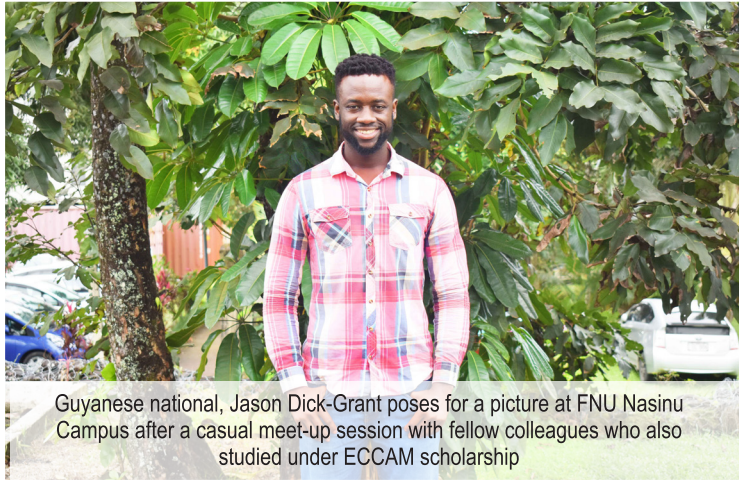


Guyanese student cherishes Fijian experience



Guyanese national, Jason Dick-Grant poses for a picture at FNU Nasinu Campus after a casual meet-up session with fellow colleagues who also studied under ECCAM scholarship

Fiji is often described as a country with a mixture of many beautiful colours, people and places. The shades of lush green scenic landscapes, brilliant azure and green colour of the sea, an abundance of tantalising cuisines and rich culture and traditions have visitors mesmerised and are the key attractions for thousands of people to our shores.

The story of Guyanese national Jason Dick-Grant is similar to many of those that visit Fiji for the first time. The 30-year-old visited Fiji for the first time in late 2017 after securing a scholarship to pursue Executive Masters in Business Administration (EMBA) at the Fiji National University (FNU) under the Education for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (ECCAM) mobility project.

ECCAM is a mobility project funded by the European Union that aims at academic cooperation between three Higher Education Institutions (Fiji National University, the University of West Indies in Trinidad & Tobago and the University of Guyana) and is designed to increase the availability of trained and qualified high-level professionals in the Caribbean and Pacific region.

Initially, Dick-Grant had applied to study at the University of West Indies, which was one flight away from his home country while Fiji was the second choice on his list.

“I was all pumped to fly to Trinidad and Tobago, but fate had other plans for me. At first, I was a bit sad when I saw Fiji as my EMBA study destination because I didn’t know much about the country then and I had to travel for two days to reach here,” said Dick-Grant.

Travelling to the Pacific was a significant culture shock. The language, dressing and surroundings took some time for the Guyanese to get used to.

He said seeing men wearing ‘sulu’ intrigued him as he had never come across such dressing.

However, as Dick-Grant acclimatised and began socialising with his new friends, he began to understand and appreciate the friendly and welcoming nature of Fijians.

He said it was at that moment that he realised why according to WIN-

Gallup, 89 per cent of Fijians reported that they are happy, making Fiji one of the happiest countries in the world.

“I found that Fijians are very open-minded and accommodating. They are not judgmental people like back at home. I have really been having fun being here, and I love the fact that I came to Fiji instead of Trinidad and Tobago because that would’ve been within my comfort zone.”

“By coming here, I have been part of a different culture. It has been an enriching experience in Fiji, and I’m really gonna miss it.”

Dick-Grant said studying in a foreign land provided him with an opportunity to understand and experience different culture and traditions.

Reflecting on his EMBA journey, Dick-Grant said he would “recommend the programme to anyone.”

Dick-Grant will be one of the hundreds of students who will graduate during a series of FNU graduation ceremonies in December.

“If you want to be a hands-on person or if you want to get technical and practical knowledge that could impact your business and organisations – I will say choose FNU’s EMBA programme,” said joyful Dick-Grant.

“I loved the programme because it was very practical in the sense that what we learnt in the classroom is something like if I get a job tomorrow, I could apply it in carrying out my duties efficiently.”

“The lecturers are knowledgeable; they are experts in their subject area. They brought real-life situations in the class. From the EMBA course, we can take many things back to our country – especially where the legislations are weak.”

“Being in the classroom, we got to learn about the institutions like the Fijian Competition and Consumer Council (FCCC). It made me think about where we lack in Guyana and how we could bring ourselves up to Fijian standards which have really good institutions governed by effective laws and regulations.”

Dick-Grant, a former Procurement Officer at Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation Development, has a passion for community service.

He is an active member of the Rotary Club back in his country, something he has been doing for eight years.

“I was previously a member of this organisation at the University of Guyana which was transferred to Suva when I came here. Through this organisation, I have been able to conduct projects which have impacted the lives of many. I love to see that everybody is the best version of themselves.”

According to Dick-Grant, the whole experience in Fiji has transformed him into a different person. He aims to take up a leadership role when he returns to his country.

Though he will be far away, Dick-Grant said the fond memories of Fiji will always be deeply embedded in his mind and he hopes to revisit our shores in the near future.