

FNU's Engineering and Science Fair a platform to promote STEM subjects – Dr Lako



Students listen attentively at the 2018 CEST Engineering Exhibition.

The Fiji National University (FNU) seeks to create greater awareness and encourage more females to pursue studies in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) through the upcoming two-day Engineering & Science Fair.

The Engineering & Science Fair is an annual event organised by the FNU's College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST), which is expected to attract students from a number of secondary schools around the country.

CEST Associate Dean Research, Dr Jimaima Lako believes such events are important in raising awareness about STEM subjects and the professional pathways available for the students.

Dr Lako said during the two-day event, the eight schools under the College will have fun activities and displays, which will guide students in exploring exciting careers.

"There will be displays comprising of water supply distribution system model, some upholstery projects, FM broadcasting station – studio & transmission, NIDA telecommunications display, irrigation Systems conversion of Bio Gas to produce power, modifying traditional wheelchair to All-Terrain Wheel Chair, Hydraulic Scissors Lift, portable Biomass Purifier, rickshaw and golf carts, Ginger Farm processing line, OHS equipment and project, navigational equipment and lifesaving equipment from Fiji Maritime Academy and many more student projects," she said.

According to Dr Lako, when choosing a career, there is still a stark gender divide although we live in a world where we are constantly told that girls can do anything that boys can.

The food scientist said there is a growing demand for STEM skills in Fiji, particularly for sectors such as engineering, construction and manufacturing.

"While the country faces a skill shortage in these fields, it is

also crucial that gender is no barrier to ensuring all young people have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in our growing economy."

The senior academic said it was imperative to 'talk about STEM.'

"The key to encouraging girls to develop an interest in STEM is to catch them early. They need counselling and good academic advise before they go onto choosing a career and this is where our responsibility as a University comes in – to provide avenues to our younger generation to have a feel and ask questions about STEM courses and the careers available," said Dr Lako.

"Therefore, platforms such as the Engineering and Science Fair plays an important part in motivating our young girls to take up careers in STEM," Dr Lako added.

The Engineering and Science Fair will be held at the FNU's Derrick Campus in Samabula on 19 and 20 September with the theme '*Preparing, Mobilising and Upskilling for the New Industrial Revolution 4.0.*'



CEST Associate Dean Research, Dr Jimaima Lako speaking at FNU Derrick Campus, Samabula.