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USPBeat Magazine

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Managing Editor

Ashley Gopal
Tel: (679) 323 2039;
email: gopal_a@usp.ac.fj

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75TH USP COUNCIL MEETING

The 75th meeting of the University of the South Pacific Council was held at the University's Laucala Campus from 5 - 6 November 2012.

The Council is the highest decision making body of the University and comprises representatives of the 12 member country governments, academic staff, and student, community and business leaders. Representatives of Australia and New Zealand and a member of the CROP agency are also part of the Council.

The two-day meeting was chaired by the Pro Chancellor and Chair of Council, Mr Ikbal Jannif. Mr Jannif said that although the meeting was intense, the time spent on finalising the new six-year Strategic Plan was well worth it.

"The open and frank discussions have meant that the USP's Strategic Plan 2013 - 2018 now has the approval of all stakeholders."

The newly appointed Visitor of the University, Sir James Bruce Robertson of New Zealand, visited Suva and briefly addressed the University Council at the invitation of the Pro-Chancellor & Chair of Council. Sir Bruce, as he is known, is a retired judge of the Court of Appeal in New Zealand. He is a graduate of the University of Otago and the University of Virginia. He holds an honorary LLD from the University of Otago. He is currently the President of the Court of Appeal in Vanuatu.

In presenting his report, the Vice Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra highlighted the following achievements since the last Council Meeting in May, which the Council acknowledged with appreciation.

Some of these achievements include:

- The finalisation of the University's new Strategic Plan 2013-2018;
- Successful graduation ceremonies for the Laucala, Tonga, Solomon Islands and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) campuses;
- The progress by the Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) project in working closely with the Curriculum Advisory Program, the Planning Office, the Credit Point project (implemented by Student Academic Services), and the Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) to ensure a smooth transition and successful implementation of the Council-approved new degree structure and the adoption of a Credit Point System;
- A successful Vice-Chancellor's Learning and Teaching Forum on 10 September 2012 at the Multi-Purpose Theatre, Japan-Pacific ICT Centre, Laucala Campus. The keynote speaker

was Professor Sally Kift, who spoke inspiringly on 'A Transition Pedagogy for First Year Student Success'. She is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at James Cook University and is President of the Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows;

- A number of major initiatives were discussed at the Forum Ministers of Education meeting in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 12-18 May 2012. One of them included the new ICT in Education framework that was jointly developed by USP and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community;
- The University Grants Committee (UGC) held its Triennial Meeting 2013 - 2015 at the Laucala Campus from 16 July to 20 July 2012. The UGC was pleased to observe that the University was on track to achieve the objectives of the current Strategic Plan by the year's end. The UGC also noted that the University is the most successful regional institution in terms of its longstanding positive impact on all member countries, and acknowledged the very important role that USP plays in fostering regional solidarity. UGC accepted the University's proposal to keep member government contributions at the 2012 level of FJ\$47,946,462 for each of the three years of the triennium 2013-2015;
- The signing of the first loan agreement with an international development bank in the University's 44 year history has been completed. The University's US\$19million Multi-tranche Financing Facility (MFF) soft loan from ADB for major capital development works has several major components, which will have separate loan sub-agreements. The signing of the loan agreement (Tranche 1) pertaining to the new Kiribati campus, worth US\$2.6million, took place at the Laucala Campus on 19 June 2012;
- The new extension to the Cook Islands Campus was officially opened on 27 August 2012. The extension includes a conference room, a student lounge, and a furnished reception area. The project was funded through the incentive funding provided by AusAID amounting to NZ\$600,000;
- Signing of a lease agreement for an additional 14 acres of land for USP Tonga campus. This will include priority developments like fencing; a building for the Institute of Education, a new building for graduate teaching (including the MBA programme) and facilities for expanded science teaching, sports and other amenities;



UNIVERSITY FINALIZES NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Council members discuss the new Strategic Plan of the University.

The University of the South Pacific Council at its 75th meeting held on 5 - 6 November 2012 approved the new Strategic Plan for the University.

The new USP Strategic Plan, which is for a period of 6 years starting from 2013, will guide the University to its 50th anniversary in 2018.

An early draft of the Strategic Plan was discussed by the USP Council in its meeting in May this year.

Since then, the Plan has been further developed and consulted on widely in the region with the different stakeholders of the University including member countries, development partners, parents, employers, USP alumni, staff and students.

The consultations were led mainly by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, but the Pro Chancellor, Mr Ikbai Jannif led the consultations in three countries. The University's Senior Management Team and other senior staff also assisted in the consultations.

Professor Chandra said that the consultation process was extremely valuable and strengthened the Plan considerably by incorporating the needs and aspirations of USP member countries.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that the overarching aim of the new Strategic Plan is to lift the vision of the University from good to excellent.

He explained that this will be achieved through improvements in the following areas:

- Quality: greater focus on quality and International accreditation of most programmes;
- Regional Campuses: significant, comprehensive, time-lined development and improved governance and management model for regional campuses;
- Postgraduate Studies: much stronger focus on postgraduate growth including PhD and Masters research;
- Research: more and greater impact of research, global recognition in selected areas including Pacific societies and cultures, Pacific Ocean and marine resources;
- Global leadership: in Pacific Studies/Arts and Culture; Pacific Ocean Studies and ICT leveraged flexible learning and new pedagogies;
- Enterprising University: a more enterprising University/students to leave with entrepreneurial skills – job creators not just job seekers;
- Regional Exemplar: in Tertiary Education and assisting national institutions where needed and appropriate; and
- People: growing talent; leadership and supervision, HR and change management, investment in people.

Professor Chandra elaborated that the challenge of moving from good to excellence will require a very

significant change in mindset and performance of people and systems, which the new Strategic Plan is focused on achieving.

According to the Vice-Chancellor, USP will ensure that staff are able to deliver the University's vision of excellence. This will involve developing a culture of excellence and personal growth for all staff to achieve the highest institutional outcomes.

The new Strategic Plan also puts significant focus on enhancing the role and potential of regional campuses.

Professor Chandra said that new Plan will be instrumental in ensuring that the physical facilities throughout the region are improved significantly.

The 7 priority areas of the new Plan are:

- Learning & Teaching;
- Student Support;
- Research and Internationalisation;
- Information & Communication Technologies;
- Regional and Community Engagement;
- Our People; and
- Governance, Leadership, Management & Continuous Improvement.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Council for the approval of the Strategic Plan and gave his assurance and commitment on behalf of the staff to energetically and effectively implement the new Strategic Plan 2013 - 2018.

Continued from page 1

- Ground breaking ceremony for a new campus in the Marshall Islands by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, H.E. Mr. Christopher Loeak and the USP Chancellor at the time, Sir Frank Ofagioro Kabui;
- USP's partnerships with Australia and New Zealand will conclude this year. Both the Governments have indicated that they intend to continue their support to the University for the duration of the new Strategic Plan 2013 - 2018; and

Professor Chandra said that the outlook for the University going into 2013 remains strong, adding that, enrolment growth is around 11 percent in equivalent full-time students (EFTS) for 2012. This, he explained, is already surpassing the record growth in 2011.

"On the whole, the University has made excellent progress in a difficult time, increased its reputation and standing, the goodwill of its stakeholders, and stands on the cusp of exciting development to transform itself from good to excellent in the next Strategic Plan," he added.

The Council deliberated on a number of reports and papers. Some of the key decisions taken by the Council were:

USP Strategic Plan 2013 - 2018: Approved the University's new Strategic Plan. The Council also commended the Vice-Chancellor, the Senior Management Team and staff for the consultative process undertaken for the new Strategic Plan and the bold aspirations of the new plan.

Annual Plan 2013: Approved the financing of the Annual Plan 2013 to be within the proposed

total income of \$170.37m, and a proposed total expenditure of \$170.22m.

2013 Tuition Fees and Charges: As the University had not increased its tuition fees since 2008, and to compensate for inflation and other increased costs, the Council approved a 5 percent increase in the University's tuition fees for next year.

New Academic Programme: The Diploma in Leadership, Governance and Human Rights programme was instituted.

Accreditation: The Council noted that two new professional degrees in Computing Science - Bachelor of Software Engineering and Bachelor of Net Centric Computing received provisional accreditation from the Australian Computer Society. It was also agreed that the University seeks Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation following stipulations in the WASC accreditation guideline for institutions external to the U.S.

New Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee: Mr Iowane Naiveli is the new Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. He is a Chartered Accountant and has served previously on the USP Council. Ms Susan Kumar was re-appointed as the independent member on the Audit Committee for two years from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2014. Ms Kumar is the General Manager for Corporate Service at the Reserve Bank of Fiji.

Appointments to the Finance and Investments Committee: Named Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Fiji to be members of the Finance and Investments Committee for the term, 1 January 2013 - 31 December 2015.

Appointment of Members to the Executive Committee: Named Cook Islands, Samoa and Nauru as well as Fiji to the Executive Committee.

The Council also appointed Dr Jeremy Strudwick, Senior Education Adviser, Pacific Division, AusAID, Dr Kabini Sanga, an academic from Victoria University in Wellington and Mr Rex Horoi, Director of the Foundation of the People of the South Pacific to its Executive Committee which has delegated authority to carry out assigned duties on behalf of the Council.

Honorary Degrees Committee: The Minister for Education, Tokelau and Dr Kabini Sanga were re-appointed to serve on the Honorary Degrees Committee for a term of two years from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2014.

According to the Vice-Chancellor, this was one of the most crucial meetings of the Council.

Professor Chandra said that the approval of the new Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 provided a bold vision of excellence, relevance, and strong regional engagement with an exciting set of initiatives to take the University to its 50th anniversary in 2018.

The Council also approved the 2013 Annual Plan - the first year of the new Strategic Plan. It also noted that the USP regional Ministers of Finance had approved the University's government contributions for the next three years.

"These approvals and other decisions will ensure a very bright future for the University. I am pleased with the outcomes of the Council," stated Professor Chandra.

The next Council meeting will be held in Tonga in mid-May 2013.

UNIVERSITY COLLABORATES WITH FIJI GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY



The Honorable Prime Minister of Fiji Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama takes a tour of the new GSC in Nausori. He is accompanied by the Permanent Secretary of the Public Service Commission, Mr Parmesh Chand and the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra.

The Government of Fiji worked with the University of the South Pacific in establishing the first Government Service Centre (GSC) in Nausori which opened on 12 November, 2012.

Located at Hemron Plaza, the new centre is expected to make government services and facilities more accessible to the general public.

The University was approached through the Pacific Centre for Public Administration (PICPA) to assist Government with the initiative.

During the opening of the centre, the Honorable Prime Minister of Fiji Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama assured his Government's commitment towards providing adequate service delivery to the public.

"I regard the delivery of basic services to all Fijians as the Government's main priority," he stated.

According to the Prime Minister, such service centres would bring the Government closer to its people.

"Government has to be present in our communities and actively engage with them. These centres will provide a single point - a one-stop shop - for at least 20 separate Government agencies," he added.

Commodore Bainimarama pointed out that his Government is working to change the culture of the civil service so that it responds better to the needs of our people.

He appealed to those who would resource these GSCs to set a new standard of service and show people that the Government really cares.

The Prime Minister pointed out that this was part of the vision for a new Fiji, to make life easier for every Fijian dealing with Government departments and agencies.

In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, congratulated the Prime Minister and his Government for taking the initiative to establish GSCs to improve the delivery of services to the public.

"This initiative is an excellent example of how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be used to improve the delivery of government services and to promote social and economic development," he stated.

Professor Chandra added that the University was pleased to have been approached by the Government to work with it on this project.

"When the PSC approached the Pacific Centre for Public Administration (PICPA) to help the Government establish this centre, we were delighted to agree immediately as we saw this as an excellent way of working closely with the Government to improve public services - the core function of PICPA," mentioned the Vice-Chancellor.

The University's Regional Centre for Continuing and Community Education (RCCCE) that provides professional and vocational education joined with PICPA and PSC in a working committee to develop an implementation strategy for the new GSCs. The strategy included identification of civil servants from GSC offices in the three divisions.

Professor Chandra said that RCCCE developed a diagnostic tool to ascertain the level of knowledge on customer service, supervisory skills and management. Based on the diagnosis, RCCCE recommended a four-module training programme that the candidates took over a period of four months covering administrative skills, working in a conducive work environment, business communications and customer service.

A total of 21 civil servants successfully completed the training and received their certificates during the opening of the GSC.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF INTERNET

The Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC) conference known as PaclNET 2012 was held at the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at the University of the South Pacific's Laucala Campus in Suva from 22-26 November, 2012.

The annual forum on ICT and internet governance in the region was hosted jointly by USP and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), along with other partner organisations and sponsors.

The conference was opened by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra. Among the distinguished speakers who attended and presented at the opening session were Mr Martin Cocker, Executive Director of Netsafe, New

Zealand and Ms Maureen Hilyard, PICISOC Board Chair, who is based in Cook Islands.

The 'Access for all' theme-based conference brought together many stakeholders from the various organisations to a single platform to discuss the dynamics of ICT and the internet, and how to make it accessible to all Pacific Islanders.

The five-day conference saw presentations and panel discussions from major ICT and internet development stakeholders.

While it will take time to bridge the digital divide and provide internet connectivity and access, participants were told that if partner organisations,

member countries, members of PICISOC and other ICT stakeholders work together, using a multi-stakeholder platform, then people in many walks of life - ICT professionals, technicians, policy makers, government agencies, telecom operators, internet service providers, academics, lawyers, police forces, the informal sector and ICT students - will be able to share ideas and learn from experience about using ICT and the internet for development. This will go a long way towards providing access to all.

This year's event also marked the 10 years of PaclNET conferences. The very first one was held in Nadi in 2002.

Pacific Islands Regional Universities Network and Science Policy Dialogue

A Pacific-led Experts' Meeting
USP, November 5-7, 2012



PACIFIC UNIVERSITIES TEAM UP TO PROMOTE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Director of UNESCO's Division for Science, Policy and Capacity-Building, Professor Lidia Brito, delivers her keynote address.

Major universities from Pacific Island Countries converged at the University of the South Pacific in Suva from 5 - 7 November, 2012.

Vice Chancellors and senior representatives from USP, Fiji National University, University of Fiji, University of Papua New Guinea, PNG University of Technology, Pacific Adventist University PNG, University of Natural Resources and Environment PNG, National University of Samoa, University of New Caledonia and University of French Polynesia attended the dialogue on the formation of a Pacific Islands Regional Universities Network to advocate on Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) issues and to ultimately develop a Pacific-owned and Pacific-driven ST&I Policy Framework.

The initiative was hosted by USP in partnership with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (ACP-EU CTA) from the Netherlands, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Representatives from regional university networks in Africa and the Caribbean were able to share their successful experiences to inform the dialogue. Representatives of The Higher Education Commissions in Fiji and PNG, as well as IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Development) were also present to discuss ST&I policy frameworks.

The USP Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and International), Professor John Bythell welcomed the Vice-Chancellors, Deans, Heads of Research and senior academics of the different universities as well as representatives of regional and international organisations to the three-day meeting.

He told those present that the ambition of USP's new Strategic Plan is to take the University from good to excellent, adding that, a large part of that is excellence in research including areas of ST&I.

Professor Bythell also touched on the importance of increasing research capacity and collaboration especially among universities in the region to

enable a fundamental shift from a region dependent on outside help to address the societal challenges to one that is able to address those challenges from within.

The issue of networking universities for research and innovation was further looked into by Ms Judith Francis, Senior Programme Coordinator, Science and Technology Policy division of CTA based in the Netherlands.

She said that Pacific universities were not sufficiently engaged. She mainly attributed this to universities lacking connection to productive sectors, lack of innovation in products, processes and services as well as limited research and development on priority issues.

Ms Francis pointed out that Pacific universities can make a greater impact through networking to formulate and focus on common issues to collectively improve performance and impact at the policy level.

"Countries are asking and expecting more of their universities given the complex challenges confronting society," she added.

Similar views were expressed by the UNESCO Programme Specialist for Small Islands and Indigenous Knowledge, Mr Hans Thulstrup.

He said that the meeting was an opportune time to share views and ideas and be more explicit about the role of ST&I in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as a build up to the upcoming major SIDS Global Conference in Samoa in 2014.

'Science, Technology and Innovation Policies for sustainable development in the Pacific' was the topic of Professor Lidia Brito's keynote address.

Professor Brito, who is the Director of UNESCO's Division for Science, Policy and Capacity-Building, reminded those present that the Earth system was profoundly interconnected and interdependent. She stated that interconnected issues require interconnected solutions, adding that local actions

in one part of the world can affect people in other parts of the globe.

While rapid scientific and technological issues can provide potential solutions, Professor Brito said social transformations were needed as well. She explained that this is where research plays a significant role in monitoring change, determining thresholds, developing new technologies and processes and providing solutions.

Given the increasing vulnerabilities faced by SIDS, Professor Brito explained that new approaches to sustainability were required.

"Science and technology have a crucial role to play but fulfilling its potential requires the development and implementation of clear and strategic policies," she said.

She elaborated that what is required is regional and inter-regional collaboration through university networks and science policy forums; collaboration and dialogue between academia and policy-makers; and consideration of the role of Pacific local and indigenous knowledge and its relation to scientific knowledge.

Professor Brito proposed the need for a critical mass of students and researchers to be trained at various levels including Masters in ST&I fields related to the country/regional priorities.

This critical mass needs to be carefully estimated to match with potential future job offers in the labour market, she added.

The outcome of the three-day dialogue was a resolution to collaborate on the establishment of a Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN). The participants issued a communiqué establishing a working group, hosted by USP and directed by Dr Jito Vanualailai in the Research Office, to draw up the terms of reference and working practices for PIURN. USP will also host the network Secretariat for the first three years.

ANNUAL REPORT WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD AGAIN

The Acting Executive Director of Finance at USP, Mr Kolinio Boila, receives the award from the Chairperson of the judging panel, Ms Renu Chand.



Photo courtesy: fijilive

The University of the South Pacific was announced the winner of one of the four categories of the Annual Report Competition Awards for 2012 organised by the South Pacific Stock Exchange (SPSE).

The 2011 USP Annual Report was awarded in the 'Co-operatives, Non-Profit and Charitable Organisations' category on 7 November 2012 at a function held at the Reserve Bank of Fiji.

Similar to previous years, the other three categories in the competition included:

- Category A: Statutory Authorities, Government Bodies & Unlisted Trusts;
- Category C: Other Public Companies and Unit Trusts; and
- Category D: Listed Companies

The award marked the second win in a row for the University in the same category.

The competition, which has become a prominent event in SPSE's corporate calendar, seeks to encourage companies, government bodies and charitable organisations to provide quality reporting and balanced disclosures in their

annual reports in a move to improve the information made available to stakeholders.

The Chief Executive Officer of SPSE, Ms Jinita Prasad, said that participating organisations can see the benefits of being part of such a competition which puts an edge within companies to endeavour on improving the quality of reporting and adhering to the extant accounting disclosure requirements as well as corporate governance principles.

"It is encouraging to see how some companies have used annual reports to tell a compelling story of their success over the past year," she added.

The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra said that the award was a good external validation of the University's work.

In thanking everyone involved in the production of the 2011 USP Annual Report, Professor Chandra, in particular, acknowledged the efforts of former Pro Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Quality), Dr Michael Gregory and the Director of Development, Marketing & Communications, Mr Jindra Karan for coordinating and editing the content, and the design of the Annual Report.

The Vice-Chancellor said that the University will take account of any comments that the selection panel may have made on the annual reports to see how they can improve the report even further.

The judging panel consisted of six independent members. The Chairperson of the panel was Ms Renu Chand, Partner at KPMG, and other members were Professor Michael White from the University of the South Pacific, Mr Sunil Sharma from AliZ Pacific, Ms Glenis Yee from BSP Fiji Life Limited, Mr Ritnesh Narayan from the Auditor General's Office and Mr Peni Tora from Ernst & Young.



NEW BOOKS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED FOR EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS

The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra with Dr Lingam at the book launch.

Two innovative books on educational leadership and teacher workforce planning were launched by the Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of the South Pacific, Professor Rajesh Chandra on 30 November, 2012.

The first book titled, 'Educational Leadership: Emerging Issues and Successful Practices' was edited by USP academic, Dr Govinda Lingam. He was also one of the significant contributors in this book.

This book highlights the need for effective educational leadership that is both transformative and contextualized to enhance the quality of work in educational systems.

"The book argues for immediate attention to leadership improvement and ongoing development at all levels of the education systems that mould the citizens of our future," said Dr Lingam.

The second book on 'Teacher Workforce Planning in the Pacific: Towards a Qualitative Perspective in Primary Education' was authored by Dr Lingam, who is a senior lecturer with the University's School of Education.

In the second book, Dr Lingam stresses on one of the most critical inputs in achieving a good quality education that is the teaching workforce.

The 168-page publication demonstrates that it is fitting to give credit to the crucial role of primary teachers in particular, and provide the support needed in the provision of education that enables children to realise their full potential.

"The major contention of the book is that unless the supply of teachers is adequate in both qualitative and quantitative terms, quality education is unlikely to be achieved. In light of this, the book argues that raising the standards in primary education firstly requires a better teacher establishment planning approach," he explained.

During the launch, Professor Chandra congratulated Dr Lingam for his outstanding achievement in publishing the two books.

"The books have all the hallmarks of good international collaboration and the potential to influence our educational systems and quality of educational outcomes," he said.

The Vice-Chancellor elaborated that the books deal with very topical and important issues such as educational leadership and teacher workforce planning which are crucial priorities in education.

Professor Chandra said that while the region feels that USP's School of Education should undertake more research on important educational issues, the release of the two books will go to some extent in changing this perception.

"These books speak of the quality of scholarship that we are capable of," he added.

The launch was well attended by representatives from the Ministry of Education and teacher unions, University staff and students, members of the media as well as other invited guests.

The Prime Minister of Samoa, Honorable Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi cuts the ribbon to launch USP's Ku-band network for the University's Savai'i Centre. Also seen in picture is the Alafua Campus Director, Ms Ruby Va'a.

KU-BAND SERVICES FOR USP CENTRE ON SAMOA'S LARGEST ISLAND

The University of the South Pacific's Savai'i Centre in Samoa has joined the USP's expanding ICT educational network, USPNet. The USP's Ku-band network – launched on 1 November 2012 on Salelologa, Savai'i – will connect students in Savai'i to USP's real-time lecture conferencing and other course management applications.

The Prime Minister of Samoa, Honorable Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele

Malielegaoi launched the Ku-band satellite services as part of the USP expansion of the USPNet services to support University services to its students at regional campuses.

In his keynote address, the Prime Minister stated that the service was the crux of his Government's rural education initiative.

"The great thing about it is that students in Savai'i can now study at institutions such as USP without leaving their homes or the care of their parents and the safety of their homes and villages," he said.

The Ku-band service provides the capability for students to access lecturers/tutors based at other USP campuses, in particular, Laucala, Emalus or Alafua. Students can participate from Savai'i Centre via live classes, lectures and tutorials.

The Prime Minister acknowledged the leadership of USP for the development of such technology and also the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the generous funding support.

The launching ceremony was organised by Ms Ruby Va'a, Alafua Campus Director, and Mr Kisione Finau, Director ITS, connecting the Savai'i Centre to the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre in Suva with live video via the Ku-band link.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration & Regional Campuses), Dr Esther Williams and the Deputy Resident Representative, JICA Fiji Office, Mr Yutaka Fukase, delivered congratulatory speeches from Suva via the new Ku-band system and demonstrated the capability of the system to the invited guests in Savai'i. Among those present were Samoa's Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Honourable Magele Mauiliu, the Minister of Police, Prisons and Fire Services, Honourable Sala Pinati, as well as other members of Parliament, government officials and members of the Savai'i community.

Dr Williams said that the launch was another milestone for USP as the University moves towards closer communication throughout the University region to the rural areas from the more populated towns and cities.

She added that similar facilities had been installed in Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu which are expected to be expanded further.

The University of the South Pacific (USP) is implementing the Ku-band satellite communication network, in partnership with JICA under its technical cooperation project 'USP-JICA ICT for Human Development and Human Security Project'. This Ku-band satellite network deployment will provide low cost solution for the expansion of USPNet throughout the region. The network, once operational will ensure that USP centres located in remote islands with limited resources for distance learning will be enhanced with ICT for distance education and learning.

One of the JICA experts, Dr Kader Pramanik, stated that the satellite Ku-band solution can provide broadband internet services to the remote islands which will boost expansion of tertiary education in the region, and at the same time, with government coordination, can be utilised as communication infrastructure for emergency communication and disaster management.

The installation of Ku-band systems at USP's remote centres commenced in 2011. Savai'i Centre is the 8th Ku-band USPNet site after Ha'apai Centre and Vava'u Centre in Tonga, Emalus Campus and Malampa Centre in Vanuatu, Lata Centre in Solomon Islands, Labasa Campus and Adi Maopa School in the Lau Group of Fiji.

STAKEHOLDERS MEET FOR PROVINCIAL COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The University of the South Pacific's Institute of Applied Sciences in partnership with the Fiji Department of Environment recently hosted the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) planning meeting of stakeholders for the Ra Province in Fiji.

The Ra Province is one of the 14 provinces in the country and is located on the northern part of Viti Levu, the largest island of Fiji.

The meeting, which was held on 8 November, 2012 at the Ra Provincial Office, was well represented by about 60 participants from the Government, NGOs, private sector and communities.

The meeting was led by the Director of the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS), Professor Bill Aalbersberg.

Professor Aalbersberg explained that the main aim of the meeting was to bring together key Ra provincial stakeholders from the public and private sectors to share progress and challenges, in a participatory approach, in regards to ICM issues and to develop a common vision towards the development of an ICM plan for the province.

Main outcomes from the meeting included the development of broad statements towards a vision for the Ra Province ICM Plan, the prioritisation of six main issues that will form the basis of an action plan and the formation of a Ra Province ICM Committee comprising representation from each of the stakeholder groups that will oversee the implementation of the action plan for the province.

This activity was undertaken as part of the Coral Triangle Pacific project which is jointly being implemented by the Fiji Department of Environment and the Institute of Applied Sciences in cooperation with NGOs.

The aim of this project is to improve the resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems and climate change within five countries including Fiji. Ra province is the pilot site for Fiji with the focus of efforts to develop an integrated coastal resource management plan for the province.

TALKS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PACIFIC



Conference participants with the Minister-Counsellor for AusAID, Mr John Davidson and the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra (both in garland).

Representatives of 14 Pacific Island Countries gathered for a three-day conference to discuss public sector needs of their countries and to understand and engage with the Pacific Islands Centre for Public Administration (PICPA) to better serve the region.

PICPA is joint initiative between the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Australian Government. It is designed to respond to the needs and plans identified by Pacific Island Countries (PICs) for strengthened public administration to enable improved service delivery to their people and foster economic growth.

The conference, which began on 21 November, 2012 at the Holiday Inn in Suva, had delegations from Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The key objectives of conference were to:

- Share information on PICPA, its services, including training and learning opportunities offered by USP and other providers which could be funded by PICPA; and
- Engage with PICs in assessing and actively contributing to the design of PICPA's forward work plan by identifying regional and sub regional priorities and partnerships in delivering work plan priorities.

In launching the inaugural PICPA conference, the Minister-Counsellor for AusAID, Mr John Davidson spoke about the importance of good public administration and how it is central to democratic processes, and critical in building trust on government systems.

"Good public administration raises not only public confidence, but also investor confidence, fostering economic activity and creating employment opportunities," he stated.

The conference, Mr Davidson explained, was

an opportunity to move beyond supply-driven approaches to ones that meet the needs identified by PICs.

"This ensures that PICPA provides assistance that is not only relevant and responsive to national and regional needs, but that these areas for support have been identified in consultation with you," representatives were told.

While commending PICPA and USP for their efforts in organising the conference, Mr Davidson said, Australia is pleased to be supporting such an important forum designed to see how Pacific governments can work together and strengthen their efforts to promote efficient and effective public services across the region.

"Our support to institutions such as PICPA helps ensure that Pacific Island governments have access to technical expertise and capacity development activities that assist in improving service delivery, monitoring and public financial management," he added.

According to Mr Davidson, Australia is in a strong economic situation at the moment and is rapidly increasing its aid program to the Pacific.

However, he pointed out that, "money and experience need to combine with the commitment of leaders such as yourselves for us to get what it is we all want from our work – better lives for the citizens of our region and our countries."

The delegates were welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, to the conference on forward planning for PICPA programmes in the next three years.

Professor Chandra said that PICPA's conference is timely and underlines the vital contribution that public administrations make, particularly in the Pacific.

In the Pacific, public administration accounts for almost 35 percent of the regional country expenditure – that is, over one in every three

dollars is spent on managing public services, said the Vice-Chancellor, referring to the 2011 World Bank report.

He thanked the Government of Australia for funding PICPA, as well as other USP stakeholders for their support.

Professor Chandra urged representatives to utilize this opportunity and be very open and frank.

"Our task at this conference is to identify and prioritise specific capacity development needs that will facilitate more effective government which will raise service delivery to our citizens."

He further elaborated that the quality of discussions over the three days of the conference will be critical, as it will shape PICPA's activities going forward.

"To ensure that we design and implement relevant development programs and initiatives for Pacific Island countries, it is imperative that we hear directly from the countries on what their needs and priorities are," representatives heard.

Professor Chandra said that the outcomes of these discussions and further engagement will lead to the development of tailor-made partnership agreements with countries reflecting agreed priorities.

A background on the conference and the role of PICPA was shared by the Director of PICPA, Mr Siosua Utoikamanu, who said that the conference is the beginning of a "conversation" between PICPA and its stakeholders.

"We have organised the conference this week to develop a multi-year work plan which will allow PICPA to balance quick responses to requests received at short notice together with predictable programming for stakeholder countries to ensure that assistance fits into a broad national strategy which considers sequencing of change, sustainability and priority," he concluded.

The conference ended on 23 November.

WORKSHOP PROMOTES INFORMATION SHARING IN AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY SECTORS



Participants of the Web 2.0 Learning Opportunity and Training workshop.

The opportunities facing the agriculture sector will change, and are already changing, because of the underlying changes in information technology. How people publish and use information on the World Wide Web has transformed in recent times.

These were the comments of the Acting Head of Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, H.E Alistair MacDonald at the opening of the Web 2.0 Learning Opportunity and Training workshop on 22 October 2012.

"Agriculture, forestry and rural development will have a prominent place in the EU's development cooperation agenda in future years, whether addressed directly through classical rural development projects, or indirectly in addressing climate change adaptation and natural disaster risk reduction," participants were told at the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre located at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva.

As a follow-up to the first Web 2.0 Learning Opportunity and Training workshop in 2011, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), in collaboration with the EU-funded Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and USP, committed to strengthening and facilitating technology-driven services in the dissemination and sharing of information.

SPC's Mr Samu Turagacati explained that the use of Web 2.0 tools for communicating with stakeholders and sharing information can bring advantages to any organisation concerned with the satisfaction of its stakeholders.

Workshop participants were made aware of the need to understand organisational policies, strategies and governance on the use of social media.

"As organisations that provide key services to the region, we need to use good judgement about what materials should be uploaded online and

in what context," Mr Turagacati reminded those present.

Participants from the agricultural sector said that while Web 2.0 technologies and web tools are useful to create a community network between agriculture extension officers, exporters and other stakeholders, there was also a need to reach out to farmers and show them the potential of using such technology.

Deputy Director of USP's IT Services, Mr Fereti Atalifo, acknowledged the participants from the agriculture, forestry and rural development sectors and the collective support by the European Union, CTA and SPC.

The second week of the workshop, targeting youths and stakeholders in the area of agriculture/forestry and rural development, began on 29 October.



PUBLICATION TO HELP STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT RENEWABLE ENERGY

Dr Anirudh Singh presents copies of his latest book to the Deputy Director of Education, Mr Jai Narayan.

A new introductory book on renewable energy was released in Suva, Fiji on 9 November, 2012. The book was launched by Fiji's Deputy Director of Education, Mr Jai Narayan.

Titled *'All about renewable energy - a basic renewable energy kit for decision-makers'*, the 64-page publication introduces the basic concepts of renewable energy with a quick assessment of the relative merits of the different types of renewable energy.

The book has been authored by an academic from the University of the South Pacific, Dr Anirudh Singh, who said, "the book is a crash course in renewable energy for anyone who knows nothing about renewable energy and wants to find out as quickly as possible."

The book provides an ideal primer for the study of renewable energy at any level, explained Dr Singh, as the language used is non-technical, and

the physical principles are described in simple everyday English as far as possible.

He added that the multi-disciplinary nature of the subject of renewable energy is emphasised throughout.

According to the author, the publication will provide a resource material for students and others who may not have a scientific background for studies in the area of renewable energy.

"It will provide a first step for teachers to plan their curricula, and for students to learn about the basics of renewable energy without needing any special knowledge of physics or other sciences," highlighted Dr Singh.

The launching ceremony was attended by more than 40 participants from the departments of Education and Energy, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, UNDP, universities

and the private sector.

The book has evolved out of the activities of Project DIREKT - a renewable energy project undertaken by five universities from the ACP region and Germany.

Dr Singh elaborated that a part of the project was to provide enough knowledge and information to decision-makers in government, NGOs, and the private sector to make wise decisions about which renewable energy technology to acquire. It was later decided to convert this learning kit into text form. This book is the result.

The production of the book has been funded entirely by Project DIREKT, which is an EU-funded renewable energy project.

Copies of the book are available upon request from the Project DIREKT Technology Transfer Centre at USP.