over 50 years old when it first entered the ranking game.

I believe that the creation of the Impact stream was a motivational

factor for FNU to submit itself for ranking. The Impact ranking is measured against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). The SDGs were set by the UN in 2015, and endorsed by all its members, including Fiji, to guide themselves towards national development up to the year 2030.

I think the THE set very good standards to follow, in aligning its Impact Ranking to the UN SDGs. Why did the THE align its Impact Ranking to the SDGs?

Globally, universities are the soul of a country; they are the proponents of the knowledge economy, and no country can develop if it does not develop its human resources. Universities champion the development of human resources.

National University

As a national university, FNU recognizes its importance to Fiji. We know that the country relies on us to produce its human resources, but most importantly, develop policies that can guide the people and Government of Fiji to work better. For this reason, we always align our strategic plans with the national development plans.

There are 17 SDGs, each chosen to address an activity or challenge in the world (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>).

Take SDG One, for example; it is set to address the eradication of poverty in the world by 2030. The poverty line is currently set at US\$1.25 per day, and there are now 700 million poor people globally.

As the world adopts measures to fight poverty, the number of people who will still be poor by 2030 is estimated to be 575 million. This is an improvement but still a long way to go.

The THE recognizes universities as the engine room of society. How universities address

the SDGs will determine how rapidly society develops, whether one measures it by reducing poverty, reducing hunger (SDG2), improving health care (SDG3), providing quality education (SDG4), or ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16). SDG17 is a special one, which tries to combine how the other SDGs are addressed.

Times Higher Education expects institutions to include it if they choose more than one SDG to be used in ranking them. At FNU, we are teaching and researching in such a way that Fiji can quickly meet its SDG targets.

In 2024, we chose only 6 SDGs, including SDG17 to assess ourselves, and the result of that exercise is already in the public domain.

We generally improved in ranking in all 6 SDGs, compared to our previous two outings. We have no intention to compare ourselves with any regional higher education provider, but we are quite happy with our performance.

It is no mean task to pitch ourselves against a university like Bologna (Italy), the oldest university in Europe (est. 1088), which was ranked at number 23 overall.

Among the top 50 ranked universities this year are the likes of Coimbra, Portugal (est. 1290), and Glasgow, UK (est. 1451). But we feel inspired by relatively young universities like Western Sydney (est. 1989), which came first in the THE Impact Ranking in 2024. Of greater inspiration to us is the University of Johannesburg, South Africa (est. 2005), which is the youngest university in the top 50.

FNU Ranking

Overall, FNU was ranked at 801-1000 (scoring 58.8-64.4 %) out of nearly 2000 institutions, which fully entered the competition. It is

important to note that the number of institutions participating in the Impact Ranking has steadily increased since it started in 2019. Fiji should hold its head high. FNU is the only ranked national university in the South Pacific islands.

The regional university, USP, has also participated in the Impact rankings for 3-4 years now. For the record, it is ranked 601-800 (score of 64.5-69.8) in 2024.

FNU's best score was in SDG3, at 71.9-75.8, confirming that we are delivering well in securing good health and wellbeing for the country and the region.

We also did well in SDG4 (50-56.2 %) and SDG8 (52.8-61.1 %). FNU and USP were ranked in only 2 common SDGs (8 and 17) of their best four SDG rankings.

In the key SDG17, FNU scored 59.9-67.4 % against USP at 36.9-52.8 %. The full global ranking can be viewed at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings>.

FNU is proud of its performance in the THE Impact Rankings. We do not intend to use it as a marketing tool but as a tool to improve our delivery to the country. We are not far from the key requirement of a minimum of 1000 publications in the preceding five years for entry into the WUR. FNU is in a position to enter the WUR before our set target of 2030. We look forward to supporting the Government in achieving its development targets through the SDGs and other indices.

We will partner with the Government to examine policies, and develop new policies to hasten the national development.

• Professor Paul Iji is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation at the Fiji National University.

Nabobo-Baba: Appreciate Culture & Values

By WATI TALEBULA

Each of us brings a unique heritage, a story that echoes the rhythms of our ancestors and connects us to the land we call home.

The Vice-Chancellor of Fiji National University, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, emphasised this during the Fiji National University Student Association (FNUSA) and Fiji School of Medicine Students Association (FSMEDs) Cultural Night on Saturday.

Nabobo-Baba said that the cultural night was a moment to appreciate the diversity surrounding us.

“I am reminded of the powerful imagery within our Strategic Plan 2024-2026, particularly in Priority Area 1: Inclusiveness

and Diversity,” Nabobo-Baba said.

“FNU strives to be an institution where everyone, regardless of background, race, gender, socio-economic status, or ethnicity, can thrive. Our diversity is not only our strength but also our collective foundation. This evening is a tribute to that diversity, a showcase of the colors, sounds, and flavors that define our Pacific Island cultures.”

She said that the cultural night celebrated traditional dances passed down through generations, with each movement telling a story and each beat echoing the heart of communities.

“From the spirit of the dancers to the graceful sways of our cultural groups, each presentation is a reminder of the beauty that lies in our roots. The Cultural Night is

more than just a display of talent; it is an opportunity for us to unite, learn from one another, and foster a sense of belonging,” Nabobo-Baba said.

“By celebrating our heritage tonight, we reaffirm our commitment to these principles. As we share in laughter and rhythms, let us remember that we are not just students of FNU, but ambassadors of our cultures.

“Let us carry the spirit of this evening into our future careers, ensuring that the rich traditions of our Pacific Islands are honored in every patient interaction, every healthcare decision, and every moment we serve our communities.”

FNUSA President Mohammed Iqbal highlighted FNU’s role in promoting

cultural diversity.

“Observing the cultural night at FNU allows students to appreciate different cultures and value diversity. This experience cultivates students’ perspectives and teaches them the importance of diversity,” Iqbal said.

“The principles of cultural togetherness hold significant importance, especially in a diverse country like Fiji. As Fiji’s leading institution, Fiji National University plays a crucial role in promoting cultural unity through its diverse student body and faculty.”

Students from various Pacific countries showcased their traditional dances, and over 500 people attended the Cultural Night.



Vice-Chancellor of Fiji National University, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba with FNUSA members during the Cultural Night at the National Gymnasium

By SELITA BOLANAVANUA

Unity in Diversity at FNU

What a night it was, a night to celebrate our people, places, and cultures.

This sentiment was shared by Mr Luke Koroi, Head of the Department for Electronics at Fiji National University, as he described the inaugural College of Engineering, Science, and Technology (CETVET) Cultural Night.

It was hosted by FNU’s School of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (SEEE) at Derrick Campus late last month.

The primary objective of the cultural night was to promote inclusiveness among students, especially those from regional backgrounds, helping them feel at home in the FNU community.

The event was inspired by FNU’s Strategic Plan 2024-2026, which emphasises diversity and inclusiveness.

The concept for the Cultural Night originated from the university’s management team during the development of the 2024 Annual Plan.

“Organising a Cultural Night for our students just seemed like the right thing to do,” he said.

Throughout the night, Mr Koroi said students showcased their cultures through a variety of performances and

presentations.

Each item contributed to a rich cultural tapestry, highlighting the diverse backgrounds of FNU’s student population.

“All performances stood out, and it showed how much there is to learn from the different countries represented,” he said, reflecting on the evening’s highlights.

With a positive response from attendees, it was not just the performances that wowed the audience; the event also saw a high turnout of students from other schools within the College of Engineering, Science, and Technology (CETVET) and even a few from the University of the South Pacific (USP).

“This was meant for SEEE students only, so the big turnout surprised us,” he said.

“Students dressed in their different traditional attires, and their performances and presentations promoted cultural awareness and diversity that exist in FNU.”

After receiving positive feedback from the event, it is now set to become an annual tradition for the School of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, with plans to expand to other campuses in Ba, Labasa, and Namaka by 2025.

“In the future, we hope that FNU will be able to organise an FNU Cultural Day/Week involving all colleges. This was always our vision from the start, and we have just opened the door to make this a reality,” he said.

“This cultural night showed the different cultures that exist within our school. We could see through the students’ faces how proud they were when going on stage representing their country in a foreign land.”

Many lessons were learned from the event, but one stood out that Mr Koroi highlighted.

“All these years, we have had regional students in SEEE, and all we knew was the country they represented, and that was it.

“This cultural night showed the different cultures that exist within our school, and we would not have known them had it not been for this cultural night. We could see through the students’ faces how proud they were when going on stage representing their country in a foreign land.”

Mr Koroi believed that, if given more time, there would be improved performances and the opportunity to discover new ideas in 2025.



CETVET Acting Dean Salabogi Mavoia with CETVET staff during the Cultural Night at the Derricks Campus in Samabula.



The Banaban students showcasing their culture during the CETVET Cultural Night

FNU Assisted Dakuivuna Rugby Team



FNU's Acting Manager Vijayta Sharma gives out sports gears to a Dakuivuna team representative.

By WATI TALEBULA

The Fiji National University's Sports Science Student Association recently donated training equipment valued at over \$2,000 to the Dakuivuna Rugby Club in Tailevu.

President of the Sports Science Student Association, Eneriko Ravato Delai, stated that the project with Dakuivuna Rugby Club was a community engagement initiative in collaboration with Sports Science, coinciding with a one-day sevens tournament held in Korovou.

"This initiative aims to foster our relationship with the youth of Wainibuka. The purpose of this project is to encourage youth participation in sports and to inform them about the evolution of sports over the years," Delai said.

"There are many career paths in sports for both men and women, providing opportunities to turn their passion into a profession. The interactive session on Friday was

designed to inform the youth about the requirements for sports science and to facilitate discussions about various career opportunities in the sports field.

"We created a testimonial video featuring current and past students who have made a difference in sports at both the international and local levels. Sports is a means to steer youth away from drugs, poverty, and crime."

He said that the sports science students also participated in the tournament with two women's teams and one men's team.

"The project took a month to develop. We were first approached by the Dakuivuna Brothers 7s team for training assistance. In just two weeks, they transformed from losing most of their games to winning the Dawasamu 7s tournament. This proves that with professional coaching and training, the sky is the limit," Delai said.

"The importance of this project is to increase the number of students enrolling in our program,

especially in Sports Science, as we have seen a decline in student enrollment each semester. The programme has significantly impacted many coaches and trainers at the national level, contributing greatly to their careers."

The University offers Sports Science Programmes for Semester 1, 2025.

Sixty students attended the handover, along with eight staff members from IT support and the Division of Marketing and Communication, as well as assistant instructors in sports science.

The training equipment donated by the Sports Science Student Association included:

- Rugby balls (training and match balls)
- Training bibs (24)
- Stopwatch
- Whistle
- Agility posts
- Cones, Agility ladders



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INSIDE FNU 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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