

## in this issue ▾



3

STUDENTS TO BENEFIT FROM NEW  
FACILITIES AT USP COOK ISLANDS CAMPUS



5

PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN  
CIVIL SERVICE DELIVERY



7

OPEN DAY DISPLAY WINNERS

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**Next issue** - September 2012



The Ambassador of Japan to Fiji, His Excellency Mr  
Eiichi Oshima gives his address at the Open Day.

## OPEN DAY ATTRACTS THOUSANDS

The 2012 University of the South Pacific Open Day on 10 August, attracted over 10,000 high school students and members of the public at the University's campuses around the country who took the opportunity to find out what USP is all about.

This important annual event took place simultaneously at the Laucala, Lautoka and Labasa campuses as well as in regional campuses located in Vanuatu, Samoa, Kiribati and Nauru.

At the main USP campus in Laucala, around 76 schools with over 7500 students visited the University's academic faculties, schools and support facilities to get first hand information on courses, student support services and to experience campus life.

The official opening ceremony was graced with the presence of government representatives including the Honourable Minister for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, Dr Jiko Luveni, diplomats, heads and representatives of CROP and international agencies, dignitaries, school principals, Open Day sponsors, school students and invited guests.

Speaking to a capacity crowd gathered at the opening ceremony, the Chief-Guest, Ambassador of Japan to Fiji, His Excellency Mr Eiichi Oshima highlighted that USP is a unique academic institution covering the Pacific region as it is jointly owned by governments of 12 member countries and supported by various partners including Japan.

The Ambassador said that USP has an extensive reach in the region and offers a wide range of programmes which provides the University with the perfect environment to deliver quality education with a variety of choice and diversity.

He pointed out to high school students that the diversity of staff and students at USP will give them an incomparable experience in understanding and appreciating the differences among people such as ethnicity, religious and racial backgrounds as well as cultural and traditional and geographical origins.

He stated that USP pursues to serve for the betterment of the Pacific communities and Japan is proud to be a partner of the University in such endeavors.

"USP and Japan have enjoyed excellent relationship and cooperation over the past decades, starting from the very first dispatch of fisheries experts to USP in 1980's. Japan is also

proud to have been a part of the University's efforts in laying infrastructural and intellectual framework for Distance and Flexible Learning under the USP ICT Human Development and Human Security Project."

The Ambassador urged potential students not to limit their interest to what they know but allow themselves to encounter new subjects and fields which is on offer at USP.

In welcoming those present at the opening ceremony, the Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Rajesh Chandra said that while the Open Day is a day of discovery for prospective students, it is also an opportunity to acknowledge the strong backing that the University enjoys from the community at large, including principals, sponsors and parents.

Professor Chandra acknowledged the generous assistance of Japan to USP and added that he is optimistic that this partnership will grow and strengthen even further.

Amongst those present at the Open Day also included the 2010 Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry, Professor Akira Suzuki from Japan. He is known for his discovery of the '*Suzuki Coupling*' reaction which is important in material science and is used in the preparation of pharmaceuticals.

"Professor Suzuki's presence here today is inspirational for all of us and I hope that the students will be especially inspired by his exceptional achievements," added Professor Chandra.

The Vice-Chancellor revealed that from 2013, USP will be embarking on a new phase of development marked by its transformation from being a good to an excellent University.

"This will mean even better learning facilities such as smart classrooms, roll-out of tablets for new students initially on a trial basis, much improved facilities at the regional campuses, greater opportunities for mixing with international students and going abroad for exchanges and greater opportunities for post-graduate studies," he mentioned.

He encouraged students to enjoy the day and explore USP's dynamic learning and living environment.

After the conclusion of the opening ceremony, school students were taken on guided tours of the University. The fun-filled day was wrapped up with entertainment from the USP Student Association's multi-cultural groups.





(left - right): The Manager HR Operations and Administration, Ms Agnes Kotoisuva, Fiji Cancer Society President, Ms Nirmala Nambiar, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Regional Campuses), Dr Esther Williams and USP Council Secretary, Ms Lily Vesikula at the Morning Tea hosted by USP in support of cancer patients.

## USP HOSTS *BIGGEST MORNING TEA*

People turned up in numbers to be part of the University of the South Pacific's Biggest Morning Tea event in aid of the Fiji Cancer Society held at the Laucala Campus on 8 August, 2012.

The initiative, which has become a major annual fundraiser over the past few years, helped raise more than F\$2400 from the contributions of invited guests, staff and students of the University.

The money raised from the Bushells Fiji's Biggest Morning Tea allows the Fiji Cancer Society to carry out awareness programmes and help support cancer patients in Fiji.

The event has been held at various venues around the country from 9 July to 15 August to raise funds.

Fiji Cancer Society President, Ms Nirmala Nambiar, who was the Chief Guest, said she was honored to be invited and thanked the USP for its support and keen interest toward the initiative in working with the Fiji Cancer Society.

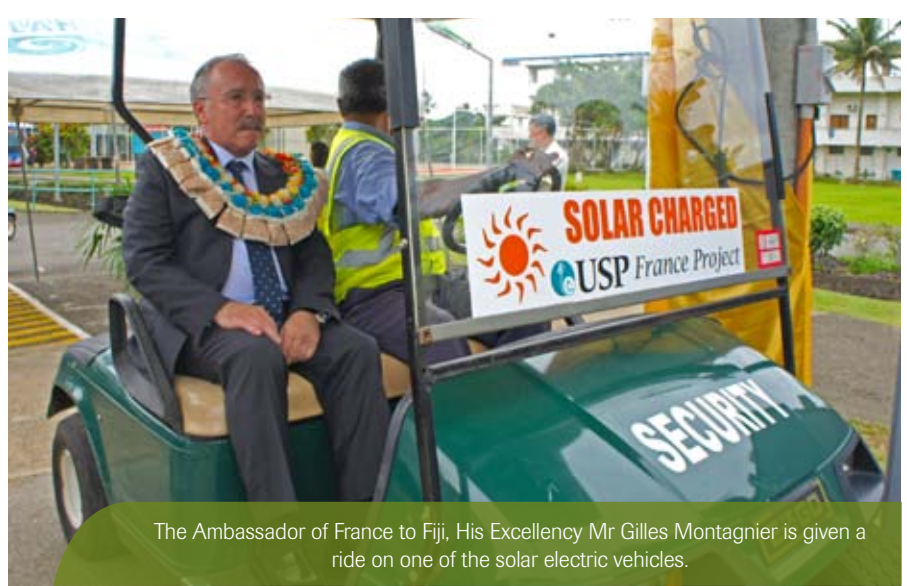
"The reason for organizing this is because once we sit around a cup of tea there are so many stories that come about. So something like this brings out the different stories and this is what it our communities are supposed to be - to learn to accept people whatever phase in lives they are going through," she explained.

"Somewhere, someone amongst our friends and family members has been touched by somebody with cancer and coming around a cup of tea and sharing the feelings and emotions of other people is important to us and we just want to have a casual atmosphere to talk about this topic," Ms Nambiar continued.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Regional Campuses), Dr Esther Williams shared that it was heart-warming to see the turnout and thanked everyone who made an effort to be present and for their contributions towards this worthy cause.

"I thank you all very much for your presence and generous contributions to USP's Biggest Morning Tea 2012," said Dr Williams.

She also acknowledged Ms Nambiar for her efforts and commitment to the Fiji Cancer Society and revealed that the University had better plans for USP's Biggest Morning Tea in 2013.



The Ambassador of France to Fiji, His Excellency Mr Gilles Montagnier is given a ride on one of the solar electric vehicles.

## NEW SOLAR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING FACILITY

In its efforts to continue to tackle climate change impacts and to promote sustainable development through the use of renewable energy sources in the region, the University of the South Pacific in partnership with the Government of France commissioned a first-of-its kind solar electric vehicle charging station for Fiji.

The solar station was commissioned by the Ambassador of France to Fiji, His Excellency Mr Gilles Montagnier, and the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra at the University's Laucala Campus on 7 August, 2012.

The project, funded by the Government of France under the French Fund for Economic, Social and Cultural Cooperation in the Pacific aims to support development projects impacting the South Pacific region.

With a total value of the project amounting to more than F\$40,000, the Government of France further added to their contribution by donating two electric vehicles which will be used by the University's security personnel.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, H. E. Mr Montagnier highlighted the seriousness of the threat posed by climate change in the Pacific region.

"By supporting such a project, we aim at developing and promoting alternative sources of energy, contributing therefore in mitigating the effects of climate change in the region," he elaborated.

The Ambassador explained that renewable energies should be considered from an economic perspective as a solution to the rising cost of fuel and its impacts on island nations.

He stressed the need to promote alternative, sustainable and affordable sources of energy for all.

"USP as the leading research centre in the South Pacific is the best institution to carry out such projects. I am glad to be able to support USP and the youth of the South Pacific in the development of the skills and capacities," he added.

The solar station will also be used within the different curricula of the School of Engineering and Physics (SEP) at USP, in order to give a practical example of a solar station to the students studying its functions.

In his remarks, Professor Rajesh Chandra acknowledged the ongoing support that the Government of France has been providing to USP over the years in many different areas.

"In some areas the assistance by the French Government has been seminal, in a sense that the assistance from France was important in starting something that we are still continuing," said Professor Chandra, referring to the University's Journalism Programme.

He shared that USP has always benefitted from the generosity of the Government of France in promoting French language and culture and recently supporting a lot of scientific areas as well through collaboration with French institutions in the region.

"This area of renewable energy that you are funding is an area in which the region has a lot of interest but it is also an area in which USP as a scientific institution can help by doing research, benchmarking and quality control and conducting training," he mentioned.

Professor Chandra stated that renewable energy is an area that the University would like the Government of France to continue and expand their assistance.

The event was facilitated by the School of Engineering and Physics (SEP) of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment.

Another similar renewable energy project funded by the French Government and undertaken by the University under the leadership of the Head of SEP, Dr Atul Raturi, focuses on replacing kerosene or benzene lights with solar lights.

These solar lights are made available to different communities in Fiji through a micro-credit fund, which has a direct impact on the economy of these communities, enabling them to experience the benefit of direct application of the development of the solar technology in Fiji and the region.





(left - right): The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, AusAID's Minister-Counsellor based in Suva, Mr John Davidson, Cook Islands Minister of Finance Honourable Mark Brown and the Cook Islands Minister of Education, Honourable Teina Bishop.

## STUDENTS TO BENEFIT FROM NEW FACILITIES AT COOK ISLANDS CAMPUS

Students studying at the University of the South Pacific's Cook Islands campus can now look forward to better and improved learning experience following an upgrade to the campus in Rarotonga worth NZ\$600,000.

The new extension to the existing campus includes a conference room, a computer lab as well as a furnished reception area. The project was funded through the incentive funding provided by AusAID.

The extension was officially opened on 27 August 2012, by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, Cook Islands Minister of Education, Honourable Teina Bishop and AusAID's Minister-Counsellor based in Suva, Mr John Davidson.

During the opening ceremony, Professor Chandra thanked Australia for providing the funding as well as the Government of Cook Islands for its continuing support of the University.

He said that the extension was a timely one as the University had a physical presence in the Cook Islands since 1975 occupying the same premises for the past 35 years.

Professor Chandra said "whereas it took 30 years to produce the first 100 USP Cook Islands graduates, more than 200 students have graduated in-country at the USP Cook Islands campus over the past 10 years."

The Vice-Chancellor further remarked that "USP recognizes the fact that it has been undergoing rapid renewal both in Suva, around the region and in the Cook Islands. In the Cook Islands, this renewal commenced with the delivery of an increasing number of degree programs in-country. These degree programs have been targeted to meet national training needs and have been focussed, primarily on education, economics, accountancy, business administration, hotel management, diplomacy and international affairs, agriculture and information systems."

Currently students in the outer islands comprise

30 percent of USP Cook Islands enrolments - a number which is proportionate to outer islanders' representation in the national population.

Professor Chandra also acknowledged the good work done by Campus Director, Mr Rod Dixon and Mr Tevai Matapo, OBE, Chair, USP Cook Islands Advisory Committee and thanked them for their excellent effort in ensuring that USP serves the interests of the Cook Islanders in the area of higher education.

Honourable Teina Bishop paid tribute to the University for its on-going work in capacity building and higher education for Pacific states.

He was very pleased to see that the University (which he fondly referred to as the University of the Special People of the region) was offering an increasing number of professional qualifications in-country such as the Masters in Business Administration; and an increasing number of other post graduate programs.

The Minister further said that USP has contributed greatly to the development of Cook Islands.

"It provides opportunity to students to study while working. They don't even have to leave the country and their families; and it also provides cost effective and quality education."

In his remarks, Mr John Davidson said that Australia was pleased to provide assistance towards the extension of the campus.

Australia has supported USP since its establishment in 1968. It recognizes that USP, as a Pacific regional organization, has an important role to play in the development of the Pacific. The extension has been provided in recognition of the important role the University plays in the development of human capacity in the Cook Islands as well as throughout the University's 12 member countries.

Mr Davidson remarked that "the facility will help to enrich the study experience of students undertaking their studies here and contribute both

to the development of in-country tertiary education and the further development of the Cook Islands."

As well as annually sponsoring around 400 students from the region to study at USP, Mr Davidson said that the Australian Government will further assist in the development of USP regional campuses to assist students to study in their home countries.

He added that Australia is very pleased to learn of the high numbers of student graduating in-country and the increasing number of students undertaking professional and academic post graduate qualifications in-country.

The Minister of Finance Honourable Mark Brown also spoke on behalf of the Government and said that being an alumnus of University by obtaining his MBA not too long ago, he was grateful to the University as it allows students to study while employed and without leaving the country.

Honourable Mark Brown said that his Government supports the direction USP is taking in serving the region in terms of providing high quality and accessible higher education as well as assisting the Pacific which is highly important and critical to the region.

He challenged USP to work with Cook Islands Ministry of Education to help assist school leavers to obtain tertiary education.

The opening was attended by Honorable Ministers for Education, Finance and Health, members of the Aronga Mana, church leaders, members of Parliament, members of the diplomatic corps, Chair and members of the USP Cook Islands Advisory Committee, Campus Director and staff, media representatives, alumni, USPSA representatives, educators, and students.

The Vice-Chancellor was accompanied by the Director, Development, Marketing and Communications, Mr Jindra Karan, who were both in Rarotonga attending the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meetings.



## UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM OF SMALL ISLAND STATES MEETING

(left - right) Manager Learning Systems, Mr Dhiraj Bhartu, UCSIS Program Committee member from the University of Malta, Professor Lino Briguglio, UCSIS Consultant, Ms Denise Forrest, UCSIS Program Committee member from the University of Mauritius, Professor Virendra Proag, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Seychelles and Deputy Chair of Board of Trustees, Professor Marina Confait, the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP and the Chair of Board of Trustees, Professor Rajesh Chandra and the UCSIS Coordinator and International Secretariat Institute for Sustainable Development, Dr David Smith.

The University of the South Pacific hosted a meeting of the board of trustees of the University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS) on 24 July 2012.

The meeting of the Trustees was preceded by the Programmes Committee of the Board chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment, Dr Anjeela Jokhan and the IT Committee chaired by Mr Dhiraj Kumar Bhartu.

The UCSIS is a consortium of universities of small states which consists of the University of the West Indies, USP, Univerisad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria, University of Malta, University of Mauritius, University of Seychelles, University of Virgin Islands and has been formed to promote cooperation among south and south-east institutions.

Its initial objective has been to foster cooperation by developing and offering a masters programme in sustainable development in small states. Activities so far have been funded by the UN DESA from a grant made by the Government of Spain.

The meeting of the board was to review the work of the Programme Committee as well as the IT Committee and to review the proposed composition regulations and associated details of the Masters in Sustainable Development programme.

The Board was satisfied with the work of both the Programmes Committee and the IT Committee and

agreed in broad terms with the outline with the structure of the proposed Masters programme.

It agreed that the beginning of the offering of the course would be that both the University of the West Indies and USP would seek approval from their respective committees for the institution of such a joint degree and each university would offer that programme in association with the other universities where appropriate.

While some issues remain to be worked out before this approval is sought, the board accepted a plan where both the University of the West Indies and USP would obtain their respective approval by October this year and begin to offer the programmes from the middle of next year.

The programme will be offered online with in-country support for thesis supervision. The Board was satisfied that the 80 platform is operational now and that the system would begin receiving materials from now onwards and test the system fully before the students begin to use the system for their programme.

The UCSIS Secretariat is located at the University of the West Indies for the first period and discussions will take place in terms of locating the Secretariat at USP after the programme has been launched.

The board also decided that UCSIS would renew its UNITWIN Agreement with UNESCO as this has

provided a useful relationship where UNESCO has offered opportunities for UCSIS to promote its work at an important forum.

The meeting of the board of the trustees was chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, who said that the UCSIS represents an important networking opportunity as well as an important capacity building opportunity for all of the universities of small island states.

"I am very pleased that USP's playing a large role in this consortium. It is in the university's interest to develop and enhance its linkages with universities in similar situations and the offer of a new degree Masters in Sustainable Development represents a new opportunity for USP to reach out beyond the Pacific Islands," he added.

Professor Chandra thanked all the people involved from all the universities and the initial development work and the very detailed activities involved in getting the proposed degree organised to the point where it is ready to be considered for approval.

"It was a privilege for the University of the South Pacific to host this meeting with representatives of many universities in small island states and we look forward to enhancing this co-operative project," he further mentioned.

The next meeting of the board is expected to be in February 2013.

## TALKS ON DISABILITY RIGHTS FOR AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

A panel discussion on Disability Rights for an Inclusive Society was hosted by the University of the South Pacific on 2 August, 2012.

This was part of the high level consultations on Disability Inclusive Development in the Pacific by AusAID's Disability Reference Group which involved meeting with national, regional and international stakeholders working to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

The Australian Government through AusAID collaborated with USP to bring together senior international and Pacific leaders in disability rights and inclusive development.

The panelists included members of the Disability Reference Group and regional specialists working to enhance the lives of people with disabilities.

In his opening address, the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra affirmed that the University supports the provisions for disability

rights for inclusive society.

"The University recognises the needs of people with disabilities and places much emphasis on providing an inclusive environment which promotes equality, values, diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected," he added.

The Vice-Chancellor made particular mention of USP's Disability Inclusion Plan which, when finalized, will include commitments to appointing academic advisors for disability in each faculty and ensuring accessibility of facilities.

The five-member panel shared their experiences and lessons learnt, and offered ideas on how the barriers that still exist can be reduced to enable people with disabilities the same opportunities as others.



# PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN CIVIL SERVICE DELIVERY

The Fiji Public Service Commission (PSC) recently signed a partnership agreement with the Pacific Islands Centre for Public Administration (PICPA) and the Regional Centre for Continuing and Community Education (RCCCE) of the University of the South Pacific, enabling PSC to seek technical and training assistance to improve service delivery through establishments of the Service Fiji Centres (SFCs).

The SFCs are aimed at improving Government's service to the public.

The agreement was signed on 25 July, 2012 between the Permanent Secretary of PSC, Mr Pramesh Chand and the newly appointed Director of PICPA, Mr Siosiaua 'Utoikamanu.

Speaking at the signing which was held at the USP Statham Campus in Suva, Mr 'Utoikamanu said PICPA views its contribution to the training programme of the staff of the SFCs as part of an on-going partnership with PSC towards the overall objective of raising the level of individual competency of the public service with the goal of improving the delivery of services to the peoples of Fiji.

"PICPA's mission is to provide sound and timely advice and services, such as trainings to improve workforce development capabilities and the individual competencies of civil servants," he continued.

PICPA was established in 2010 as a result of the recognition by AusAID and USP, following consultations with Pacific Island Countries (PICs) that the civil services of these countries faced various challenges which inhibited the achievement of national development goals.

One of the key challenges, according to the PICPA Director, is the need to strengthen the capacities of the civil services to design and implement coherent public policies.

This challenge, he said is being addressed by PICPA by strengthening the capability of the civil services of PICs to fulfill their mandates through the development of individual competencies (including knowledge, skills and attitudes) linked to organizational capabilities.

Mr 'Utoikamanu acknowledged the contribution by the staff of RCCCE and PICPA in designing and delivering the training programme as well as the strong support provided by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP,



The Permanent Secretary of PSC, Mr Pramesh Chand (left) and the Director of PICPA, Mr Siosiaua 'Utoikamanu (right) at the signing.

Professor Rajesh Chandra, in setting up PICPA at USP.

There are currently 25 officers who have started with the first module of the training programme.

Mr Chand said that not only those participating in the training are benefitting but the whole exercise has been an eye-opener for the PSC trainers as well.

"The diagnostic tests and other learning tools that have been used by USP, to design the course, has contributed greatly to the work of our own trainers," he added.

Mr Chand said that while only 25 participants took part in the training, the impact will not be confined to them only.

"It will cascade down to the thousands of customers that will be served at the SFC counters."

The Permanent Secretary acknowledged the vast contribution of AusAID and USP, and for allowing the Commission to come on board and be part of the regional programme.

"This has been a milestone for the Commission, and indeed, we could not have done this without AusAID, PICPA and USP," he stated.

SFCs are expected to open in Suva, Nausori, Labasa and Lautoka by the end of the year.

## GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE AND USP EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS

The French Government and the University of the South Pacific recently exchanged agreements of two newly signed projects worth around F\$59,000.

The projects, which were selected under the French Pacific Fund Programme, aimed at addressing two very important issues in the region - Climate Change and Pacific Heritage.

The agreements were exchanged between the French Ambassador to Fiji, His Excellency Mr Gilles Montagnier and the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra at the USP Laucala Campus in Suva on 27 July, 2012.

The first project is titled, '*Processing and Monitoring of Climate-Change data for Coral Reefs of the Fiji Islands*' and the second one is '*Connecting Moana: the Common Heritage of Pacific Islanders*,' which focuses on the development of a joint curriculum for undergraduate studies in history of the Pacific.

During the exchange ceremony, Professor Chandra highlighted that the two projects, "will provide USP with the opportunity to build on its capacity to deliver climate change research by having available climate change data on coral reefs and to also allow USP to be a leader and a centre of excellence in the region for Pacific studies.

Professor Chandra emphasized the need to have current climate change data for research purposes as this would assist in developing policies for vulnerable communities in the region.

He further stressed the need to safeguard, enhance and promote Pacific heritage as it portrays Pacific uniqueness.

The Vice-Chancellor assured the French Ambassador that USP is committed to implementing these two projects in a timely manner.

"We also welcome any future opportunity to work closely with the French

government through its embassy in Fiji on projects or programmes that will benefit the region and link us closely to France and her territories in the region," he added.

In his remarks, H. E. Mr Montagnier shared that USP occupies a very unique place in the South Pacific, being the state-of-the-art research and educational institution of the region.

"The exchange of agreements is a testimony of our commitment to back this institution," the French Ambassador said.

He added that, "by handing over the two grant agreements to USP, the French Government is proud to be able to contribute to the development of the South Pacific, the research capacities of USP and ultimately, the development of the skills of the youth from the South Pacific."

The Ambassador explained that the first project which looks at strengthening the monitoring of climate change effects on coral reefs in Fiji will provide a better understanding of this issue which affects the lives of people in the Pacific.

H. E. Mr Montagnier further elaborated that the other project will allow the coordination of the work of many universities such as USP, the French universities of New Caledonia and of French Polynesia, as well as universities from the North-Pacific and Australia, in order to focus on the history of the Pacific common to both the French territories and the English countries.

"By doing so, it will then contribute to a better understanding between these territories of common history and culture and so strengthen their regional integration," he stated.

The first project will be implemented by the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment and the second one will be carried out by the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education.

# NOBEL PRIZE WINNER VISITS USP

The 2010 Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry, Professor Akira Suzuki visited the University of the South Pacific during his stay in Fiji from 6 - 11 August, 2012.

During his visit, Professor Suzuki gave a series of public lectures and met with staff and students of the University.

He was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize award by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. His work on the cross-coupling reaction of an organic boron compound using palladium as a catalyst has grown as a field with profound impact on catalytic chemistry and material science as well as synthetic chemistry.

Since then he developed a new research topic globally recognised as the '*Suzuki coupling reaction*'. The reaction allows extensive universality and practicality, and has been used for the synthesis of many biologically active natural products, including pharmaceutical preparation.

In his lectures, Professor Suzuki emphasized the importance of chemistry, pointing out that, chemistry is a vital area, which if harnessed well, can benefit a nation economically.

"I think that science is very important for students at



university, especially chemistry. We can make many important materials by using different techniques in chemistry," he added.

A native of Hokkaido Japan, Professor Suzuki, has worked in many countries around the world including China, Taiwan and U.K.

Professor Suzuki believes that new discoveries in medicine can be made from the plants found in Fiji by using chemistry. These medicinal chemicals produced from plants can even be exported to help progress the country's economy, he mentioned.

His public lecture on '*Receiving the Nobel Prize in Chemistry*' was delivered in front of a record crowd where the participants were able to hear the personal experiences of Professor Suzuki.

According to Dr David Rohindra, a senior lecturer in chemistry, this was probably the first for USP host a Nobel Prize winner in chemistry.

He added that Professor Suzuki's visit gave a very rare opportunity to present and future chemists of Fiji to meet in person with him.

Professor Suzuki also attended the University's Open Day which was held on 10 August.

## TEACHERS RECEIVE TRAINING ON USE OF LAPTOPS

In an effort to promote education and keep on par with technology, the University of the South Pacific (USP) in partnership with the Fiji Ministry of Education and the Bank of the South Pacific embarked on the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) training for the three pilot schools' teachers.

The training which was formally opened on 20 August, 2012 by the OLPC Trainer and Consultant, Mr Ian Thomson at the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture and Pacific Studies

It was organised by the School of Education in the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE).

38 primary school teachers were trained during the two-week school break on how to use the digital laptops.

OLPC will open up new learning opportunities for Fijian children, introducing them to the Information Society and the world of Information Communication and Technology (ICT). There is a rich source of world class education resources available through the laptops and the internet which will prepare our students for the future.

USP's Dean of FALE, Dr Akanisi Kedrayate said there is a need for teachers to move into ICTs and e-learning from just using blackboard and chalks.

She said this was the first systematic training conducted in the region because the Government of Fiji was able to submit a well developed and detailed plan on the provision of laptops to the primary school children in the country.

"The Ministry of Education has produced a very good plan on how children of Fiji will be provided with a laptop each as well as how teachers and students will be trained to use the laptops," Dr Kedrayate said.

She acknowledged the support of the Bank of South Pacific in providing 1000 laptops as part of their corporate social responsibility to the Ministry of Education.

The training follows the Ministry of Education's plan to start the OLPC trial projects in Draiba Primary, Navesi Primary and Nabua Primary schools this year.

Senior Education Officer and MOE representative present at the official opening, Mr Narain Sharma said the Ministry has presented the concept of OLPC through papers and power



OLPC Trainer and Consultant, Mr Ian Thomson explains the use of the digital laptop.

point presentations at divisional school board meetings. He said the concept was also presented at the last Education Forum which is an advisory forum for the Minister of Education, Hon. Filipe Bole.

Mr Sharma thanked USP especially the School of Education for their contribution and support to this project.

Mr Thomson said, the laptops were designed specifically for children's use and understanding. Digital laptops such as these, he said, were first produced by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States of America and now there are more than 2.5 million deployed around the world.

He said the training was designed around the OLPC Australia Teacher Training framework to empower teachers to self-learn using the main training resource, called the Manual, via the school server. He stressed that the training was a time of learning as well as sharing as the teachers determined how they were going to use the laptops with the current school curriculum.

"The purpose of the training was to firmly establish the OLPC Pilot project in the three pilot schools through discussion and agreement on goals, strategies and implementation between the teachers and school officials, the Ministry of Education and USP. It is about getting teachers at a stage where they are comfortable with technology and with the use of laptops," said Mr Thomson.

Mr Thomson said that training enabled primary teachers to document an agreement establishing and running the OLPC pilots to the current school curriculum, be sufficiently trained to commence the pilot projects and understand the partnership and roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the project.



# OPEN DAY DISPLAY WINNERS

(left) Dr Jito Vanualailai and Dr Gurmeet Singh present the award for the 'Best Support Services Display' to Ms Renuka Singh who accepted the gift on behalf of the Library section.

(right) PVC (Planning and Quality), Dr Michael Gregory presents the award for the 'Best Academic Services Display' to Dr Bibhya Sharma from FSTE.

The University's Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment (FSTE) and the Library section were declared winners of an internal competition for best displays at this year's Open Day which was held on 10 August.

FSTE was awarded for the *Best Academic Services Display* while Library won the *Best Support Services Display*.

The announcement was made during a function on 17 August 2012, hosted by the Development, Marketing, Communications and Alumni Office to thank members of the Open Day Organising Committee, staff and student volunteers.

The Open Day is an important event in the University's calendar which is held once every year. It is aimed at ensuring that prospective students are made aware of the different programmes, courses and services provided by the University to enable them to make sound decisions regarding their future studies and career paths.

The Director of Development, Marketing, Communications and Alumni Office, Mr Jaindra Karan said that the function was to acknowledge the efforts and support of the USP community towards a successful Open Day.

Mr Karan explained that the internal competition was an initiative to encourage the faculties and support sections to try and better their displays every year. He added that while all the displays at this year's Open Day were outstanding the judges had to select the winners.

The winners were judged based on the following criteria:

- Reflection of and relevance to the Open Day theme;
- Information – access, readiness to assist and answer questions;
- Effort – how people were welcomed to the booths, how the crowds were handled and visibility of academic staff;
- Attractiveness – appeal, content flow, how many people were attracted to the displays at different times; and
- Innovation – creativeness of the displays, new/unusual elements if the departments were combined.

Mr Karan thanked everyone that participated in this year's Open Day and said that he anticipates that the same support will be given towards preparations for the event in the future.

The prizes were presented by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Quality), Dr Michael Gregory, the Director of Research, Dr Jito Vanualailai and Associate Professor Dr Gurmeet Singh from the Faculty of Business and Economics.

The competition was judged by a panel of judges comprising representatives from Westpac, Vodafone and Telecom Fiji Limited – three of the major sponsors for this year's Open Day.

## OPEN DAY INSPIRES STUDENTS

Over 7500 students from 76 secondary schools flocked to the 2012 University of the South Pacific (USP) Open Day at the Laucala Campus today to get the opportunity to explore their future options when it comes to higher education and choose their pathway to success.

The annual event, which always generates a lot of interest, had students come from all over the country and was held simultaneously at two other USP campuses in Fiji – Lautoka and Labasa as well as in regional campuses located in Vanuatu, Samoa, Kiribati and Nauru.

Over 2000 students from 16 schools were present at the Open Day for the Western Division in Lautoka, while around 1200 students from 9 schools visited the Labasa Campus.

On offer was information on the courses and programmes available at USP, displays by the different faculties and student support services, as well as entertainment and giveaway prizes for those that attended the Open Day.

Secondary school students got to learn about USP as the premier higher education institution in the region as well as enjoyed the informative tours provided by the University's student tour guides.

A Form six student of Richmond Methodist High School from Kadavu, Mr Sailasa Bereimi was pleased to see what USP offers.

He shared that after touring around the campus, he is convinced to pursue further education at USP.

"I have made up my mind that next year, I will not do Form seven. It's better to do foundation and transfer to degree-level studies," Mr Bereimi said.

Another student, Ms Ashlene Lata of Penang Sangam High School in Rakiraki shared similar sentiments.

"The Open Day has provided the opportunity for me to explore the courses and the programmes offered and I have found the day to be very educational, informative and interesting", she said.

"It has really helped me to decide on what I want to do in future," she added.

While many students had the chance to explore and enjoy the various activities at the fun-filled Open Day, for some it was also a huge learning experience and confidence boost.

Like for Ms Naomi Tawake, a Form six student at Ballantine Memorial School who said that the Open Day had broadened her knowledge.

"Since I'm a science student, coming to the Open Day is like a new experience for me as I got to learn something I did not know like Marine Studies," she explained.

Ms Tawake is also convinced that USP will be her first choice for studies after high school.

The 2012 USP Open Day also marked the start of enrolments for 2013.





## LAUTOKA CAMPUS HOSTS SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY

The city of Lautoka in the Western Division of Fiji was abuzz with activities as thousands of people attended the University of the South Pacific's Open Day held by its Lautoka Campus on 10-11 August, 2012.

Apart from Lautoka, the annual event took place simultaneously at the Labasa and the main Laucala campus as well as in regional campuses located in Vanuatu, Samoa, Kiribati and Nauru.

It was a very colorful and carnival-like atmosphere as students and people from all walks of life flocked to Shirley Park in Lautoka to make the most of this popular event.

Prospective students were able to get a feel of what it is like to study at the University and they made the most of this ideal opportunity to find out about the range of programmes and courses by engaging in one-on-one chat with academics and other support staff as well as talking to current USP students.

The event featured brilliant displays and demonstrations by the three faculties of the University – Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE), Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE) and Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment (FSTE). There were also informative exhibits from the Campus' library, Student Academic Services, Distance and Flexible Learning, Continuing and Community Education and the College of Foundation Studies. The USP Book Centre and USP Student Association were also present.

This year's Open Day was organised on a more

comprehensive scale and for the first time ever was conducted over two days to make it convenient for working-class-people to attend.

Participants were kept thoroughly entertained with multi-cultural items by students of USP and Jasper Williams High School and live broadcast by the Lautoka Campus media partner, Mix FM.

The Chief Guest at the Lautoka Campus Open Day was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Regional Campuses), Dr Esther Williams who emphasized that the presence of 54 high schools in the Western Division indicated a high demand for tertiary education in the division.

"The Western Division is also the economic heartland of Fiji, and is projected to grow rapidly in the future. Increase in learning population due to rapid development in tourism industry is likely to increase demand for tertiary level courses and skilled based training in the Western Division," she said.

She highlighted that despite the competition in tertiary education especially in Fiji, USP's student numbers continue to grow.

"We have managed to record a 12 percent increase. We now have over 20,000 students studying at USP doing various programmes. The most pleasing is the increase in students registered in foundation and postgraduate studies."

Dr Williams announced that USP had commenced its longer term strategy to rectify 40 years of under-investment in long-term maintenance, expansion of regional campuses and additional infrastructure

to deliver high quality learning and improve the student experience.

According to Dr Williams, a new Campus Development Plan is currently being developed which also includes a new Lautoka Campus that is expected to begin in 2013.

She revealed that significant capital expenditure allocation had taken place in 2011 and 2012 and will continue in 2013 and beyond with a new campus to commence in Kiribati later this year.

Dr Williams explained that there has been a decisive improvement in student engagement and services as a new student federation and leadership with a new governance structure involving students in all the campuses were in place.

The Lautoka Campus Director, Dr Pramila Devi said the Campus took a bold step this year to host the Open Day over two days.

"Being predominantly a Distance and Flexible Learning Campus, this two day event is meant to provide flexibility to those who due to family or work commitments cannot attend on a normal day," she added.

Other organisations that also participated in the event included PSC Scholarship Unit, iTaukei Scholarship Unit, Ministry of Health, Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF), FICAC, Vodafone Fiji Limited, Digicel Group, Punjas, Superb Distributors, Aqua Pacific, Pops, BSP, BSP Life, Westpac, LICl, Courts, South Sea Cruises, VanMed Lab and Downtown Restaurant.

## GOVERNMENT OF VANUATU MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDALS RECIPIENTS



Emeritus Professor Don Paterson (left) and Dr Howard Van Trease (right).

Two former academics of the University of the South Pacific, Professor Don Paterson and Dr Howard Van Trease have been honored as recipients of the Government of Vanuatu Meritorious Service Medals from the President of Vanuatu, His Excellency, Mr Iolu Abbil.

Professor Paterson and Dr Trease were honored by H.E. Mr Abbil on Vanuatu's Independence Day on 30 July, 2012 for their contributions to the country and the people of Vanuatu over the years.

The Faculty of Arts, Law & Education (FALE) at USP congratulated the esteemed academics for their achievements.

Professor Paterson went to Vanuatu in 1985 to establish the Pacific Law Unit – the forerunner of the School of Law – having already served USP since 1979 as Professor of Public Administration and then Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

He retired in 1997 and was made an emeritus professor of the university, but has been very closely associated with the School of Law since then.

He has undertaken numerous consultancies for the government of Vanuatu and other regional governments in matters relating to land law and customary law, as well as constitutional review and commissions of enquiry.

Dr Trease joined the USP's Laucala Campus in 1973 to teach History, and soon afterwards started his PhD research on the politics of land in Vanuatu.

Later, after being Director of the Kiribati Centre for two years, Dr Trease went to Vanuatu in early 1980 to establish the USP Centre and was its first Director. After stints in Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, he returned to USP, first as Director of the Nauru Centre, and then as Director of University Extension.

His final academic post was at the University of Hawai'i, from which he retired and returned to Vanuatu as Honorary Research Fellow at Emalus Campus. He has long been involved in work on land issues in Vanuatu, as well as various educational issues.