



VICE-CHANCELLOR'S WEEKLY MESSAGE

1 October 2025

Bula Vinaka FNU Family Community and Partners,

This week, I am honoured to reflect on a moment of great significance for both our University and our nation—*Na Vuku ni Vanua* – Charting Our Cultural Destiny Conference, held from 22–25 September 2025. The conference was proudly sponsored by the World Bank, SPC, and FNU, with strong partnerships and support from the Great Council of Chiefs and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. We were especially privileged to welcome the Chair of the Great Council of Chiefs, Ratu Viliame Seruvakula, as the Chief Guest.

This landmark gathering brought together chiefs, traditional leaders, knowledge holders, academics, and community representatives in rich dialogue on the protection and revitalisation of our cultural heritage. At its heart, the conference reminded us that relationships are our true heritage, our connection to the land and ocean, to our ancestors and generations yet to come, and to each other as members of a resilient Pacific community. These enduring bonds shape our identity and guide our collective journey.

I thank all who participated, especially the Chiefs and traditional leaders whose wisdom and presence anchored our discussions. A landmark highlight of the conference was the attendance of the 28 Sausauvou (young chiefs in training) who are currently enrolled in FNU's Diploma in Vanua Leadership programme, sponsored by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and GCC.

The recent Pacific Symposium on Climate Loss and Damage, hosted by FNU, Monash University & SPC with the Government of Denmark, brought together over 120 delegates from across the Pacific and beyond, including academics, policymakers, development partners, and community leaders. The Symposium featured research papers, panel sessions, a poster session, and a field visit to Vunisavisavi Village, a site of climate-induced relocation. Discussions addressed both economic dimensions, such as infrastructure, crops, and livelihoods, and non-economic dimensions, including health, displacement, and cultural heritage. Cross-cutting themes included water security, customary land tenure, climate financing, and socio-ecological resilience. Across these deliberations, one clear message emerged: integrating indigenous knowledge with academic research strengthens the Pacific's capacity to respond effectively to the complex challenges of climate change.

The symposium was officially opened by Fiji's Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Moses Bulitavu, and was a resounding success. It also drew the participation of key national leaders, including the Chair and CEO of the Fiji Higher Education Commission, Mr Steve Chand, and its

Director, Dr Eci Naisele; the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Education, Mr Navin Raj; and the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, Dr Sivendra Michael.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency the President, Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, and the First Lady, Madam Emily Lalabalavu, as well as to our former President and Patron of the FNU Foundation, Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere, for their presence at the inaugural Grand Alumni Fundraiser Ball at the Sheraton last week. We were especially honoured to have Tui Macuata, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, as our Chief Guest. I am equally grateful to all our alumni and friends of the University who supported this milestone occasion, and I extend special thanks to our sponsors and partners, whose generosity made the event possible. Together, your contributions are helping to advance the education and future of our students, and by extension, the development of our nation.

Looking ahead, I warmly invite you to join us at the FNU Open Day 2025, which will take place across our campuses:

- **3 October** – Natabua Campus, Lautoka and Bonunaqwele Campus, Namaka
- **2 - 4 October** – Nasinu Campus, Suva
- **2 – 3 October** – Naduna Campus, Labasa

The Open Day is a chance for prospective students, parents, teachers, and the public to engage directly with our academic staff, explore our programmes, learn about scholarships and student support services, and experience the vibrant life of our university. I encourage you all to attend and to spread the word within your communities.

At FNU, we are proud guardians of a rich cultural and academic legacy, but we are equally committed to shaping the future with vision and adaptability. The work of recent weeks has reminded us that education is about far more than knowledge; it is about values, relationships, and responsibility.

Together with our partners and the coalition government we will continue to honour our past, rise to the challenges of the present, and chart a confident and sustainable course for the future of the Pacific.

Vinaka vakalevu,

Professor Unaizi Nabobo-Baba
Vice-Chancellor
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