

## Students plant trees at Mount Korobaba



FNU Creative Arts students before hiking up Mount Korobaba.

A group of Graphic Design students from Fiji National University (FNU) turned their usual outdoor activities class into a climate action event by hiking up to Mount Korobaba to plant trees at its peak.

About 16 students were accompanied by their College of Humanities and Education (CHE), Senior Lecturer Jerry Wong last week and were not deterred by the rainy weather.

Wong said the trip was planned months earlier and the two coconut trees planted would serve as both remembrances of their bonding trip as a class, and a climate mitigation initiative. "Our class usually has outdoor sessions where we go out in groups for a (photography) PhotoWalk and the students take pictures of everything and anything that captures their attention and imagination," he said.



Creative Arts students planting a coconut tree at Mount Korobaba.

"I always take my photography students up to the peak of Korobaba at least once a year and have been doing so every semester for ten years. Apart from the learning experience away from the traditional classroom, students get to interact with nature and get that needed exercise to fight NCDs while having fun learning in the course GAD432 - Digital Photography."

"For this particular trip, we decided to hike the mountain and leave a positive mark by planting the trees."

"The landowning head of the mataqali Natodre – Tevita Qounadovu of Waiqanake – gave his blessing when contacted about the trees being planted and was happy that FNU students had come up with the initiative."

Wong said the students were excited for their first trip up the mountain and made their way up with a sense of purpose. He

added "I trek up every year with a fresh set of students, but this is the first time we've planted a tree."

"The coconut is a hardy plant, being able to withstand the eroding soil and strong winds. It will give back to the environment and atmosphere via the emission of oxygen while recycling the carbon dioxide at that altitude," he said.

"It will also provide fruits with succulent coconut flesh and water as well as shade to climbers of Mt Korobaba."

Student Medaleine Ramanu said as an environmentalist, the initiative was significant as it showed young people playing their part in addressing climate issues.

"As a Pacific Islander, it is our duty to respect our land and in planting the trees we prevent degradation and hopefully create a chain reaction effect for hikers going up to plant something," the 21-year-old said.

"I would encourage other youths to do this. As youths of today, we need to make sure that mountains and our land in general, is sustained for tomorrow and what better way to do this than to plant a tree."

Fellow classmate, Ratu Manasa Baleivolivoli said the initiative highlighted how simple actions such as afforestation contributed to the national goals of climate adaptation and mitigation.

Shivaan Sashi Narayan added that the hike also provided the opportunity for the students to discover and learn about the different types of native trees and wild insects.

Wong plans to check on the trees every semester when he takes his students on photography trips up Mount Korobaba.



FNU Creative Arts students with the two coconut plants before planting it at the peak of Mount Korobaba.