

Issue 1 | January 2022



Shaping
Pacific
Futures

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About the cover.

The mural represents the University's sea of islands – its member countries and their diverse cultures, reflected in the carefully constructed twelve (12) panels which tell the story of the USP journey and shows in sequence the growth of the University community.

Following the order in which member countries joined the University, the mural depicts iconic cultural symbols from each nation and draws from the official USP tapa featuring each individual country design (kupesi).

The Oceanic narrative binds these island nations with heritage elements of the Blue Continent showcasing to the world, the unique and special relationship that Pacific peoples have with the land, sea and sky.

The mural was painted by a team of local artists; Anare Somumu, Lingikoni Vaka'uta, Josaia Mc Namara, Jeke Lagi and William Camakau. The mural titled, "Celebrating the Pacific" drawn for the 50th Anniversary theme of "Celebrating the Pacific, Shaping its Future".

The mural can be found inside the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at the Laucala Campus, Fiji.



Editor's note.



Natasha Begum

Manager Public Relations and
Communications

Hello and welcome to The Conch Magazine's inaugural issue, where you'll uncover stories you've never read before!

This issue of the magazine will be fascinating as we strive to bring you tales from all around the region while keeping our USP family connected.

You might be curious about the genesis of the magazine's name, The Conch. The conch shell is, without a doubt, one of the most iconic shells found and used in the region. It is still utilised in traditional ceremonies around the Pacific because of its universal symbolism.

Its haunting sound as a wind instrument can be heard across long distances, signaling and calling people to come together, therefore it's only natural that we use The Conch magazine to share entertaining and inspirational stories of USP with our global network.

This month we commemorate the International Day of Education and so we've dedicated this edition to a focus on education. The education sector and more particularly, USP was not an exception to the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic had posed. As you flip through the pages, you will find how USP has navigated the waters and planned for future.

The last twenty months of border restrictions have been stressful and tough for USP Pacific TAFE's hospitality students, but they've remained committed to their students and the sector as a whole, ensuring that their training remains relevant and current.

We speak with Ollie Zoti, a third-year student from the Solomon Islands studying at the Laucala Campus who has adjusted well to her new surroundings and praises the USP experience, as well as Charlotte Taylor, a USP alumnus who is working as an academic staff member at the School of Accounting, Finance, and Economics.

Inside, you'll also find special academic experts who offer their perspectives on education at USP.

Please let us know what you enjoy about our new publication and any ideas or interests you'd like to see us explore.

Until next time...

Managing Editor:

Natasha Begum | Manager Public Relations and Communications

Reports by:

Swashna Chand | Public Relations Officer

Desktop Publisher:

Loriza M Bano | Graphic Designer

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Pro-Chancellor's Message.

Dear Staff and Students,

First and foremost, I wish to express that it is my honour and pleasure to lead The University of the South Pacific (USP). It is my privilege to introduce you all the first University magazine.

With all universities, in the Pacific and around the world, we face great challenges. The effects of the current pandemic has been experienced differently in different places and far reaching. Our Alumni community and our University partners are facing challenges as well.

We must be mindful of the challenges that we face and the opportunities they provide. We have important roles to play in both. Like all universities worthy of their name, USP is the premier institution of higher education in the region, established with the objective of maintaining, advancing and disseminating knowledge by teaching and research responsive to the needs of the communities of the South Pacific. They have never been needed than before.

The resolve of the people of our University has never been tested this way before; being away from campus and working from home, they responded with innovation and purpose. Courses were put online, timetables were adjusted while students studied and research continued through Zoom and other electronic platforms.

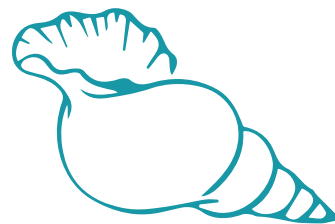
I sincerely thank you for your commitment and support and I am counting on your continued cooperation and goodwill. On my part, I



promise you my best – my determination to learn from you and share my experiences and knowledge with you, and to work with you to enable our University to emerge stronger and better, achieving greater heights. Together we shall overcome and continue our great service to our national, regional and international communities.

We have prevailed over the pandemic through our people's capabilities: our challenge is to continue enhancing our responsiveness in serving our communities now and into the future.

Dr Hilda Heine
Pro-Chancellor



Vice-Chancellor's Message.

Warm Pacific greetings!

I am delighted to launch this first edition of the USP magazine, taking over from the USP Beat, which many of you will remember. This new magazine provides information and exciting news about what's happening at USP and the opportunities available for our University community.

As we traversed 2021 and embark into the new year, I am extremely proud of how we have collectively responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and adapted new modes of learning and teaching.

Without a doubt, the year 2021 was both challenging and rewarding and we acknowledge the ongoing circumstances under which we will continue to operate under.

Our capacity to continue during the pandemic has been critical, and it will be even more important in the coming months as we prepare for the new academic year.

Despite a challenging 2021, we achieved a number of milestones, including being ranked for the first time amongst the top 10% of universities in the world in the 2022 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, and the World Universities with Real Impact (WURI) 2021 global ranking in Crisis Management. Another notable global achievement that put up on the world map was having four of our academics listed in the Stanford University top 2% scientists in the world.



We also refreshed our Strategic Plan for the next three years, providing the direction for the near future of the University. During this next strategic phase, we are even more focussed on delivering a quality student experience and will work tirelessly to maintain quality and achieve the University's vision and mission. We can only do this through high-quality teaching, cutting-edge research, and innovative initiatives that deliver truly transformative opportunities for both our students and staff, and our region.

To all of our students, staff, alumni, donors and supporters – thank you again for your continued support to your University.

Professor Pal Ahluwalia
Vice-Chancellor and President



Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education's Message.

Future of education at USP in the next triennium and post COVID-19

Article by:

Professor Jito Vanualailai

Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education

Within the next triennium, The University of the South Pacific (USP) can expect member countries to begin aligning their education system to Education 4.0.

Created in 2020 by the World Economic Forum, Education 4.0 is a global framework that shifts learning content and experiences to meet the needs of the future. As outlined in the document *Schools of the Future: Defining New Models of Education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, the eight critical characteristics in learning content and experiences are global citizen skills; innovation and creativity skills; technology skills; interpersonal skills; personalised and self-paced learning; accessible and inclusive learning; problem-based and collaborative learning; and lifelong and student-driven learning.

The University has been reorganising itself to prepare for students who will be affected by the transition in education and the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the reorganisation has now given the University the opportunity to execute a hybrid higher learning model for revamping our current spaces for different functions, expanding the University's remote education,



and increasing educational technology advancements.

Classrooms and labs were left abandoned and unused during the pandemic and pre-mass immunisations. However, the post-COVID-19 environment is projected to return to normalcy, interrupted by the recurrence of COVID-19 hotspots. As a result, the facilities on the regional campuses will be re-evaluated to meet the flexibility of various uses.

Education 4.0 requires accessible and inclusive learning and problem-based and collaborative learning. And the pandemic has brought to the fore the need for online and digital resources. Hence, the University will look at re-designing the current spaces for both face-to-face and virtual interactions and incorporate modern technology to allow more breakout areas for collaboration in smaller groups.

This is not a complex undertaking, given that most of the teaching rooms are already equipped with such technology nonetheless the redesign would need to take into account the routines of campus life such as socialising, building relationships, and character-building.



The University will be able to shape classrooms to meet a variety of requirements, including those of students who may be physically unable to attend a class. These components address two of the eight critical characteristics in learning content and experience expounded in Education 4.0, namely, personalised and self-paced learning and accessible and inclusive learning.

We can also expect the University to focus on expanding its distance education and increasing innovations in educational technologies. Expanded distance education include the greater adoption of the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and live interactive online courses. Increasing innovation in educational technologies means enhancing USP's Learning Management System, Moodle, and the adoption of Artificial Intelligence-based education tools to collect data on a student's level of understanding, analyse it, and then determine how to improve it.

Undeniably, the business of education will need to move with time to accommodate the new normal in a post-covid world.



We can also expect the University to focus on expanding its distance education and increasing innovations in educational technologies.



Feature
article.

New academic year draws on the lessons and innovations of 2021



Contributed by:

Dr Matthew Hayward | Director Education

As an institution, we faced many trials in 2021, but in relation to learning and teaching, there is nothing that affected us so universally as COVID-19.

The closure of our Fiji campuses created major challenges for staff and students across the USP region. For many, it meant no face-to-face activities for three quarters of the academic year, restricting classes, field trips, and labs. It meant limited access to university resources, limited connectivity, and uneven access to devices. Working or studying from home may also have brought additional complications, such as extra domestic responsibilities, and cramped or distracting workspaces.

Though other campuses remained open, staff and students outside of Fiji were also heavily affected, by the technological and other operational obstacles imposed by the closure of Laucala Campus, as well as by the financial difficulties and anxieties felt across the region since the closure of our national borders in 2020.



It was a learning experience for all of us, but I think we must be proud of the way in which we have met these challenges together.



Then there are the effects on our health and wellness. There are few of us who have been left untouched, whether from personal sickness, by the loss of colleagues, family members or friends, or even by the stress and fatigue of maintaining high working standards in a time of crisis.

It was a learning experience for all of us, but I think we must be proud of the way in which we have met these challenges together.

Some of our responses have been institutional, mobilised via the Learning and Teaching Continuity Team (LTCT). Chaired by the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Education, Professor Jito Vanualailai, the LTCT brings together representatives from across the University — not only the Academic Units, but also Information Technology Services (ITS), Student Administrative Services, the Centre for Flexible Learning, the Library, Campus Directors, and the Students' Association.

In addition to overseeing the shift to virtual teaching, the LTCT saw through such initiatives as the toll-free USP Call Centre; Offline Print Packs; free access to USP learning platforms via Vodafone Fiji and Digicel Fiji; a laptop scheme offering subsidised laptops via the USP Book Centre; and the repurposing of Radio Pasifik for the broadcast of course learning materials.

These initiatives were invaluable, and I thank and commend all staff for their support in design and implementation.

For most students, however, it is the interactions with their teachers that will have defined their learning experience in 2021, and I have been continually impressed by the stories I have heard of teaching and support staff going beyond the call of duty to reach out to their students.

While the University was getting to grips with the technical and administrative challenges of moving to virtual teaching, these acts add a personal dimension to technology-driven learning.

It is at the local level, too, that many of our most striking innovations have emerged. From telephone examinations, to the use of optical character recognition (OCR) for handwritten assignments, to the design of podcast lectures for data-light and flexible learning, staff have repeatedly found inventive ways of rising to the challenges of virtual teaching.

The crisis is not yet over, and as we enter the 2022 teaching year, we reflect upon ways



in which we can learn from each other's experience and innovations.

The Office of the DVCE will continue to host monthly Learning and Teaching (L&T) Talanoa sessions, offering an informal space for staff to meet outside of the school setting, and to discuss problems faced and solutions found. If you would like to join this group, please email me (matthew.hayward@usp.ac.fj) and I will gladly include you in the invitation list.

We will also be launching an L&T Circular, to showcase initiatives and to share best practice across the University community. Continuing to open flows of exchange, and cooperating to identify barriers to teaching excellence, we look forward to bright futures ahead.

What is already clear to me from my interactions with the different sections of USP is that we have the talent and commitment that we need to thrive, as we commit to equitable learning across the region, leaving no student and no community behind.

Finally, then, I applaud all staff and students for the resilience, compassion, and dedication that you have shown in 2021. As we work together to provide future Pacific leaders with the best education we can give, it is these qualities that will take us from strength to strength.



Feature
article.

A journey from a remote, young student to conquering academia

Contributed by:

Dr Rosiana Lagi | Deputy Head of School, SPACE

My journey at The University of the South Pacific (USP) began in 1996 as a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) student majoring in Education, Language and Literature studying remotely from Lakeba, Lau (21-hour boat ride from Suva) with the hope of upgrading my qualification and improving my teaching practice, consequently transforming the lives of my young students.

In 1998, I joined the Laucala Campus with a scholarship funded by the Fijian Affairs Board to complete my Degree.

My Bachelor in Education (Secondary) also helped me acquire a scholarship and placement at the University of New England in New South Wales, Australia, to undertake a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics (MAAL). Discipline, commitment, determination, and skills learned during my undergraduate study days at the USP allowed me to complete my MAAL within a year.

These trainings moulded me into the Head of Department in Languages and eventually the Acting Assistant Principal at schools in Fiji and Australia. Learning relevant pedagogies and networking with educational experts were two of the many advantages of studying at USP. As a result, the caliber and prestige of the qualification I obtained opened up job and education prospects for me. Seeing many of the students I taught in high school complete their university studies and secure highly paid jobs was satisfying and rewarding.

In 2011, I earned another USP funded (Graduate Assistant) scholarship to complete a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education Programme. Learning was even more exciting this time because I was a part of the Graduate Assistantship Programme requiring me to teach at least eight hours each week. Two of the best the region could get, Professor Konai Thaman and Dr Cresantia Koya-Vakauta, supervised me.



**A USP
qualification
is a gateway
to a colourful
and rewarding
career.**



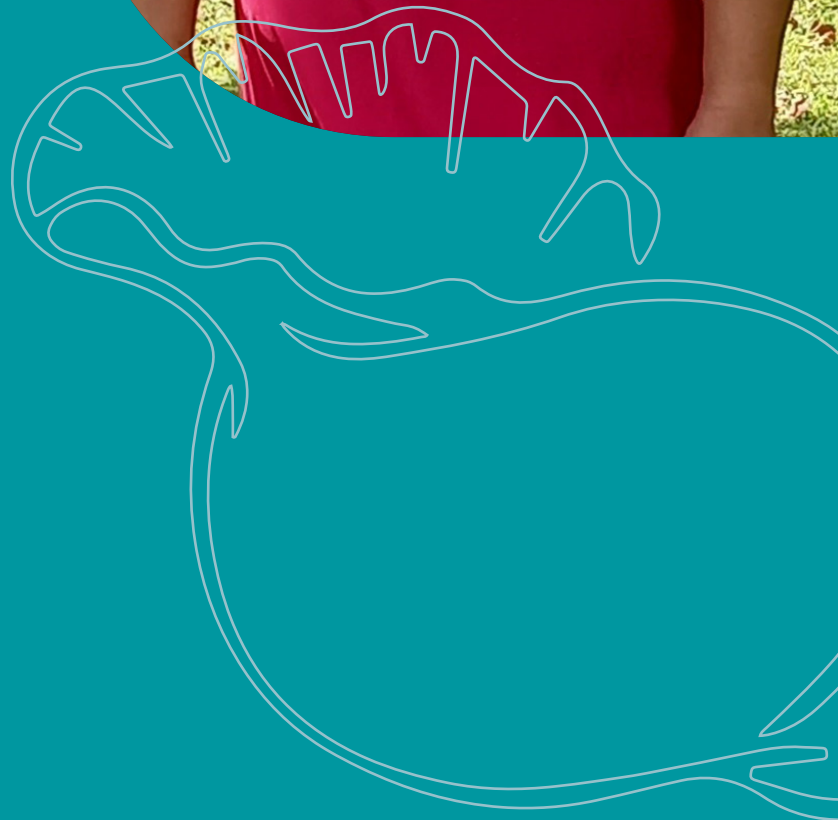
The coaching and support allowed me to graduate within the period required developing me into the educator I am today. After completing my PhD, I was ready to conquer the world of academia to educate teachers in Fiji and the region, investigating current issues, and transforming the lives of students and the communities I served.

My current research areas include literacy, indigenous knowledge systems—specifically traditional ecological knowledge of climate change adaptation education and quality education. My interest in these topics grew during my undergraduate years at the USP and flourished during her PhD and USP academic journey, leading to my promotions from Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer, Campus Director, and now Senior Lecturer and Deputy Head of School Learning, Teaching, and Quality at the School of Pacific Arts, Communications, and Education (SPACE).

A USP qualification is a gateway to a colourful and rewarding career. It is internationally recognised, which led to my selection as the Country Lead for the ClimateU - Transforming Universities for a Changing Climate Research Project, which is supported by UKRI and collaborates with major universities in the UK, Mozambique, Brazil, Kenya, and Fiji.

Did you ever believe that one-day learning courses remotely from the USP would take the voices of our people, people from Fiji and the region through videos to COP26? Apart from teaching and graduating untrained teachers in Fiji and the region, being a voice for our people in international meetings was one of the highlights of my career.

Again, this could not have resulted without the networks developed during my tenure as a student at the USP. Today, I am working on mentoring USP students to be better academics and researchers in their different areas of interest, more so responsible and resilient citizens.



Feature
article.

USP Pacific TAFE navigates the challenges of remaining relevant in the tourism industry



Contributed by:

Nilesh Kumar | Head of College of Continuing Vocational Education and Training



Students have been assigned for workplace attachment since Fiji's international borders opened to tourists in December.

The recent COVID-19 outbreak wreaked havoc on the small island nations of the South Pacific, with many still struggling to recover. GDP per capita growth in Pacific Island countries fell from -0.7 per cent in 2019 to -14.5 per cent in 2020 (GDP per Capita Growth (Annual per cent) - Pacific Island Small States | Data, 2021). Many of these Pacific Island nations saw a significant decline in tourism arrival numbers because of the closure of international borders, reducing tourism revenue.

For tourism and hospitality students, the last twenty months have been the most difficult and stressful. Despite these obstacles, The University of the South Pacific's (USP) Pacific TAFE remained committed to its students and the industry at large. While theoretical portions of the course were being taught remotely, everyone awaited the return to campus for skills training. Pacific TAFE commenced skills training as soon as the campus reopened in October 2021, bringing students back to its training facilities in Laucala and Nadi allowing pupils to complete their skill training and evaluations by the end of the year. Students have been assigned for workplace attachment since Fiji's international borders opened to tourists in December.

With the COVID-19 pandemic immediately impacting most activities, Tourism and Hospitality Programmes Coordinator, Pasirio Kitione said alternative methods of teaching were developed to ensure that students learning remained relevant and current.

"As with many of the hospitality programmes across the world, our skills training components were directly affected and no amount of YouTube videos or Q&A sessions and forums could match skills sessions that are demonstrated, replicated, practised and assessed in real-time.

"Lockdowns and the online learning mode became an opportunity to edit and revise our knowledge areas for



all our programmes. While we planned and delivered activities online, we also prepared for the skills components in 'face-to-face' mode.

"The online experience confirmed the capability and scope of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in competency-based training. The incorporation of technology and ICT into the programme enhanced content access, student learning, assessments and data management and meant that learning content, learning outcomes and standards could be tailored to be specific and relevant at all times."

While online learning has been pivotal in allowing programmes to continue despite the pandemic, tourism and hospitality students are now looking to the future for opportunities extending beyond the digital sphere.

Taianui Smith, a Certificate III in Commercial Cookery student said that while the pandemic has been tough on the industry, he looks forward to the reopening of borders.

"The pandemic has emphasised that the hospitality industry being a global industry is susceptible to uncertainty but I am hopeful that things will get back to 'normal'.

"Online learning kept me up to date with my programme. The hospitality programme at USP Pacific TAFE was one of the very few ones at the University that offered face-to-face classes from October 2021 allowing my peers and me to complete skills training and assessments in preparation for industry-based workplace training.

"With the reopening of borders, the opportunity to train and seek employment means that I can continue to develop my skills and work towards getting international experience so that I can pursue my goal of operating my Fijian based food business."

Preity Ram, a Certificate IV in Hospitality Operations (Events, Front Office, Food & Beverage) student said, "The border closures confirmed that my industry, hospitality, is vulnerable to the global market forces. I know of the loss of foreign exchange to Fiji and the thousands of jobs across the country".

She added that she now looks forward to opportunities that would allow her to venture into business.

"The opening up of borders have allowed me to complete this phase of my training and where I can look to the industry for work opportunities. I intend to enrol on the Diploma of Hospitality Management (Level 5) programme in semester



2, 2022. Ultimately, with my training and experience, I will venture into a small and medium-sized enterprise or SME and operate an event or food business."

Pacific TAFE now anticipates the start of the new academic year and the introduction of a new Australian qualification, SIT40416 Certificate IV in Hospitality, as well as short training and upskilling opportunities for the industry at the Nadi Hospitality & Tourism Training Centre (NHTTC) and Laucala Campus.

With the short training addressing specialist areas, it is hoped that the introduction of these programmes will foster professionalism within the industry, allowing career growth and employment prospects for Pacific hospitality employees.



Humans
of USP.

USP alumnus gives back to the university and community

Our alumni.

**Charlotte
Taylor**

Assistant Lecturer
at the School of
Accounting, Finance,
and Economics
(SAFE)

A USP alumnus is making waves by returning to the University as an academic staff member and encouraging women and girls in the community.

Charlotte Taylor is an Assistant Lecturer at the School of Accounting, Finance, and Economics (SAFE) and is the immediate past president of Graduate Women Fiji (GWF) which she has been a member of for ten years.

“Most importantly, I am the mother of two beautiful daughters who bring me so much joy and purpose in my life,” she added.

Ms Taylor attributes her success to USP’s qualifications and training, which helped her obtain practical skills and knowledge in accounting and finance while also enhancing her soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving. These characteristics have aided her in developing confidence in herself and the field, as well as growing her social network.

“Making impactful change not only in Fiji but throughout the region is surely a blessing for me, and I am happy that my talents and gifts have been used for the betterment of USP,” she said.

Ms Taylor described many memorable moments at USP, such as being a part of the pioneering team developing online courses and presenting at international conferences. However, her main highlight has been chairing the DEIC for the past three years.

She expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate with Dr Akanisi Kedrayate to deliver anti-sexual and anti-bullying workshops across all USP Campuses, which is a first for the University.

“In addition to our learning and teaching responsibilities at USP, we have completed several groundbreaking projects.



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we facilitated a number of workshops on-site at the Lautoka, Labasa, Laucala, and Emalus Campuses, including presentations at first-year orientation programmes,” Ms Taylor added.

“Because of the pandemic, we started holding these workshops virtually with the regional campuses via zoom.”

Ms Taylor said these workshops send a strong message that USP has zero-tolerance for any form of sexual harassment and bullying saying, “We have procedures and policies to ensure that reporting is fair for both staff and students”.

“We are also piloting questionnaires using Moodle/Survey Monkey, and these questionnaires will gauge the level of understanding and experiences of harassment and bullying at the University within the various campuses,” she added.

Ms Taylor believes that her work goes beyond USP empowering both male and female students and staff to become agents of change when it comes to witnessing and experiencing bullying and sexual harassment.

She collaborates with GWF to encourage more women and girls to pursue higher education and careers in Science, Technology, and Engineering (STEM). She added that GWF is composed of strong USP women alumni.

Ms Taylor is passionate about women and education, and is of the view that education is the only way to lift women out of poverty helping them become financially independent.

“We have partnered with various organisations. Through GWF, I can put my passion into action in Fiji’s communities and schools. For students in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, we offer scholarships, career workshops, mentoring programmes, and science camps,” she added.

When asked about her advice to fellow alumni, this is what she had to say.

“One thing I’ve learned over the years is that your most valuable asset is your network. Develop positive professional and personal networks early in your career, and have a good mentor as part of it - mentors can provide advice based on first-hand experience to help develop leadership abilities, as well as offer their connections and networks to help advance your career.”



Making impactful change not only in Fiji but throughout the region is surely a blessing for me, and I am happy that my talents and gifts have been used for the betterment of USP



Our students.

Ollie Mangi Zoti

Third-year Bachelor of
Law student

Ollie Mangi Zoti, a third-year Bachelor of Law student from the Solomon Islands, is studying at USP's Laucala Campus in Suva. Ollie shared her experience at the University, stating that, aside from feeling nervous jitters in her first two weeks as a new student at the institution, she has already acclimatised to the Campus and feels at home.

She stated that her three years at University have helped her understand more about herself and evolve with time. Ollie adds that studying in a rich and culturally diverse institution was daunting at first, but it has taught her to coexist with others, which has been refreshing in some ways.

The 23-year-old stated that the quality of education she received at USP, particularly in her programme, was relevant to the Pacific, allowing graduates to build and improve the region with the knowledge they obtained during their time at USP.

Ollie says that USP has also prepared her well for the workforce by teaching her how to manage her time, work under pressure, and be open to other people's perspectives and opinions. She believes that these abilities will come in helpful when she enters the workforce.

The Solomon Islands lass went on to say that, while she is still a few years away from graduating, her three years in Laucala have brought her many positive improvements. The availability of support services at the University has bolstered her academic journey.



"I have to give kudos to the University's assortment of teaching and learning facilities, from the many computer laboratories, libraries, and not to mention the outdoor bures, we truly have it all. Everything you need to complete your classes is literally at your fingertips," added Ollie.

She further noted the level of cooperation and effort demonstrated by students to complete projects and prepare as a wonderful component of studying at USP.

Furthermore, Ollie adds that her whole experience at USP has been incredible, citing one highlight of her academic path as being a part of the Campus Life First Year Experience Buddy Programme and participating in their teambuilding events. She has made numerous friends and has thoroughly enjoyed her time away from the classroom as a result of this programme.

Ollie believes that the quality of teaching at USP is impressive, and that the institution's great cultural array is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. As a result, she intends to continue her studies at USP by obtaining a Masters in Law, and she recommends USP to people searching for a tertiary institution in the Pacific.



**I have to give kudos
to the University's
assortment of teaching
and learning facilities.**

Hot
Topic.

Aligning education programmes to society's needs

The quality of education and teaching remains a priority for The University of the South Pacific.

Recently, the School of Pacific Arts, Communications, and Education's (SPACE) Education Discipline held a three-day workshop involving all programme Course Coordinators from the Laucala and regional campuses to discuss and ensure quality in students' programmes.

The Education staff collaborated with the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Human Resources during the three-day workshop to strengthen its programmes to meet society's needs and aspirations and identify the appropriate academic staff to provide quality teaching and research services.

According to the Executive Director, People and Workforce Strategy, Mr Maritino Nemani, academic staff is a priority.

He said that hiring relevant staff to provide effective teaching, research and support for our students in crucial and one of their key roles.

Deputy Head of School (Learning, Teaching & Quality) at the SPACE and Chair of the workshop, Dr Rosiana Lagi, said workshop was timely as the Education Discipline reflects on the year's work and strategies for the new academic year.

She also commended the staff for their work throughout the year.



"Despite COVID-19 and its issues, the team continued to research and publish two series of the Directions Journal. In addition, they were also able to teach and assist students remotely whilst maintaining the quality of the courses and the pass rate," Dr Lagi said.

"One thing we have learnt this year is that we need each other's support to beat anything in life."

She also expressed her gratitude to the Head of School, Professor Sudesh Mishra, and the SPACE team for their support in ensuring the success of 2021.

"I joined SPACE in January 2021, but the tremendous support I received from the Head of School and the staff have helped me smile through this difficult year. I thank all the staff, students and my family for their great work and support and wish everyone a fantastic 2022," she said.

The workshop also provided an opportunity for the Education Discipline to meet Mr Ruveni Gacala, their new Accreditation Officer. He spoke on approaches to improve education programme outcomes in order to reward excellence in their courses, consequently adding value and credibility to education programmes.



Hot
Topic.

School literacy projects succeed when relationships, indigenous expertise and culture are prioritised



for all of these good works to be sustainable, it has to “speak to the heart”.

In November, the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Institute of Education (IOE) released a new research paper that outlines crucial variables underpinning effective school literacy programmes in Pacific countries.

The paper, titled Literacy Research: People and Context, was unveiled at simultaneous gift-giving ceremonies in the Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, and Tonga. In response to the gifts, representatives from the Ministries and Departments of Education from the various islands expressed their delight and honour at receiving the report.

The report, commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade was carried out by USP's IOE in collaboration with researchers from the University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington.

Investment in relationships of reciprocity, respect for culture, and the use of indigenous methodologies was among the key factors identified as essential for projects to raise literacy learning outcomes at schools and sustain gains over time.

The University of Auckland, Associate Professor Rebecca Jesson and Victoria University of Wellington, Associate Professor Kabini Sanga gave an overview of the study, identifying what they considered the highlights of the work conducted.

Dr Jesson discussed the use of “weaving” to articulate the information they had received so that rather than a “linear” manner of reporting, they had to consider multiple elements/strands concerning language, literacy development, the classroom, teachers, pedagogy, and engagement, to weave meanings.

Dr Sanga highlighted that for all of these good works to be sustainable, it has to “speak to the heart”.

“After many years of engaging in this development space, to witness this moment of affirmation was most empowering and exciting for him,” he said.



Mr Okesene Moananu (right) of MFAT gifting the report to the Secretary of Education, Ms Danielle Cochrane.

He stated, “I am excited at creating new paths while still being on this journey.”

Speaking at the gift-giving (luva) in Tonga, New Zealand High Commissioner Her Excellency, Tiffany Babington, said she was “delighted to be supporting such important work because improving education outcomes is a high priority for New Zealand in our support for the Pacific”.

She went on to say, “New Zealand supports the purpose and approach of the Pacific Regional Education Research Framework – growing the Pacific’s research and evidence base to understand Pacific contexts and world views more deeply. An approach which emphasises the importance of respect for the mana of each nation”.

She reflected on the importance of cultivating quality relationships, embedding Pacific-led solutions, frameworks and approaches, and voiced their need to grow in their knowledge of these approaches.

The New Zealand High Commission’s First Secretary in the Cook Islands, Mr Okesene Moananu, and Counsellor at the New Zealand High Commission in the Solomon

Islands, Ms Kate Bradlow, spoke highly of the report and its intentions.

The research explored three school literacy and leadership projects delivered in Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Tonga over 2015-2021. Each of the projects was funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and were implemented by a consortium involving IOE, the University of Auckland and, the Fellowship of Faithful Mentors in the Solomon Islands.

Each of the projects achieved strong results in improving student literacy learning outcomes, strengthening school leadership, and enhancing school-community partnerships. The research utilised Pacific research methodologies, including talanoa and tok stori, and worked collaboratively with project participants and stakeholders to determine the key factors contributing to project success.

The full report is available at: www.usp.ac.fj/ioe



Recap.

Ridge to Reef Programme

The Republic of Marshall Islands's (RMI) Ridge to Reef Programme is offering four scholarships to students to complete their Postgraduate Diploma in Islands and Ocean Stewardship at the USP Marshall Islands Campus.

Semester Zero

A one-of-a-kind initiative and a first-of-its-kind programme in the Pacific, Semester Zero was launched for provisional and potential first-year students to learn more about the University and get a "feel" of university life.

Pacific TAFE Partial Scholarships

USP Pacific TAFE has launched an initiative allowing students to receive a partial scholarship covering up to 50% of tuition costs.

Mark the date.

FEBRUARY 2022

Our USP Samoa Team will be visiting schools to help students fill out application forms, get a better understanding of programme offered at USP and talk about life as a tertiary student.

14 – 18 Feb

ENROLMENT ROADSHOW, FIJI

19

Enrolment Fair is a great opportunity for those in the Central Division to meet the Laucala Campus staff, tour the Campus, collect offer letters and ENROL!

28 Feb – Mar 12

SEMESTER 1: POSTGRADUATE ADMISSION

28

A great opportunity for students to meet with employers and discuss internship and possibly recruitment for future employment, Careers Planning assistance and employability skills which include, Resume/CV, Cover Letter Writing, Interview Skills and so much more.

14

SCHOOL VISITS, SAMOA

Visit USP's Fiji Roadshow Team around the country to collect your offer letter, complete applications and meet the dynamic team!

19 – 26 Feb

28

ENROLMENT FAIR, FIJI

Postgraduate Admission Application Deadline for students new to USP and students resuming after a lapse of six semesters. Late application shall not be permitted.

28

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