

Together We Build Better



WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 2 - 3

- Pacific Identity and Unity at FNU Multi-Cultural Week
- Rising Drugs, HIV Concern

Page 4

- From Home to Graduate
- Family Learning, Growing Together

Page 5

- Age No Barrier for Learning
- Grandson Honours Grandmother's Sacrifice

Page 6

- FNU Strengthens Industry Links
- FNU Reaffirms Commitment at ICDF to Supporting Communities

Page 7

- Faith, Family, Future Care
- Sailing Towards a Dream

Page 8

- Vesikula Advocates Sports Participation for a Healthier Life



The Fiji National University's Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba with Taveuni Multiracial Land Purchase Co-operative Secretary Ian Simpson in Taveuni on Saturday, 28 March 2026. Photo: Wati Talebula

FNU Scouts Taveuni

BY WATI TALEBULA

The Fiji National University (FNU) has taken a significant step towards expanding its national footprint with plans to expand its services to Taveuni. Leading the initiative, Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and her team recently visited Taveuni to scout suitable land for the proposed development. The visit reflects FNU's ongoing

commitment to increasing access to higher education across the country, particularly for students in maritime and outer island communities. Professor Nabobo-Baba during the annual Industry & Community Discussion Forum (ICDF) in Savusavu highlighted the strategic importance of bringing university services closer to the people of Taveuni and surrounding islands. "This is an important step for FNU as

we look at expanding access to quality higher education. A campus in Taveuni will greatly benefit students who currently face challenges in relocating to major urban centres for their studies," she said. She added that the university is open and ready to engage in discussions with landowners and stakeholders. "We are ready to negotiate and work collaboratively with landowners and the community to ensure that this development

is mutually beneficial and sustainable," Professor Nabobo-Baba stated. The proposed campus is expected to not only improve access to education but also contribute to local economic development through job creation, skills training, and increased community engagement. FNU's expansion into Taveuni aligns with its broader vision of inclusive education and strengthening regional presence across Fiji.

#LandcareFiji2026: Weaving People, Livelihoods, and Landscapes.
Landcare and inclusive agriculture: achieving **socio-ecological balance** to shape our future.

Register now | Join the Braid

06 - 10 July, 2026 | FNU Bonunaqwele, Namaka Campus, Nadi, Fiji



Pacific Identity and Unity a

BY WATI TALEBULA

A powerful display of unity, identity, and shared purpose marked Day Two of the Fiji National University College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences CMNHS Multi-Cultural Week, as students and dignitaries gathered for a symbolic flag-raising ceremony and cultural showcase.

Held under the theme “Celebrating Cultural Connections: Flag Raising Ceremony and Booth Display: Showcasing Cultural Diversity Through Creativity Ceremony,” the event transformed the campus into a vibrant reflection of the Pacific’s rich and diverse heritage.

The Ambassador of the Federated States of Micronesia to Fiji, Carson Sigrah, delivered a stirring message on the power of culture in shaping identity and unity across the region, stating that in the Pacific, culture transcends heritage and serves as a source of identity, strength, and connection among people.

He said that cultural expressions from traditional songs to knowledge passed down through elders reflect resilience and are grounded in respect, community, and collective responsibility.

“To embrace cultural diversity is to open both heart and mind to the beauty of difference and to celebrate the customs and traditions that make each of us unique, while recognising the shared humanity that unites us all,” His Excellency Sigrah said.

He further highlighted that in institutions such as CMNHS, cultural competence is essential in healthcare, as it fosters trust, improves communication, and leads to better outcomes for communities.

Reinforcing the importance of international partnership, Second Secretary at the Embassy of Japan in Fiji, Chika Inoue, highlighted the enduring relationship between Japan and Fiji and its impact on health education.

Ms Inoue said events like the multicultural celebration demonstrate that despite diverse backgrounds, people are united by shared aspirations for peace, progress, and well-being.

CMNHS Acting Dean, Dr Amelia Turagabeci, said the ceremony carried deep meaning beyond its visual symbolism.

She said flags represent nations, heritage, and unity.



Flag bearers from the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences with guests during the Multi-Cultural Week held at the School of



Students from the Tongan Students Association perform during the Multi-Cultural Week held at the School of Nursing in Tamavua. **Photo:** Penioni Kolinisau



College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences students during a field trip in Nadroga on the final day of the Multi-Cultural Week. **Photo:** Penioni Kolinisau

at FNU Multi-Cultural Week



of Nursing in Tamavua. **Photo:** Penioni Kolinisau



Commissioner of Police, Mr. Rusiate Tudravu, who was the Chief Guest on Day 1 of the Multi-Cultural Week held at the School of Nursing in Tamavua. **Photo:** Penioni Kolinisau

Rising Drugs, HIV Concern

BY WATI TALEBULA

The growing link between illicit drug use and rising HIV cases has been identified as a behavioural issue requiring urgent attention, says Police Commissioner Rusiate Tudravu.

Speaking during Day One of the Multi-Cultural Week hosted by the Fiji National University's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Mr Tudravu stressed the importance of collective action in addressing the escalating concern.

The panel discussion, themed *"Our Stories, Our Realities in the Pacific Islands. Combatting HIV and Illicit Drug Use Across Communities,"* brought together key stakeholders to examine the intersection between substance abuse and public health challenges.

Mr Tudravu acknowledged that while he is not a health expert, behavioural factors play a significant role in drug use, which in turn contributes to rising HIV cases.

"It is ever so important to act now, for the sake of our

future generation, and to protect the next generation from being born into a life that was not their choice, but the decision of others," Mr Tudravu said.

"To read the headlines on the high number of babies born with HIV is indeed heart wrenching and reinforces the need to work together. While we acknowledge our diversity in culture, it must not however impinge our ability to tackle issues facing Fiji and the Pacific.

"The reality is that drugs is threatening our cultures and identities, which makes me worry about what the future will look for, for our children and grandchildren."

Mr Tudravu also acknowledged FNU's role in early prevention and awareness, noting that such platforms allow professionals to come together and address shared challenges.

"Multi-Cultural Week is a celebration, but it is also a reminder. A reminder that unity in diversity is not just a slogan—it is a responsibility," he said.

"I have been reliably advised by a senior official from the United States Homeland Security Investigation Department, that if we act together now, we can change the

narrative.

"Fiji is for now, considered a "door of opportunity", meaning the syndicates are testing the waters so to speak. While there a lot of narratives out there about the dire situation in Fiji, it is still controllable and manageable."

During the discussion, Acting Chief Executive of the National Substance Abuse Advisory Council, Josua Naisele, highlighted peer pressure as the leading factor influencing youth involvement in drugs.

"What we teach at home can be different from what our children do when out of our homes. You would be surprised that there are children who are doing drugs while none of the parents take drugs," Mr Naisele said.

Meanwhile, general practitioner at FNU, Henry Waqa, raised concerns about changing sexual behaviours and low condom usage despite ongoing awareness campaigns.

"I think the sexual landscape of our society has changed. Back then HIV was associated with marginalised group. That has changed now with human rights advocacy.

"Despite condom advocacy, we have a large number that do not take heed of this advocacy."

From Home to Graduate

BY WATI TALEBULA

Stephani Baletalei from Suweni Village in Wairiki, Cakaudrove, has achieved a wonderful milestone by graduating in Screen Printing Artwork and Designs.

With maternal links to Nabouva Village in Wainibuka, Tailevu.

After completing Year 12, the 36-year-old stayed home for 17 years, dedicating her time to family. Today, she stands proud as a wife and mother of three, proving that it's never too late to learn and grow.

Stephani shared that she learned about the programme when the Cakaudrove Provincial Council visited her village with application forms. Taking that opportunity changed her life.

“I learned a lot. Before, I used to buy things, but after this course, I can actually make my own and even start a business. I learned everything from the start to the end of the process.”

She highlighted that there is also a great opportunity for all 14 Provincial Councils across Fiji to work closely with the Fiji National University (FNU) to bring these courses directly into rural communities.

“When provincial councils and institutions like FNU work hand in hand, we can ensure that no one is left behind and that opportunities reach even the most remote areas of our country.”



Stephani Baletalei with her first certificate. **Photo:** Wati Talebula

Family Learning, Growing Together

BY WATI TALEBULA

A proud and inspiring moment for one family at the Rural Remote Maritime Training under the Community-Based Non-Formal Education programme held in Nabalebale, Wailevu, Cakaudrove yesterday.

For Talatala (Reverend) Semi Bosei and his family, this achievement marks a fresh start and a breath of new opportunities.

Talatala Bosei graduated in Basic Cabinet Making and Joinery, his wife Rayape Niumahi completed Garment Construction Techniques and Procedures, and their daughter Takayawa Tikoiserene achieved her certificate in Baking & Patisserie.

“It is a good programme. I am happy that I have reached today and hope that there would be more. This is my first certificate from a tertiary institution, and to do it with my husband and one of our daughters is a blessing,” shared Ms Niumahi.

“As a family, we need to be part of this, and I am glad that we did this together. It is an eye-opener. We can take this knowledge and share it, especially with the congregation.”

The family also expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Fiji National University for bringing such impactful programmes to rural communities.

It marked a truly inspiring milestone as 263 individuals graduated from the Fiji National University's Rural Remote Maritime Training Community-Based Non-Formal Education and Training Programme.

From the youngest graduate at just 16 years old to the oldest at 82, this achievement reflects the power of lifelong learning and determination across generations.

This graduation aligns strongly with Fiji's National Development Plan—promoting inclusive growth, strengthening rural communities, and building a skilled, adaptable workforce for the future.



Takayawa Tikoiserene with her parents, Talatala (Reverend) Semi Bosei and Rayape Niumahi, all graduated from the Fiji National University's Rural Remote Maritime Training Community-Based Non-Formal Education and Training Programme at Nabalebale in Savusavu. **Photo:** Penioni Kolinisau

Age No Barrier for Learning

BY WATI TALEBULA



Losana Dioi, 82, was the oldest graduate of the Fiji National University's Rural Remote Maritime Training Community-Based Non-Formal Education and Training Programme at Nabalebale in Savusavu. **Photo:** Wati Talebula

Travelling to Nabalebale in Wailevu, Cakaudrove from Labasa at 6am every morning was a sacrifice Losana Dioi was willing to make.

At 82, she remained determined to learn not for herself alone, but so she could give back to her church and community.

Today, she graduated from the Fiji National University's Rural Remote Maritime Training Community-Based Non-Formal Education & Training programme with a certificate in Screen Printing Artwork Designs.

"This is the second time I am graduating from this training this year. Last month I graduated from Naiyaca Campus with floriculture, and this learning journey has been fulfilling," Ms Dioi said.

Despite the daily challenges, she remained committed to attending classes.

"Travelling daily is not easy because it gets tiring, but I have to keep going because I know I will be able to assist others with what I am learning," she said.

She expressed joy and gratitude for reaching another milestone.

"I am glad and happy to be receiving my certificate today," she said.

Grandson Honours Grandmother's Sacrifice

BY WATI TALEBULA

At Nabalebale in Wailevu, Cakaudrove, 16-year-old Ratu Peni Silikiwai sat among 263 graduates, quietly reflecting on the journey that brought him there.

While others celebrated, his thoughts were with his grandmother.

"My grandmother has been raising me since Year 4 after my parents separated and this certificate is for her," he said.

Now 72, she had taken on the responsibility of caring for him, facing life's hardships with strength and determination. Her sacrifices became his motivation.

Graduating with a certificate in Domestic Electrical Installation was more than just an accomplishment, it was a step toward a better future.

"Electrical Engineering is something I am passionate about and something I want to pursue as a career," Ratu Peni shared.

A Year 10 student at Saint Bedes College, he continues to balance his education with his ambitions.

"I want to work hard so I can help her in whatever way I can," he said.

He graduated under the Rural Remote Maritime Training Community-Based Non-Formal Education & Training.



Ratu Peni Silikiwai after graduating at Nabalebale in Savusavu. **Photo:** Wati Talebula

FNU Strengthens Industry Links

BY WATI TALEBULA

The Fiji National University is calling on industry partners to work collaboratively in identifying critical skills gaps across key sectors, as part of efforts to better align academic programmes with the evolving demands of the workforce.

This initiative is being driven through the annual Industry and Community Discussion Forum (ICDF), a platform that brings together employers, educators, and community representatives to highlight workforce needs and training priorities.

Recent ICDF sessions held in Labasa and Savusavu have provided valuable insights into the specific skills shortages facing the Northern Division.

Stakeholders from various industries and community organisations shared their perspectives, helping to shape future training and education pathways.

At the Labasa forum, the Fiji Sugar Corporation Limited Labasa Mill General Manager, Mr. Navin Charan highlighted the ongoing challenge of sourcing and retaining skilled tradespeople in the Northern Division.

“We currently engage a number of expatriate specialists at the Mill due to the shortage of skilled local tradespeople.



Fiji Sugar Corporation Limited Labasa Mill General Manager, Mr. Navin Charan, during the annual Industry and Community Discussion Forum (ICDF) in Labasa. Photo: Penioni Kolinisau

While our preference is to employ locally, many individuals relocate to Viti Levu for further studies or seek opportunities overseas, making it difficult to attract and retain talent in the North,” he said.

Mr Charan emphasised the need for more accessible and industry-relevant training opportunities within Labasa, noting that limited course availability and certification levels remain a key constraint.

“While some trade training programmes are available locally, including automotive, carpentry, plumbing and electrical, not all are offered up to the required Level

4 certification. Additionally, specialised fields such as instrumentation and controls, fitting and machining, heavy mobile plant mechanics, and welding are currently not available in Labasa,” he added.

He further encouraged the Fiji National University to consider expanding its technical and vocational training offerings in the North.

“Introducing these programmes in Labasa would significantly support workforce development in the region and improve the retention of skilled tradespeople,” Mr Charan said.

Community organisations also acknowledged the importance of the forum. Lomani Au Manager Leonie Maree Johannesen described ICDF as a meaningful platform for engagement.

“ICDF allows the community to be better informed with FNU opportunities, activities and possible developments within the local area,” she said.

“And also, for FNU to hear from the communities as to what their needs may be. We felt heard and look forward to seeing how this plays out in the future of FNU in Savusavu.”

Established in 2006, Lomani Au is a children’s home in Savusavu.

Adding to the discussion, Inise Tawaketini from Nasavusavu Special School stressed the importance of regular engagement.

“In my opinion it should be done at least annually but targeting key stakeholders—community, employers, teachers, and disability organisations. The forum will help FNU align their courses to the needs of the different groups,” she said.

Through continued collaboration and dialogue, FNU aims to ensure its programmes remain relevant, responsive, and capable of equipping graduates with the skills needed to drive Fiji’s economic growth.

FNU Reaffirms Commitment at ICDF to Supporting Communities



Participants following the ICDF held at the Tanoa Rakiraki Hotel. Photo: Nicolette Chambers



Mr Bob Mitchell speaking at the ICDF held at the FNU's Naceva Campus in Lautoka. Photo: Nicolette Chambers

BY NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

Our purpose here is to connect with the industry – we are ready to assist you.

These were the sentiments shared by the Director for the Division for Productivity and Consultancy under the Fiji National University’s (FNU) National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC), Mr Bob Mitchell while addressing the Vanua O Ra at the 2026 Industry & Community Discussion Forum (ICDF) at the Tanoa Rakiraki Hotel this week.

The ICDF also took place in Northern Division and FNU’s Naceva Campus in Lautoka while upcoming sessions will take place in the Central and parts of the Western Division too.

The sessions brought together industry leaders, business owners and representatives, Small and Medium

Enterprises, community leaders, and training providers from a wide range of organisations, all committed to strengthening Fiji’s workforce.

Mr Kolitagane assured the communities that FNU stood ready to support all communities.

“We want to ensure that no one is left behind,” he said.

“There is a pathway for everyone in TVET!”

The FNU looks forward to strengthening future collaborations with the Vanua O Ra, with plans underway to establish an FNU Centre.

The proposed Centre aims to provide training and support for individuals and communities, helping to build skills and create opportunities. With the continued support of communities, industries, and the Vanua, the Ra Province holds strong potential to nurture and develop the nation’s future leaders.

Rakiraki’s prominent businessman and former

Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs, Mr George Shiu Raj acknowledged the support shown by the FNU.

Participant, Samuela Seru Tuilevukana from the Ra Disability People’s Federation Organisation said he was grateful that the FNU did not leave out those from the organisation he is part of.

“I suggested in the discussion to bring the training for our people to Rakiraki to train our youth who are aged from 13 to 35 years to help with their future,” he said.

The FNU extends its sincere appreciation to the many participants who attended and for the valuable feedback shared.

Hosted by the FNU’s TVET Pasifika, the theme for the forum was – *Let’s collaborate to build a skilled and future-ready workforce.*

Faith, Family, Future Care

BY WATI TALEBULA

Raised in a large family as the second eldest of seven, Selina Paea 'I Nafualu Timani Halafahi learned early the values of responsibility, humility, and service—principles that continue to shape her path today.

The third-year student is studying Medical Imaging Science at the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science.

Originally trained as a nurse in Tonga, Selina's transition into Medical Imaging Science came through a scholarship opportunity that required her to change direction.

What seemed like a challenge soon became a calling. The field allowed her to combine compassionate patient care with advanced technology, playing a vital role in diagnosis and treatment.

"Knowing that the images I help produce could help change someone's life motivates me every day," she says.

Selina describes her academic journey as both demanding and rewarding. She particularly enjoys anatomy and physiology, especially when

theory is applied in practical radiology sessions.

These experiences have strengthened her confidence and deepened her understanding of patient care.

Beyond the classroom, Selina is an active student leader. She serves as a Class Representative, Vice President of the Medical Imaging Science Student Association, and Secretary of the Tongan Medical Association.

Her leadership reflects her commitment to supporting others and building strong connections within the university community.

Balancing studies and personal life are not always easy, but Selina draws strength from her husband, family, and faith.

"On difficult days, I remind myself why I started and that is to serve and make a difference," she shares.

She hopes to become a qualified radiographer and continue growing in the healthcare field.

For Selina, success is not just personal, but it is about teamwork, service, and making a meaningful impact in people's lives.



Selina Paea 'I Nafualu Timani Halafahi

Sailing Towards a Dream

BY WATI TALEBULA

For many passengers boarding a Goundar Shipping vessel, the friendly smile of Onisimo Votea is a familiar welcome.

But behind that smile is a story of resilience, sacrifice, and a steady course toward a bigger dream.

At 32, Votea has spent the past nine years navigating life at sea; a journey that began not by design, but by circumstance.

A former student of the Fiji National University, Votea had once set his sights on a career in tourism. However, financial challenges forced him to leave his studies behind and enter the workforce earlier than planned.

"I was not able to complete my tourism and management

studies due to financial constraints, so I started working," he recalled.

That decision led him to the maritime industry — a path he has never regretted.

He hails from Naivilaca Village in Noco, Rewa, with maternal links to Tokatoka in Nakaele, Tailevu.

Votea first joined Goundar Shipping before moving on to Blue Lagoon Cruises.

Today, he has returned to where it all began, bringing with him years of experience and a deeper appreciation for life at sea.

"I love working on the vessel, and it has been a good experience. I get to meet people from all walks of life," he said.

His daily responsibilities have taught him more than just

technical skills. For Votea, working on a vessel demands discipline, awareness, and strong decision-making.

"Being on board, it is important to always follow instructions and be firm in making decisions," he added.

Even after nearly a decade in the industry, Votea's journey is far from over. Determined to advance his career, he has been taking short courses at the Namaka Campus while preparing for his next big step.

He now plans to enroll at FNU's Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies to pursue a Diploma in Nautical Science — a move that brings him closer to his ultimate goal.

With guidance already sought from the Centre, Votea is focused on one day taking command on the bridge as a ship captain.



Onisimo Votea (right) doing what he does best on board one of the Goundar Shipping Limited vessels. Photo: Penioni Kolinisau

Health & Hustle



Vesikula Advocates Sports Participation for a Healthier Life

Mere Vesikula at the FNU Gymnasium, Nasinu Campus. Photo: Vetaia Dakua

BY NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

It is important for people to participate in sports and live a healthier life, says the Fiji National University second year student, Mere Vesikula.

Originally from, Nakorolevu in Namara, Tailevu sharing maternal links to Boitaci, Vanua Balavu, Lau, Vesikula was always passionate about sports.

She was especially passionate about rugby and enrolled in a Certificate in Sports Science (Level 4) last year and is currently pursuing a Diploma in Sports Science (Level 5) at the FNU's Nasinu Campus.

"When more females study sports science, it helps reduce the gender gap in the sports industry and encourages equal

opportunities in coaching, research and sports management," she said.

The former Adi Cakobau School student shared that the programme has allowed her to know more not only about rugby, but other sports too.

She said sports is something everyone should be part of. "It is important for people to look after their health and participate in sports because not only does it help to keep the body fit and strong it also helps people stay mentally and socially healthy," said Vesikula.

"Regular physical activity improves heart health, controls body weight and it keeps blood pressure and blood sugar at health levels. This helps reduce less tolerated diseases and it allows people to live a healthier and more active lives."

Women in Sports

Vesikula highlighted that women's role and participation in sports was paramount.

She said women in sports have helped shape a better future by promoting gender equality and inspiring young girls to believe in themselves.

"Their success shows that women can achieve greater things in sports which encourages girls to participate, follow their dreams and be more confident," she said.

She encouraged men to continue to show respect and encourage women to participate in sports.

"Continue to treat women with the same respect as men, encourage girls and women to join sports teams and competitions, and avoid stereotypes that say some sports are 'only for men'," she said.

Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium

PIHRS 2026

"Accelerating SDG 3 in the Pacific: Research, Accountability and Impact toward Vision 2050"



31 August - 4 September 2026



Fiji National University, Nasinu Campus Suva Fiji

Register Now!



INSIDE FNU is a monthly newspaper which aims to promote the University's activities to the wider community.

This newsletter is produced by the Public Relations and Communications team at the Division of Marketing and Communications.

Publisher: Fiji National University

Editor: Manager Public Relations and Communications, Navinesh Kumar

Design & Layout: Aniket Prasad

Division Head: Acting Director Marketing and Communications, Ella Bennion

Writers: Wati Talebula, Nicolette Chambers

INSIDE FNU wants to HEAR FROM YOU

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

Follow us on

