

National Budget reflects the Government's strong commitment towards education - Prof Healey



FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey

Fiji National University (FNU) Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey says Fiji needs to continue investing in education, technology and capital infrastructure. Professor Healey said the 2019-2020 National Budget allocation received by FNU is a sign of the Fijian Government's unwavering commitment to economic development.

For 2019/20, the baseline budget for FNU has been maintained at \$53.10m. The University had requested for an additional grant to contribute to the remaining cost of the Banner system and for further digital infrastructure – this has been pegged to \$3.10m.

Professor Healey said although this was a tricky year for some parts of the public sector, FNU's allocation signals the Government's support for education and the importance of young people having the opportunity to benefit from tertiary education.

"Overall, despite the fragility of the global economy and the sharper than expected slowdown in the growth of tax revenues, the 2019/20 Budget Statement has combined fiscal consolidation with significant protection for education, reflecting the importance that the Government places on investing in human capital," said VC Healey.

"FNU has, relative to the rest of the public sector, received a very generous settlement and we will ensure that we repay the Government's faith by working hard to achieve their vision for a skilled workforce and support the development of new sectors like care homes and retirement villages – both new policy priorities."

Professor Healey said the University also received a capital budget of \$15m for the Labasa Campus. Phase One of the construction is planned for completion by the end of this year.

"The first phase is a \$35m project. We think this campus taken together with the adjacent Damodar City Complex will be a game changer for

Labasa in terms of bringing about an economic revival of the town. Taken together, the two projects will attract people to Labasa and students to study there – and be able to secure a job after graduation."

Professor Healey said the University continues to revamp and design programmes that are relevant and up to international standards.

He said that the Bachelor of Media and Communication and Diploma in Media and Communication are good examples of this commitment of the University.

"Both programmes will be offered from Semester 2 this year. While the Bachelor's is a brand-new programme, the Diploma programme has been redesigned."

"It took some time to develop these programmes because we wanted them to meet international standards. It is something that we know there is demand for in the industry. Therefore, I am very pleased that it's been launched," Professor Healey added.



Students during their group discussions at FNU Pasifika Campus.