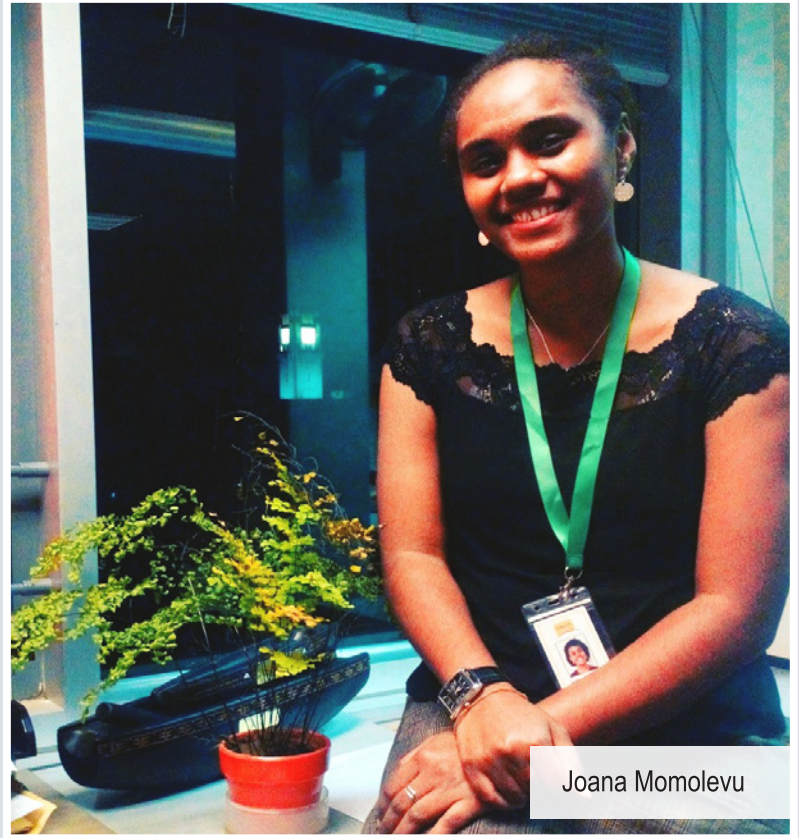


Practical training enables Momolevu to make a seamless transition into a career after studies



Joana Momolevu

The Fiji National University's (FNU) Urban and Regional Planning programme provides students in-depth knowledge in planning, designing and development as well as allowing them to put their learning into practice by undertaking projects, says graduate Joana Momolevu.

The former Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning student who studied at FNU's College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) said the programme had enabled students, including her, to be more familiar with the major areas of planning and urban design.

"Students taking up the programme have also worked on various high-profile projects over the years, which is in itself an achievement and highly commendable," said Momolevu.

Some of these projects included the Wailea Slum upgrading project, developing a plan for Nausori Central Business District and Rewa Riverbank area, identifying the characteristics of Nadali Village, identifying the potential of informal sectors work group in Suva and Nausori and a detailed Urban plan for Valelevu area.

Momolevu, who took a lead role in a significant project on the FNU Derrick Campus site planning in 2017, said it was the full range of professional skills she acquired during her studies that enabled her to carry out this project.

After thorough research, Momolevu and her group identified the lack of green spaces and spatial planning at the Derrick Campus.

"As a student at the Samabula Campus, my friends and I witnessed some issues that needed attention at the Campus. Hence, we

identified ways to improve these areas," said Momolevu.

They recommended that the institution construct buildings that are architecturally significant and can be used as a landmark for Derrick Campus.

"I have recently seen some development changes within the Campus that is in line with my project, and that is very progressive," she said.

Currently working as a Graduate Trainee for the Research and Development Department at the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB), Momolevu said she was always fascinated with the urban environment, and the three-year programme at FNU was a way to achieve this dream.

"The programme offered a wide variety of studies on aspects of planning, and it challenged how I see my community as a whole. The lecturers have an abundance of knowledge and put themselves across very well to us students," explained Momolevu.

The aspiring planner is urging prospective students to choose a career in this field as Fiji has a scarcity of town planners.

"Fiji is a developing country. It is small, but it's rapidly changing in time with new developments and more urban problems arising. It needs planners to plan and manage these developments as well as solve these problems, especially now. If you are someone who has the desire to make a difference in your community, this is the programme for you," she said.