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## USPBeat Magazine

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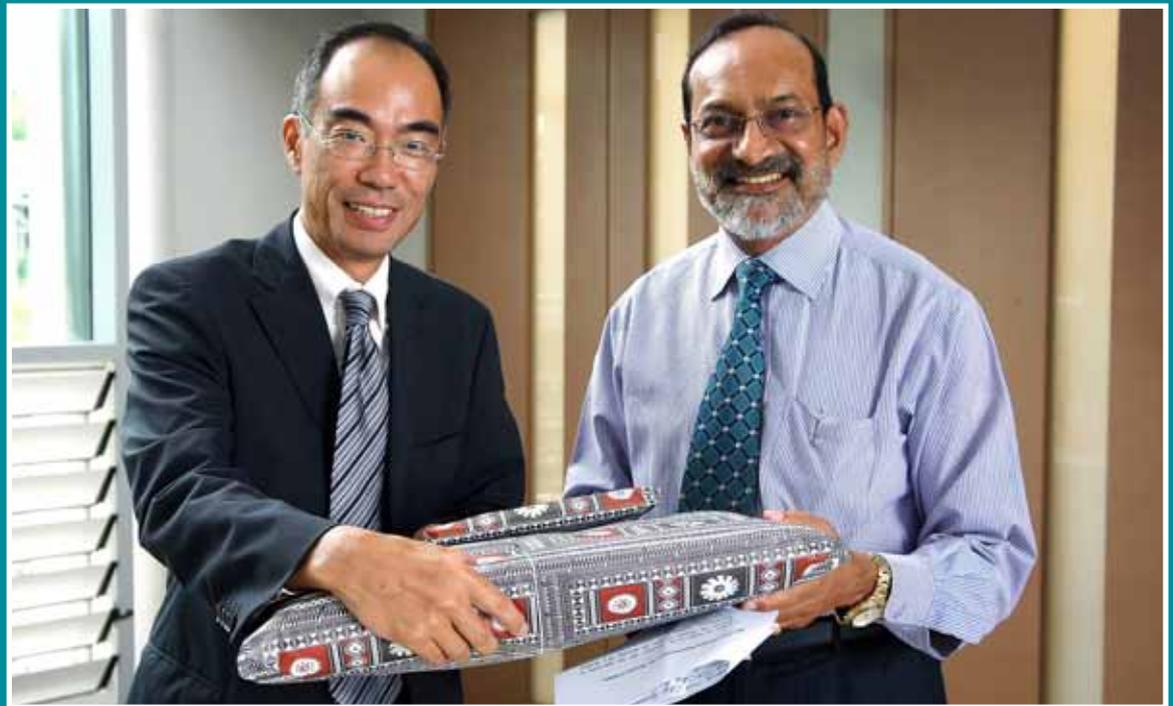


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## UNIVERSITY FAREWELLS JAPANESE DELEGATE



The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra and the outgoing JICA Resident Representative to Fiji, Mr Juichiro Sasaki at the farewell hosted by the University.

The University of the South Pacific hosted a farewell lunch for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Resident Representative to Fiji, Mr Juichiro Sasaki on 23 January, 2012.

The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra together with members of the University's Senior Management Team and other senior staff were present at the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre in Suva, to bid farewell to Mr Sasaki and to thank him for his contribution towards the University.

Mr Sasaki took up his role with JICA in 2008 and played a significant role in facilitating the construction of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at USP. The state-of-the-art landmark facility for the region comprises two buildings with fully-equipped computer laboratories, conference rooms, and a multi-purpose lecture theatre.

In thanking Mr Sasaki, Professor Chandra expressed his sincere gratitude to the outgoing JICA Resident Representative for his commitment and support during his time in Fiji.

Professor Chandra said he was extremely pleased to have both Mr Sasaki and his successor, the new JICA Resident Representative, Mr Shumon Yoshiara present at the farewell.

"Through Mr Sasaki's leadership at JICA, USP has gained a lot of support and we look forward to working very closely with the incoming representative, to further this collaboration with JICA in the near future," he added.

It was during Mr Sasaki's tenure that the JICA President, Madam Sadako Ogata visited USP. Professor Chandra

described this as a "momentous and meaningful occasion for the University" and thanked Mr Sasaki for making the visit possible.

Highlighting the strong relationship that USP shares with JICA and the Government of Japan, the Vice-Chancellor said that Mr Yoshiara will be able to see how such assistance has benefited USP and its member countries.

JICA and the Government of Japan assisted in the introduction of new computer and information science degree courses, enhancement of the distance learning environment through efficient utilisation of new ICT technologies including the *USPNet* - a satellite-communications network that links USP campuses in its 12 member countries, and the establishment of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at USP.

Professor Chandra wished Mr Sasaki well for the future.

In his comments, Mr Sasaki thanked Professor Chandra for his leadership and the University staff for their cooperation during his term as the JICA Resident Representative.

Mr Sasaki said he was pleased to work with Professor Chandra and the University in developing the *USPNet* to enhance the delivery of distance learning for students living in remote areas. He was also delighted by Madam Ogata's visit to USP.

Mr Sasaki thanked USP for the cooperation extended to him. He also wished Mr Yoshiara well in developing stronger ties between USP, JICA and the Government of Japan in the future.

Mr Sasaki said that he has fond memories of Fiji during the time he spent in the country.



Heads of tertiary institutions in the Pacific at the second meeting in Nadi.

# THE ASSOCIATION OF HEADS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS ESTABLISHED

The Heads of Pacific tertiary institutions concluded their second meeting in Nadi, Fiji on 13 December, 2011.

The two-day meeting was attended by the Heads of the National University of Samoa (NUS); The Pacific Institute of Technology, Fiji; the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE); the Fiji National University (FNU); The University of Fiji (UoF); The University of the South Pacific (USP); the Tonga Teachers College; the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT); and representatives of the Oceania University of Medicine (OUM), Samoa; and the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE).

Apologies were received from two other institutions that had attended the first meeting in March 2011, namely 'Atenisi University, Tonga; and the Tonga Institute of Science and Technology.

The meeting endorsed the establishment of an association to be known as the Association of Heads of Tertiary Institutions in the Pacific Islands (AHTIPI) with the following founding office-bearers:

- President - Professor Rajesh Chandra, Vice-Chancellor & President, the University of the South Pacific;
- Vice-President - Professor Asofou Le'apai So'o, Vice-Chancellor & President, the National University of Samoa;
- Secretary/Treasurer - Dr Michael Gregory, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Planning & Quality), USP, has been appointed by the President of AHTIPI as Secretary and Treasurer.

The meeting also established an Executive Committee comprising the above office-bearers and four (4) Committee Members. The four Committee Members elected were:

1. Dr Ganesh Chand, Vice-Chancellor, Fiji National University;
2. Ms Ana Lupe Voi, Principal, Tonga Teachers College;
3. Mr Donald Malasa, Director, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, and;
4. Mr Kalpet Kalpeo, Principal, Vanuatu Institute of Technology.

The meeting also finalised the AHTIPI Constitution and identified the roles and functions of the Association as:

- a. To be a forum for academic leadership of tertiary institutions to attain academic excellence in the Pacific Islands through co-operation and the exchange of ideas;
- b. To promote cooperation and collaboration between institutions in areas such as administrative and academic practices, development and maintenance of academic standards, staff recruitment and

exchange and student affairs;

- c. To serve as a mechanism for collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations, including in particular, development partners and international organisations on tertiary education;
- d. To be a strong and credible voice for tertiary education and to raise its profile, including internationally; and
- e. To provide joint responses to governments, regional and development partners where appropriate.

The meeting also received updates from its various Working Groups established at its first meeting, namely the Library Working Group and the Information and Communications Technology Working Group. The meeting also agreed to set up a Procurement Working Group as a means of cost saving and using limited resources effectively.

USP was designated to lead the Procurement Working Group. There was interest from some institutions, especially those that have not quite developed their Management Information Systems (MIS), in the development of common software for MIS. FNU was tasked to lead this exercise for those interested.

A presentation was made on a proposal from USP to set up a regional Licensing Authority that would deal with issues such as copyright. While there was general interest from all the institutions represented, some operational issues needed to be sorted out first.

FNU and USP have agreements already in place to enable their students to access the general collections and certain other facilities of their respective libraries without charge. External borrower conditions apply to borrow books from the USP library under current long-standing arrangements.

The Association also endorsed that a Higher Education Conference on Tertiary Education in the Pacific be held in 2012. A working committee with representations from the tertiary institutions is working on the organisation of this Conference in July 2012.

In a statement, the new President of AHTIPI, Professor Rajesh Chandra, said that "he was delighted that the Heads of Tertiary Institutions in the Pacific Islands had decided to form AHTIPI as it would provide an important forum for them to collaborate and co-operate, avoid duplication, and promote the tertiary sector as a whole in the context of increasing importance of knowledge as a prerequisite to development and competitiveness. I have been very impressed by the spirit of co-operation among tertiary institutions, and I look forward to working closely with fellow heads of tertiary institutions to promote excellence, relevance and access in tertiary education."



Left: Attendees of the 2011 Careers Fair at the Shangri-La's Fijian Resort & Spa.

Right: Mr Bryce Clarke of Carnival Australia interviews a final year student during the 2011 Careers Fair.

# UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO TRAIN ONBOARD INTERNATIONAL CRUISE SHIPS

Six students from the University of the South Pacific will benefit from a year-long internship on board the P&O Cruises' ships in 2013.

The opportunity is a result of a successful partnership that USP has been able to forge with Carnival Australia - a leader in the cruise industry for the region, representing five of the international cruise brands operating in the local market today.

The 12-month practicum programme is for students completing their Bachelor of Commerce Hotel Management Degree at the University's School of Tourism and Hospitality Studies (STHM).

The partnership began a few years ago when Professor David Harrison, Head of STHM, met with representatives from Carnival Australia at a function held by the South Pacific Tourism Organisation. Later that year, a group of USP students visited the *Pacific Dawn*, a cruise liner operated by P&O Cruises, when it came to Suva, and a representative of Carnival Australia attended the School's Careers Fair. As a result, few students were employed by the company.

Professor Harrison describes the partnership as a mutually beneficial one. "Some of our best graduates find well paid positions onboard the cruise ships, Carnival Australia is able to obtain a good supply of graduates, and the STHM is pleased with the achievements of its students," he added.

Students selected for the internship will gain relevant industry

experience working with the hotel department teams onboard the cruise ships. They will be deployed in different sections of the ships which include restaurants, bars, housekeeping and front office. Following the practicum, students will graduate and, if successful, take up full-time employment at P&O Cruises.

Professor Harrison said that students benefit immensely from experiences like the ones offered onboard international cruise ships.

Career building internships are in line with our commitment to ensure Pacific Island communities share the economic benefits of the big surge in cruising in the region, explained Mr Bryce Clarke, the South Pacific Fleet Training and Development Manager for Carnival Australia.

Setting the scene for the six new internships, Mr Clarke attended the annual Careers Fair last year, held in Sigatoka, Fiji.

The fair is always a great opportunity for P&O Cruises to be represented as one of the leading employers in the region as we pursue our aim of having 10 percent of onboard staff drawn from the Pacific Islands, he noted.

Mr Clarke met with graduating students to discuss opportunities and potential career paths at P&O Cruises. They were also asked to complete a 2000-word paper outlining their suitability for the internship programme.

As a result of the four years that Carnival Australia has been represented at the fair, it has successfully deployed 31 crew members from Fiji.

## STAFF PROFILE | AITU KITIONE WILSON - SECURITY OFFICER, LAUCALA CAMPUS



**What is the length of time you've been employed at USP?**  
A little over four months.

**What is your home country?**  
Fiji.

**How do you usually begin your working day?**  
I begin my day by preparing myself physically, mentally, and spiritually.

**What is the best part of your current work?**  
Interacting with the many Pacific Islands students, delegates and locals.

**What is your best practical remedy for work and life stress?**  
Tuck myself into movies with family members, playing touch rugby, soccer, or swimming.

**What is the most unusual/ unexpected event that has ever happened to you?**  
Getting the opportunity to be part of the USP Security Services. There were so many applications made when I applied for the position and only four made the cut... worth trying!

**What is the best advice you've ever been given, or have given to students at USP?**

Never give up on life. Times are hard; therefore, make use of the opportunities available.

**Who inspires you and why?**  
My mum (Lia Wilson). She has been a rock in my life. A parent who understands the calamities in life; she makes sure that I be at my best with what I do.

**What have been your main career highlights?**  
Being the Chief Security Officer/ Assistant Foodcourt Manager at Tappoo City Complex from 2009-2011.

**What books are you reading at the moment, and why?**  
I mainly read the Fiji Times. Not into reading books yet.

**What are some challenges you think are faced by young people in the pacific?**  
Poverty, Financial instability, Unemployment, Unskilled jobs.

**What are your hopes for the Pacific in 2012 and beyond?**  
I hope that Governments of the day works hand-in-hand with their population to make the Pacific a crime free environment and that all young people (especially school dropouts) attain academic qualifications to get an employment.



Workshop participants with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Regional Campuses), Dr Esther Williams (centre) during the opening of the workshop.

## REGIONAL CAMPUSES LIBRARY STAFF UNDERGO TRAINING

A week-long workshop aimed at improving the services of the University of the South Pacific libraries in its regional campuses was held from 28 November to 2 December, 2011.

Library staff from 14 of the USP regional campuses/centres gathered at the Laucala Campus in Suva to take part in the training. The Laucala Campus is home to the main USP Library which was first established in 1969.

The objectives of the workshop was to train staff to be better equipped in terms of library customer and technical services, operations and resources; share library standards and best practices; explain the purpose, content and application of the Campus Library Operations Manual; and to observe and experience a professional study and work environment.

Speaking at the opening of the workshop, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Regional Campuses), Dr Esther Williams said that the training will enable participants to better understand the important role libraries play in the overall success of universities.

"You will learn that your major responsibility is service to the students - our key stakeholders. Therefore how you perform, think, act and plan for the future is important to the future of this University," participants were told.

Dr Williams elaborated that such workshops which are focused on student services, help raise the commitment of the University staff by empowering them to provide services across the region that are of high quality, equitable and student-oriented.

She reminded the participants on the importance of their work and the need to streamline competencies in the provision of effective library management and services.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor further stated that the workshop would help train and up-skill staff to keep up with the changing technology and to provide quality library services.

The USP Library network currently comprises 22 libraries located across USP member countries. Through the main Library, it offers more than 1 million books, 30,000 full text titles accessible via multidisciplinary databases on the library website, and over 300 print serial subscriptions.

Dr Williams pointed out that library staff need to review their attitude towards their users so that libraries are a conducive place to study and attracts students.

"We are looking at building library spaces that are friendly, where students can have access to discussion areas, idea spaces, and help build their creativity," she highlighted.

The Chairman of the Library Advisory Committee, Professor Randy Thaman encouraged participants to make the most of this opportunity. He challenged the participants to advance their learning through the experiences of other countries.

## RESEARCH STUDENT PROFILE | KELLY THOMAS BROWN



**What is your home country?**

Fiji.

**What programme are you currently enrolled in?**

Master of Science in Marine Science.

**Please state your research topic?**

Density, habitat and nursery studies of reef-associated sharks in Fiji.

**Please explain your reason for the choice of research topic?**

I was always fascinated with sharks and being an avid SCUBA

diver, seeing a shark on a dive is an awesome experience. While researching potential topics I found out that not much is known about sharks in Fiji and that there is no legislation protecting sharks, despite the fact that most of the shark species that are known to occur in Fiji are known to be threatened by overexploitation internationally. We do not have enough information on shark populations in Fiji and I want to address that. A healthy reef should have sharks.

**Please state the impact(s) you perceive your research will have locally or within the region?**

My research will contribute to the lacking data on sharks in Fiji, which will give policy makers more data to make decisions regarding sharks either for protection, fishery and/or export regulation or for tourism purposes. Through similar research, this can be expanded throughout the region as data on shark populations in the region is also lacking.

**What resources or assistance did the University provide you for your research?**

I am on a Research Office (Office of the Pro-vice Chancellor Research and International) Graduate Assistant Scholarship, which includes a small research grant. I also received additional research funding from the Faculty Research Committee of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment. The School of Marine Studies has

provided me with office and work space as well as technical assistance.

**What are some challenges that you faced as a researcher?**

Fieldwork on boats on reefs is the main component of my research, so weather and sea conditions dictate field time, especially for safety reasons. More funding is always welcome.

**What do you find most fulfilling in the whole research process?**

Studying animals that I am interested in and knowing that my research can contribute to their protection in Fiji. I also get to participate in shark conservation awareness by simply talking about my research.

**What are some recommendations you would make with regards to improving the research experience at the University?**

Strong support from administrators, including finance officers, dealing with research students is important.

**What is your advice to other prospective research students?**

It is an advantage if you have a personal interest in your research topic. Doing research is not just about obtaining an award at the end of the programme. Identify the skills that you will develop during your research that can make you secure future research opportunities or employment.

# INFORMATION SESSION ATTRACTS PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS



Student Officer-Enrolment from the Student Academic Services, Mr Shane Antonio (left) advises a student on USP courses and programmes during the information session.

Members of the public especially students flocked to a very successful two-day information session held by the University of the South Pacific at the Ivi Triangle in Suva on 13-14 January, 2012.

During the two days, representatives from the various sections of the University were present at hand to conduct face-to-face enrolment, provide academic counselling and answer queries relating to USP courses and programmes.

The response from the public was overwhelming as noted by the Student Officer-Enrolment from the Student Academic Services, Mr Shane Antonio who was present at the information session conducting enrolments for interested students.

"We have conducted a lot of face-to-face enrolments and received many queries from students which have been attended to," he went on to say.

Also part of the USP team was the Acting Director of the College of Foundation Studies, Ms Susan Sela, who described the event as part of "bringing USP to the people."

Majority of those who visited the information booths were secondary school students who had recently received their Fiji Seventh Form Examination results last week.

A student from Nasinu Secondary School, Ms Tekela Musudroka said she was pleased with what was on offer and the kind of advice and assistance provided at the information session.

"I am really looking forward to the university experience and I feel that this is the ideal way to get well informed before I actually begin studies at USP," she added.

Mr Joshua Nair, a student from another tertiary institute who visited the information booths, said that the staff were helpful in answering his queries.

Mr Nair is hoping to take up further studies in electronics at USP this year. He also took information leaflets and application forms for his other siblings and family members who are interested in pursuing tertiary studies.

Subsequently sessions were held in Suva, Nausori, Labasa and Lautoka.



Dr Priya Chattier (standing) conducts training for a group of youths involved in community work on gender.

## NEW PROGRAMME IN GENDER STUDIES

The University of the South Pacific will be for the first time offering specialised courses in Gender Studies in Fiji from this year. This is to meet the domestic training needs for gender specialists and also to build regional capacity of gender experts in the South Pacific region.

*The GN200 - Contemporary Feminism: Theory, Methods and Debates for Gender Research* and *GN300 - Gender, Global Change and Development in a Comparative Perspective* courses will be offered as part of a Minor in Gender Studies for students at undergraduate level.

The courses are open to new and existing students who want to take Gender Studies as electives and those who want to specialise in it.

The courses will equip students with skills in feminist and/or gender studies research by examining contemporary issues and debates regarding feminist research methods, methodology and epistemology. It will also look at how the measures and processes of development are gendered and what policies and institutions have been set in place nationally, regionally and internationally to advocate for gender justice.

Dr Priya Chattier, Coordinator of the Gender Studies Programme at USP, says that the courses will help prepare students for careers in public policy, social work, development aid, research, media and other professions in which there is a need for critical and creative interdisciplinary thought with a competitive edge on gendered analysis and frameworks.

As regional and international organisations including women's NGOs maintain the need for institutionalising gender and development curriculum in the context of the region, Dr Chattier points out that this has been addressed in the Gender Studies programme offered by the University.

"The content of the courses are practically relevant for the Pacific as it reflects historical, cultural, economical and developmental realities of not only Fiji but the South Pacific region, whilst being grounded in gender/feminist research and methodology," she elaborated.

The new courses are expected to become part of a Major in Gender Studies when a fully-fledged Gender Studies programme becomes available at undergraduate level in the near future.

Dr Chattier believes that USP has gone a step further in the "mainstreaming of gender" across the University curriculum through its compulsory courses. Gender is introduced either as a theme or topic for discussion in the content of the four University compulsory courses.

"It is expected that gender mainstreaming in the USP curriculum will inspire graduates to cross-examine their own positions and take collective actions that will contribute towards achieving gender equality concerns in their own communities, institutions and society as a whole," she added.

There are plans for the introduction of a Postgraduate Diploma in Gender and Development to be offered jointly by the School of Social Sciences and School of Government, Development Studies and International Affairs.

According to Dr Chattier, this will try to meet the critical skills gaps in gender-sensitive analysis, policy, planning, service delivery and implementation that existing USP graduates in the region can fill.

GN200 and GN300 courses will be offered in semester I and II respectively. Enrollment for the courses is still open.



The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra and the Vice-Chancellor and President of NUS, Professor Le'apai Asofou So'o at the signing of the MOU in Samoa.

## USP AND NUS ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP

The University of the South Pacific (USP) and The National University of Samoa (NUS) recently formalised their intentions to work together in areas of teaching, research and community engagement over the next three years.

This is after a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the two universities on 14 December, 2011 in Samoa.

Under this partnership arrangement, both institutions will collaborate on areas that include:

- Exchange of researchers, faculty staff, and students;
- Joint research or projects of mutual interest that address regional priorities;
- Technical assistance and training;
- Exploration of the potential to offer joint programmes; and
- Joint sponsorship of symposia, seminars, and conferences on themes of mutual interest.

The MOU was signed by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra and the Vice-Chancellor and President of NUS, Professor Le'apai Asofou So'o.

Professor Chandra highlighted that the MOU marks a milestone in the history of both the universities.

This will allow the two institutions to mutually benefit from each other through the exchange of researchers, faculty staff and students among other possible priorities and developments, he explained.

Professor Chandra said that the signing merely formalised a partnership that had existed since 1984, when NUS was established.

Professor So'o elaborated that the most important part of the MOU was that it will enable staff from both universities to work together and share resources.

Both Vice-Chancellors expressed that they are looking forward to working together.

Meanwhile Professor Chandra has been appointed President of the Association of Heads of Tertiary Institutions in the Pacific Islands (AHTIPI) and Professor So'o is the Association's Vice-President.

## UNIVERSITY ACKNOWLEDGES ALAFUA CAMPUS AUTHORS



The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra with staff from the Alafua Campus during the Alafua Authors Tea in Samoa.

The University of the South Pacific hosted authors from the Alafua Campus to a tea gathering to honour and recognise them for their research work last year.

Held on 14 December 2011, the inaugural *Alafua Authors Tea* brought together staff who presented summaries of their published research and its importance. This also marked the value given by the University to academic research.

The occasion was attended by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, who was in Samoa at that time for the Alafua Campus Graduation Ceremony.

Senior Librarian at the Alafua Campus, Ms Angela Jowitt said that the idea behind the gathering was to enable people in Samoa and the region to understand how the results from the different researches can help them.

Ms Jowitt, author of *'Surviving a Tsunami'*, is among six staff members who have had their work published during the past three years.

The other five authors who have had their research published include Dr Adama Ebenebe, Mr Tolo Iosefa, Mr Ioane Malaki, Dr Pradeep Singh and Dr Sonny Lameta. The latter had assisted as a content specialist in the publication of the book, *Planning and Management of Projects* - a manual now being used as a learning resource material for the School of Agriculture and Food Technology course. The publication was edited by the Acting Alafua Campus Director, Mrs Ruby Va'a and had been reviewed by a regional panel from agriculture ministries and tertiary education institutions.

Over the next couple of years, Ms Jowitt expects to see a huge increase in the number of authors from USP who are able to publish their research.

"I would also hope to see our authors get involved with external parties so we can carry on getting the name of USP out there. Not only that, the work we are doing also helps young students learn how to move forward in future," she added.

Ms Jowitt also thanked Mrs Va'a and the other authors who shared their research at the Authors' Tea.

She hopes that this will encourage other staff members to write up their research in preparation for the next Authors' Tea in 2012. The event is expected to be held annually.

# PUBLICATION SHEDS LIGHT ON CONSTITUTION MAKING IN FIJI



Associate Professor, Dr Sandra Tarte speaks at the launch of the handbook. Sitting (left to right): CCF Chief Executive Officer, Reverend Akuila Yabaki with the authors of the handbook, Ms Jill Cottrell and Professor Yash Ghai.

The real opportunity to devise a new constitution for which the process of public participation and consultation is thoughtfully and creatively devised and implemented, maybe the best chance for laying the foundations for long term peace and stability.

These were the comments made by the former Vice-President of Fiji, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi at the launch of the 'Constitution: Making and Reforms: Options for the Processes' handbook on 25 January, 2012.

The handbook was jointly launched by the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) and the School of Government, Diplomacy and International Affairs (SGDIA) of the University of the South Pacific.

A large crowd had gathered at the Holiday Inn in Suva to witness the launch of this new publication. Present among the guests was the Attorney-General of Fiji, Honorable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum and a number of diplomats as well as representatives from various institutions.

Speaking to those present, Ratu Madraiwiwi said that the launch of the handbook was a timely one for Fiji as the country begins the process of drawing up a new constitution.

In his review of the handbook, the former Vice-President said that the focus of the publication on constitution making as a means for peace building is a relatively new and welcome concept.

This, according to Ratu Madraiwiwi, enables citizens of a state to come together with a genuine commitment and a passion to create structures, institutions, and systems that will be engaged in the betterment and

welfare of society as a whole.

Published by INTERPEACE - an international peace-building organisation, the handbook draws from more than a hundred constitutional experiences of countries including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It provides practical guidance on how to design transparent, nationally led and owned processes that are participatory and inclusive.

The publication has been written by four respected experts from the constitution-making domain, Michele Brandt, Professor Yash Ghai, Jill Cottrell, and Anthony Regan.

While introducing Professor Ghai and Ms Cottrell, two of the four co-authors who were present at the launch, Associate Professor at SGDIA, Dr Sandra Tarte, said it would be hard to find two more eminent, qualified and prolific scholars.

Both Professor Ghai and Ms Cottrell have worked as constitutional experts and academics in many countries around the world. They have written extensively on political and constitutional issues in Fiji and other Pacific Island states.

Dr Tarte said that while the authors of the book contend that the process of making a constitution is important, effective public participation in the making of a constitution needs to be encouraged.

A copy of the handbook is available on: <http://www.interpeace.org/constitutionmaking/sites/default/files/Constitution-Making-Handbook.pdf>



Pro Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Quality), Dr Michael Gregory presents the annual Planning and Quality department's Employee of the Year award to Mr Edwin Singh.

## STAFF RECEIVES SPECIAL ACCOLADE

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Quality) of the University of the South Pacific, Dr Michael Gregory recently presented the annual Planning and Quality department's *Employee of the Year* award to Mr Edwin Singh during the department's retreat at the Pearl Resort in Pacific Harbour, Fiji from 1 - 2 December, 2011.

Mr Singh, who works as the Institutional Researcher and Data Analyst at the Planning and Quality department, is the second recipient of the award.

The idea behind the new annual commendation was to recognise a member of staff in the department who had shown consistent professional excellence together with an outstanding commitment to USP over a twelve-month period.

In presenting the new award, Dr Gregory said that Mr Singh was a worthy recipient as he had developed the first-ever USP

dashboard system which allows University staff to access data on real terms with a click of a button.

Dr Gregory also thanked Mr Sunil Chand (Senior Data Analyst) for being a supportive supervisor to Mr Singh and encouraging him to achieve the department's goal.

In accepting the plaque, Mr Singh said, he was very grateful to receive the award. He thanked Dr Gregory, and his supervisor and the rest of the staff for their support in creating an environment that empowered him to soar and achieve his goals.

Mr Singh holds a Masters in Software Engineering and has worked at various organisations before joining USP in November, 2010. Mr Singh was also a participant of the 3-minute thesis competition in 2011. His thesis was based on 'Mobile Micro Payment Systems.'

# New Plant discovered in Fiji



Photo: IAS



Mr Marika Tuiwawa (centre) stands with the biodiversity assessment team overlooking Matasawalevu Bay of Nakasaleka District in Kadavu, Fiji. Insert: The newly discovered flower species.

A new flowering plant belonging to the *Medinilla* species, similar to that of the famous *Tagimoucia* flower, has been recently discovered on the island of Kadavu in Fiji.

The plant was found on the edge of a remnant primary forest during a biodiversity assessment of forests in Nakasaleka district, Kadavu by scientists at the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) of the University of the South Pacific working under the IUCN - Water and Nature Initiative project.

Taxonomic work is currently underway to get a proper name of the plant and in the meantime a temporary name has been given for the plant. It is called *Medinilla Matasawalevu*, illustrating the location where it was discovered.

Mr Marika Tuiwawa, Curator of the South Pacific Regional Herbarium and lead scientist and botanist on this particular expedition, highlighted that discovering new things was part of their everyday work at IAS.

Commenting on the discovery, Mr Tuiwawa revealed that it was an "opportunistic find". This is despite the fact that there have been many research done since the University came into existence, there are still many species out there that nobody knows about which is yet to be discovered and identified.

"We were actually on our way down to the village of Matasawalevu, after seven hours of hiking, where we were going to spend the night. We were looking around where we were walking and saw this cluster of white flowers in a tree growing at the edge of the grassland. Upon closer examination, I realised that I was looking at a flower that I had not seen anywhere else in Fiji. Yes, it is definitely a new record for Fiji" he said.

There are about 400 known species of *Medinilla* around the world and of

that, 11 can only be found in Fiji.

The major threat to the new species is the disappearing of its habitat, Mr Tuiwawa said. The only reason the plant has been discovered is because it is growing at the edge of where the burning of a traditional road, which links two villages, continually takes place to keep the route accessible.

Water and Wetlands Coordinator at IUCN's Oceania Regional Office, Dr Milika Sobey said that the discovery of this previously unknown species of plant gives us a sense of just how fragile nature can be.

The Global Director of IUCN's Biodiversity Conservation Group, Ms Jane Smart further noted that the fact that only one plant of this kind was found so far and that it occurs in such a vulnerable place should set alarm bells ringing.

The challenge now is to protect the new species and raise awareness of its importance among local communities, to secure its long term future, Ms Smart stated.

Mr Tuiwawa pointed that there was a serious lack of knowledge on the plant within the local community which is why IAS is planning to carry community awareness about the plant.

"I am glad IUCN is willing to provide some funds for community awareness and at the same time enable an assessment to find out if there are other plants of the same type around the vicinity," he added.

Mr Tuiwawa further added that USP plays a very important role in training scientists (taxonomist) within the Pacific region who now have the skills and experience to recognise unique organisms around them.