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**PRESS RELEASE**

**PhD supervisors undertake skills development workshop**

**Suva, Fiji Islands.** Senior Academic faculty from across Fiji National University (FNU) are attending a skills training workshop that will strengthen their mentoring and supervision skills for guiding students seeking higher academic degrees.

The three-day workshop is divided into two sessions and is hosted at the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) in Nabua, Suva. The programme is funded by the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Research and facilitated by Professor of Educational Research and Acting Dean of College of Humanities and Education, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba along with several other senior academics from the Fiji National University.

The aim of the training is to produce academic leaders who will advise and lead new researchers in their journey to a higher research degree.

FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey said the University is investing in the expansion of part-time and in-service doctoral qualifications to enable staff to work towards a PhD.

“To support this development, we need to widen the pool of trained and qualified PhD supervisors, who can work with less experienced researchers to help them realize their full potential,” said Professor Healey.

“Being a PhD supervisor can be a fulfilling and enriching role; not only are you contributing to the professional development and personal growth of colleagues in a life-changing way, but the experience can also be revitalizing and help you to reignite your own research agenda.”

According to FNU’s Pro Vice Chancellor, Research, Professor Nii-K Plange, this workshop is the first of its kind hosted by FNU and it is a strong indication of FNU’s commitment to strengthen the capacity of its local academic staff.

Professor Plange said higher degree, especially doctoral studies, provides the best context and process for advancing knowledge through critical and robust research.

“Well supervised students get the opportunity to strengthen their research and analytical skills for employment readiness within or outside the academy and into different sectors of society where they can contribute to national development,” said Professor Plange.

“It will equip senior faculty members with a combination of skill sets and attitudes that are relevant and appropriate in interacting with doctoral students and contributing to shaping their work. But, it also provides the Supervisor with the opportunity to learn new things as students open new frontiers of ideas.”

The participants discussed major issues in the supervisory relationship, including reasons for non-completion and how this can be avoided, advising and guiding candidates on the selection of research projects and techniques to mentor students in producing high quality publication through the application of sound research methods.

Participant, Dr Donald Wilson who is currently the Head of School of Public Health and Primary Care at the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS), said he learnt about several social factors that are equally important as academic ones while supervising a PhD student.

“We have learnt the importance of being sensitive to the cultural background of the potential PhD students,” said Dr Wilson.

“We have learnt that we play an important role on who the person is as an individual and when we don’t take this into consideration, we will not be able to identify when the student is struggling because of certain problems that are linked to their studies and are generated from issues at the cultural level.”

For more information contact: Kalpana Kaajal | Public Relations & Communications Officer | P: 339 4000 | Ext: 2886 | Email: [kalpana.kaajal@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:kalpana.kaajal@fnu.ac.fj)

**About the Fiji National University:** The Fiji National University (FNU) was established through the merger of 7 government-owned tertiary institutions in Fiji, and commenced operations from 1 January 2010. The constituent institutions are found at over 40 different locations across Fiji, and collectively offer Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Degrees, Postgraduate qualifications and Skills Upgrading for those who are already in employment. Approximately 30,000 students pass through the University each year. Over the last six years of its operations, the University has registered major achievements with regard to new programme delivery, quality improvements and contribution to research and publications via its 5 Colleges: The College of Humanities & Education (CHE), the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS), the College of Engineering, Science & Technology (CEST), the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF), the College of Business, Hospitality & Tourism Studies (CBHTS) and the National Training & Productivity Centre (NTPC).