



## ISSUE 02 2025

## Message from Pro-VC (Research & Innovation)

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Welcome to our Newsletter for the second quarter of 2025. We are halfway through the year but I believe we have more than half of the work outlined to be done for this year. We have been busier this quarter than ever before, but also more productive. The workforce at the Research Office is close to full but we still lack one critical position, that of the Research Data Analytical Officer, which has been vacant for nearly 2 years. The appointment of the Director of Research in February has eased the pressure on us all but our deficiency shows quickly if one person goes on leave or is sick. The support staff tend to understand each other's duties, which is good but they do not always have all the right files or contacts to obtain information that may be required in an emergency. As can be seen, the Newsletter is packed with news and plans, to demonstrate how productive the staff of the Research Office have been. We seem to have a lot of irons in the fires. We will strive to mold them at the right time, so that we can build from one step to the other. I think the most scintillating news that we received during the second quarter was the signing of the agreement between HECF and FNU, which enabled the receipt of the Fiji Government grant to the Centre for Pacific Action for Climate Transitions (PACT). Since then, we have received \$1.5m of the designated annual support of \$2m. The funding committee of PACT has since met to allocate some of the funds to key projects.

We have continued with staff development through the interactive workshop on the

very useful statistical software, Minitab, and the trialling of Pivot-RP, a super funding information database that is now used by top universities across the world to access research grants. We have paid for one year of subscription, to make it available to our staff. We paid out publication incentives and awarded a number of research grants. We recognised our high-performing researchers in four categories – graduate students, early-career researchers, established staff, and impactful research.

We hosted three powerful researchers in our Global South Seminar series on topics ranging from bioactive compounds in healthcare to the potential of coffee production in the South Pacific, and use of AI in scientific publishing. We were thrilled to receive the results of the 2025 Times Higher Education Impact Ranking exercise in June 2025. We improved on our ranking, as in previous years. For the first time, we exceeded the global average score in all the 6 SDGs that we entered. The implementation of our roadmap to full global ranking continues, with the planned launch of a training publication platform, the FNU Reviews and Perspectives. The Research Office continued to support graduate students through new local and international scholarships. We congratulate the four students, one supported by the ACIAR, who graduated in April. I also met with supervisors of ACIAR students to discuss interventions to achieve early completions.

On the international front, we hosted officials of the Chinese branch of the International Society of Zoological Sciences, and met with the German Ambassador to Fiji and the President of the German funding agency, DAAD. A team from the University of Queensland was here in early June for a workshop on Strengthening Australia-Pacific Research Partnerships in Food and Agricultural Systems.

We continued with preparations for various symposiums and conferences, including the inaugural FNU Research Symposium 2025, Loss and Damage Symposium 2025, International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSPPPE), and International Conference on Learning and Teaching 2026.

Please, enjoy the Newsletter.

**Professor Paul A. Iji.**

## 2.0 Community Information

### 2.1 The Vice-Chancellor's Research Excellence Awards 2024 ceremony

celebrated researchers' achievements across three categories, Established Staff, Early-Career, and Graduate students, recognising their hard work and dedication. Winners were presented with awards while nominees received certificates in recognition of their contributions.

This year's awards not only highlighted individual efforts but also reinforced FNU's commitment to fostering a robust research culture. The evening concluded on a hopeful note, inspiring all to keep pushing the boundaries of knowledge and making a difference in their communities.

As in previous years, the Research Excellence Awards celebrated outstanding contributions across three key categories:

- Graduate Students – *Dr Ashnita Krishna*, College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences
- Early/Mid-Career Staff – *Dr Moshmi Bhim* Assistant Professor, College of Humanities, Education, and Law.
- Established Staff – *Dr Shipra Shah*, Associate Professor of Forestry, College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

This year also marked the introduction of a new award: the Vice-Chancellor's Special Recognition Award, created to acknowledge research with significant community impact. The inaugural recipient of this award was Mr Viliame Sakiti, Senior Instructor at the College of Engineering Technical Vocational & Training, whose work exemplifies the power of research to drive meaningful change. Congratulations to all our awardees for their dedication and achievements!



*The Guest of Honour Hon Iliesa Vanawalu, Assistant Minister for Education with the FNU Chancellor, Mr Semesa Karavaki, and some members of the FNU Senior Leadership Team (front) with winners, runner-up and nominees for the VC's Research Excellence Awards 2024 at the Holiday Inn, Suva on 24 April 2025.*

### 2.2 Completion of industry collaborative research project 'Fuel level monitoring system for Telecom Fiji Limited'

A team of researchers from the School of Electrical & Electronics Engineering at the College of Engineering and Technical Vocational Education and Training (CETVET), in collaboration with Telecom Fiji Limited, successfully completed an industry research project aimed at designing and building an innovative remote fuel level monitoring system. The goal of this project was to provide Telecom Fiji Limited with real-time insights into fuel storage and consumption patterns in tanks located at remote sites used to operate generators. The system was specifically designed to detect fuel leakage or theft, helping the company reduce downtime and better understand business risks and opportunities. Additionally, it enables the pursuit of tank capacity optimisation strategies through consistent and reliable data. The CETVET team undertook an investigation to model the fuel tank, select suitable transducers, design power supplies, install and program the embedded system, and set up the database and

website for the monitoring system prototype at Derrick campus. Experiments were performed to validate the measurements from the level and flow sensors, ensure accurate fuel tank modelling, and enable remote updates of monitoring data with alarm configurations. The system was systematically designed and demonstrated to the management of Telecom Fiji Limited. It is anticipated that the system will be replicated by Telecom Fiji Limited for their various remote sites and is anticipated to also be a solution to other communication and utility service providers.

The CETVET research team included Dr Satyanand Singh, Dr Ronesh Sharma, Dr Shiu Kumar, Professor Tibor Pasinszki, Dr Kajal Kothari, Dr Bhanu Pratap Soni, Mr Shivneel Chand, Mr Nauneet Menon, Mr Nischal Chandra, Mr Shamal Chand, Mr Pranid Reddy, Mr Vinay Maharaj, and Mr Ravendra Chand from Telecom Fiji Limited, who served as key industry partner for the project.

During the official presentation and demonstration of the unit on 06/03/2025, The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), Prof. Paul Ade Iji, emphasized the significance of the industry collaborative research project and congratulated

the CETVET team for successfully achieving the project objectives. Mr Mesake Tuinabua, the Chief Technical Officer, expressed his gratitude to the team and acknowledged the potential of the researchers at CETVET. He further highlighted the importance of this collaboration and expressed his eagerness for continued partnerships with CETVET in the future.



*Pro- Vice-Chancellor-R&I Prof Paul Iji and Mr Mesake Tuinabua (pink shirt), the Chief Technical Officer, Telecom Fiji Limited with FNU staff and Telecom Fiji Limited staff after the official presentation and demonstration of the Fuel level monitoring system at CETVET, Derek Campus, Samabula on 06/03/2025.*



### 3.1 The ACIAR-funded Landcare Project No. SSS/2029/140

The ACIAR-funded Project No. SSS/2029/140 Landcare – an agricultural extension and community development model at district and national scale in Fiji, project meeting was held at the Research Office Board room on Tuesday 25/03/2025. The purpose of the meeting was to formally brief PVCRI on the extension of the project to April 2027 and International Landcare Conference that is planned to be held at the FNU Namaka Campus from 24/11/25. The meeting was attended by Prof Paul Iji (PVC R&I), Mr Clinton Muller (RMIT/RMCG), Ms Mai Alagcan (ACIAR Regional Manager), Dr Pamela Greet (Global Landcare), Ms Aloesi Dakuidreketi-Hickes (Project In-country Manager), Dr William Kerua (FNU Landcare Research Team Leader) and Dr Apaitia Macanawai (DR&I).



*Meeting with the Landcare Project Team at the Research Office Board room on Tuesday. 25/03/2025*

### 3.2 FNU-UQ-USP Workshop on Strengthening Australia-Pacific Research Partnership in Food and Agricultural Systems

The event brought together scientists from FNU, University of Queensland (UQ) and USP and Fiji agriculture stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, Fiji Crop and Livestock Council and industry players. The workshop aimed to strengthen collaborative research partnerships between UQ, FNU and USP, particularly in the areas of food and agricultural systems in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. The workshop also aimed to promote knowledge exchange and capacity building among researchers, institutions, and stakeholders in the three pacific nations and support the development of sustainable and inclusive agricultural innovation systems tailored to the unique needs of island communities. The UQ team led the Fiji partners through exercises in systems thinking processes.



*Participants at the FNU-UQ-USP Workshop on Strengthening Australia-Pacific Research Partnership in Food and Agricultural Systems at the Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies, Suva Point, 4-5 June 2025 at the FNU's Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies, Suva.*

### 3.3 Visitors

#### 3.3.1 FNU meeting with CABI

(legally CAB International, formerly Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux) at College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF), Koronivia Campus on 04 April 2025. The discussions and presentation from Dr Feng Zhang (Regional Director, CABI East & South-East Asia) have provided valuable insights and new perspectives that can benefit Fiji as a whole. It also paves a path for Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways (MoAW) and FNU to work together to ensure that Fiji rejoins CABI.



*Dr Feng Zhang Regional Director for East & South (front right) and Dr Ravi Joshi (Honorary CABI rep) (front left) with CAFF Staff and Dr Apaitia Macanawai, Director Research & Innovation (front-center).*

#### 3.3.2 International Society of Zoological Sciences

The PVCRI and representatives from the CAFF and CETVET met with a delegation from the Chinese branch of the International Society of Zoological Sciences at the Research Office on 09/04/2025. The meeting was aimed at promoting exchanges and cooperation in zoological research and technological applications across the South Pacific region, while conducting natural resource investigations in marine biology, animal ecology and conservation, and biological invasions.



*The Chinese delegation with FNU researchers from CAFF and CETVET.*



## 4.0 Conference and Seminars

### 4.1 Global South Seminar Series

#### 4.1.1 Dr Jioji Tabudravu,

School of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK. Dr Tabudravu's seminar topic – Multi-analytical approach for efficient discovery of bioactive natural products. Dr. Tabudravu highlighted the ongoing potential of natural products, particularly those derived from plants, microbes, and marine organisms as promising sources of innovation for both health and industrial applications. He also shared his vision for the Fiji Centre for Natural Products and Biodiscovery, which aspires to establish Fiji as a global leader in natural product research. This pioneering Centre, the first of its kind in Fiji, will focus on discovering and developing bioactive compounds from local medicinal plants, food sources, and both microbial and marine organisms, including micro and macro species.



PVC-RI Prof Paul Iji presenting a token of appreciation and gratitude to Dr Jioji Tabudravu after his seminar presentation at the Main Boardroom, Nasinu Campus on 9 April 2025.

#### 4.1.2 Dr Eugene Ezebilo,

Associate Professor and former Deputy Director of Research at the National Research Institute, Papua New Guinea (PNG), delivered a virtual presentation on 28 June 2025 titled “Challenges and Determinants of Coffee Production in Papua New Guinea: Lessons for the Pacific Region.” In his presentation, Dr. Ezebilo shared several key findings from his study aimed at enhancing coffee production in Papua New Guinea; offering valuable lessons for Fiji and other island nations in the Pacific region. These include:

- Revitalising abandoned coffee plantations and addressing challenges related to the use of customary land for development, to encourage large-scale coffee production.

- Establishing production facilities in areas most suitable for coffee cultivation.
- Utilising hired labour to boost production volumes and promoting development projects focused on coffee production.
- Providing continuous training for coffee growers on modern cultivation techniques and effective management of pests and diseases.



Associate Professor Eugene Ezebilo.

#### 4.1.3 Professor Dr. Sam Goundar,

Senior Lecturer at RMIT University, Australia, and Visiting Professor at SRM University, India, delivered a presentation titled “AI, Editors & Ethics: Mastering the Art & Science of New Era Research Publications” on 03 June 2025. The session was conducted both in-person and virtually from the CHEL Boardroom, Nasinu Campus. Drawing on decades of experience in academic publishing and editorial leadership, Professor Goundar shared valuable insights into what it truly takes to make research visible and citable. The seminar went beyond conventional guidelines, offering practical strategies, publishing shortcuts, and real-world lessons. His extensive experience as Editor-in-Chief and his success with high-impact journals and major publishing houses provided FNU staff and students with meaningful, actionable knowledge to enhance their research publication journey.



Prof Sam Goundar (6th from left) with PVC-RI Prof Paul Iji and FNU staff after his seminar presentation at the CHEL Boardroom on 03 June 2025.

### 4.2 Icon of Global Impact Award to PVC-RI Prof Paul Iji

The presentation of the Icon of Global Impact Award to Professor Paul Ade Iji, by Mr Chris Fayomi, Global President, of the National Association of Nigerian Students in the Diaspora (NANS-D) was held at the Nasinu Campus Main Boardroom on 11 April 2025. The award recognizes Prof Iji's exceptional contributions, unwavering dedication, consistent mentorship, and profound impact on youth and student development, which have inspired, motivated, and uplifted many within and beyond the community of Nigerian students in the diaspora.



Mr Chris Fayomi presenting the Icon of Global Impact Award to Professor Paul Ade Iji.



## 5.0 ACIAR PASS-CR Scholarship Students

### 5.1 Amelia Nadau Wins Top Poster Prize, While Lily Qaranivalu Secures Fourth Place in Oral Presentation at the Pacific Research Symposium

Amelia Nadau, an ACIAR PASS-CR Scholarship Master's by Research student, presented her poster titled "Farmers' Perceptions of Climate Change Impact in Fiji" at the Pacific Regional Research Symposium held in Tonga from 22-23 May 2025. Her presentation earned her the first prize in the poster presentation category. Ms. Nadau shared that the knowledge and experiences gained from both the symposium and the Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry (26-30 May 2025) significantly enriched her academic work. She noted that "exposure to current research methodologies, policy frameworks, and community-based approaches enhanced the depth of my analysis and broadened my understanding of regionally appropriate adaptation strategies."

Lily Qaranivalu, an ACIAR PASS-CR Scholarship recipient and Master of Science in Forestry candidate, participated in the Oral Presentation segment of the Pacific Regional Research Symposium. She presented her research titled "Agroforestry for Strengthening Rural Livelihoods in Fiji" and was honoured with a 4th place award among a diverse field of regional researchers and professionals.

During the symposium, Ms. Qaranivalu shared insights from her exposure to a variety of agroforestry models and sustainable agricultural practices implemented across the Pacific. This experience broadened her understanding of how different island contexts are addressing shared challenges such as food security, land degradation, and climate resilience.



Ms Amelia Nadau (left photo) and Ms Lily Qaranivalu (right photo with the Tongan Minister for Agriculture), both ACIAR PASS-CR Scholarship Master's by Research students at CAFF.

## 5.2 Internal Research Grants

In the first half of 2025, seven seed funding grants totalling \$102,792.00 were awarded to researchers across two colleges. Of these, four grants were awarded to the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF), and three to the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

## 5.3 Recent Publications

Our researchers, including graduate students, continue to produce high quality publications across a range of scholarly platforms. In the first half of 2025, FNU researchers published 6 book chapters, 73 journal articles, 3 conference papers, and 3 research notes. Notably, approximately 86% (63) of the journal articles were published in Quartile 1 journals, reflecting the high quality of the research output.

## 5.4 Staff Training

The Research Office concluded the virtual and interactive workshop for FNU researchers on the use of the statistical software Minitab on 8 May 2025, marking the end of a three-month training series that began on 12 February 2025. Minitab is a globally recognized statistical software, widely used across disciplines including the social sciences, natural sciences, medicine, and engineering. The workshop was led by Dr Gbenga Festus Akomolafe from the Federal University, Lafia, Nigeria. As part of the training, Dr. Akomolafe provided a comprehensive 50-page manual and MP4 recordings of all sessions for future reference and continued learning. Considering the value this training has brought to our researchers, it is recommended that FNU consider purchasing a Minitab license in 2026 to support ongoing research and data analysis needs.



Dr. Gbenga Festus Akomolafe

## 5.5 Upcoming Events and Conferences

- FNU & USP ACIAR PASS Design Program: August 2025
- Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium: 10-12 September 2025
- 2025 FNU Research Symposium: 25 September 2025.
- Symposium on Loss and Damage in Pacific Small Island Developing States: 16-18 September 2025, Savusavu, Cakaudrove.
- Learning and Teaching Symposium: 07 November 2025

## 6.0 Staff of the Research Office

For any research support and questions, please contact the Research Office on the following numbers

Staff Name	Position	Email	Telephone +679 3394000
Professor Paul Iji	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)	pvc-r@fnu.ac.fj	Ext: 2046
Dr Apaitia Macanawai	Director Research & Innovation	director-ri@fnu.ac.fj	Ext: 2043
Ms. Rashika Kumar	Senior Executive Officer	eo-pvcr@fnu.ac.fj	Ext: 2041
Ms. Reena Singh	Grants & Ethics Officer	geo@fnu.ac.fj	Ext: 2042
Ms. Varsha Dutt	ACIAR Graduate & Scholarship Officer	aciar-go@fnu.ac.fj	Ext: 2044
Mr Prithvi Narayan	Research Data & Analytics Officer	rd.ao@fnu.ac.fj	Ext: 2347