

FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey welcomes appointment of new Council



FNU Chancellor and Council Chair Dr Rajesh Chandra with members of the FNU Senior Management Group (SMG).

The governance of the Fiji National University (FNU) will now gain full momentum following the announcement of the full Council by the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts Honourable Rosy Akbar.

The FNU Council will be led by Doctor Rajesh Chandra and he will be joined by 14 other members from academic and industry backgrounds. The full list of the appointees is as follows:

Ms Tessa Price is the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group's Regional Executive for Pacific. She holds a Masters of Business Administration - Executive (2007) from the Australian Graduate School of Management, Bachelor of Commerce (International Business) and a Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) from the University of Auckland.

Professor Dharmendra Sharma, originally from Fiji, has served the Chair of the Academic Board since 2014 at the University of Canberra, where he was also the Dean of Engineering and Information Sciences from 2007 to 2012. University Distinguished Professor of Computer Science since 2008, he was formerly a senior lecturer at USP.

Ms Lala Sowane brings over two decades' experience in the tourism sector, providing valuable insight into the demands of the industry. She is the director/owner of Pacific Destinations, an inbound tourism operator, and also holds qualifications as an accountant/auditor.

Mr Raymond Prasad graduated with Honours from Deakin University, where he earned a BA in Architecture. He brings over 15 years' industry experience, and will supply the Council with his refined expertise surrounding the demands and requirements of professional services in the construction industry, such as civil and services engineering.

Professor Barry McGrath is the Adjunct Professor of Medicine, Monash University. He is a trained physician and former Professor of Vascular Medicine at Monash Health in Victoria. A leader in cardiovascular medicine, he brings with him clinical, academic and research experience.

Dr Joseph Veramo has worked at USP, previously teaching in the non-formal education sector. He has extensive experience consulting for multi-lateral organisations, and will bring a berth of insight on non-formal education to the Council.

Dr Penuel Immanuel, formerly known as Dr Emi Mataitoga, is a Consultant Specialist of Internal Medicine at Suva Private/MIOT. She currently serves as a member of the Professional Standards Committee of the Medical Council.

Dr Nur Bano Ali stands out as the only Fijian practising accountant with a PhD. Her thesis was on Development Finance (using FDB as a case study) from the University of Waikato, New Zealand. She is also a member of the Fiji Chamber of Commerce and the Chair of Women in Business (Fiji).

Dr Parakrama Dissanayake holds a PhD, Management/Business Administration, bringing valuable business acumen to the Council. He is Deputy Chairman/Managing Director of Aitken Spence, Co-Chairman of CINEC Maritime Management Campus (CINEC is currently assisting with the Fiji Maritime Academy) and Board Director of Fiji Ports Corporation Limited and Fiji Ports Terminal Limited.

Professor Ravi Naidu, originally from Fiji, is one of Australia's leading environmental scientists. He is the Global Information Chair and Director of the Global Centre for Environmental Remediation. He was formerly the Chief Scientist at the prestigious CSIRO in Australia, and is also currently on the Board of the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji.

Dr Akhila Nand Sharma, after serving as a teacher for more than 46 years across various levels of the education sector, retired from his position as Associate Professor of Education at USP. He holds a Doctorate in Education from Bristol University, and was formerly a PhD supervisor at FNU and a secondary and primary school teacher, equipping him with a unique

perspective on teaching and learning.

Mr Davenesh Sharma is a lawyer of 31 years, having obtained his LLB from Victoria University in Wellington. He now specialises in all aspects of civil and commercial litigation in Magistrates Court, High Court, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court and Industrial Tribunals. He is a past president of the Fiji Law Society.

Mr Vishnu Mohan is the current Chair of both the Public Service Commission and Fiji Sugar Corporation. He is a senior, international banker with 40 years of experience in Corporate and Institutional Banking and Consumer Banking, covering the Middle East, North America, Southern Africa, West Africa, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Singapore and the Pacific. He led ANZ's businesses across 12 countries in the Pacific region which covered all retail, commercial and institutional customers, products and operations, and also looked after Fiji as its Country CEO.

Mr Gordon Jenkins, Chair of the Construction Industry Council, has been a quantity surveyor for 56 years. He brings the Council invaluable insights into the demands and requirements of the construction industry, an important sector for growth to meet Fiji's development needs.

FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey welcomed the appointment of the new Council. "The new Council has brought together some very senior people with serious expertise. It includes bankers, lawyers, accountants, clinicians, engineers, business executives and senior academics. This breadth of experience is important for two reasons," he said.

"First, the primary role of the Council is to represent our stakeholders – Government, employers, society, students, staff and alumni. To do this, the Council needs a mix of appointed members which reflects the key industrial sectors, as well as representatives of Government and staff and students. Second, the Council has to make complex financial decisions about the University's operating and capital budgets and it is crucial that its members have, as a collective, the technical expertise to make good choices."

Professor Healey also applauded the international, outward-looking mix of Council members, noting that: "It includes a number of Fijians who have made their careers overseas and expatriates who are based in Fiji. If Fiji National University is to become a premier university, as we all intend, we need to ensure our academic programmes, our processes and policies are all based on international best practice. The new Council members bring with them a wealth of experience from universities, research organisations and corporations from other parts of the world."

Meanwhile the newly appointed Chancellor Doctor Chandra was hosted to a lunch organised by the Professor Nigel Healey and the Senior Management Group (SMG) at Nasinu Campus last week. In his address to the SMG, Dr Chandra highlighted the importance of good governance and transparency.

"It has a dual role, one is to work with management and facilitate what the university wants, the other one is to set the strategic directions and then to monitor what the University is doing in relation to those strategic directions set by the Council," said the senior academic.

"They (Government) have seen what I have been able to do and they have very high aspirations for the University as a national university," he added.

Dr Chandra commended the work of the Fiji National University and the changes it has brought in recent years.

"FNU has already made many changes and I think going forward what will happen is that because there are expectations from us, we can see how we can do things faster and most of the time it will be like an escalator now that is running very fast."

Dr Chandra said having worked for all the three Universities in Fiji, he plans to contribute his knowledge and experience to lift FNU's reputation through international accreditations and major focus on the employability of graduates.