The University of Fiji
UNIpulse
NEWSLETTER
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UniFiji Celebrates 12th Anniversary

The Vice-Chancellor Professor Prem Misir

March 14 marks an important date in UniFiji calendar. 12 years ago, this was the date when The University of Fiji opened its door for the students. Below is the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Prem Misir's message on UniFiji's 12 Year Anniversary.

The University of Fiji today celebrates its 12th Birthday Anniversary, after 12 years of weathering the storm and initiating new knowledge and innovation from the onset of its humble beginnings in 2005.

With the new academic year 2017 unfolding on a high, the University is on a roll with increased student numbers, as an incisive projection in its Five-Year Strategic Plan 2017-2021: The Global Path to Academic Excellence and Building a Knowledge-Based Society. Within this Strategic Plan, internationalization, interdisciplinary, and academic-industry collaboration are some of the significant strategic platforms for the delivery of tertiary education at the University and for the development of a knowledge society in Fiji.

Intrinsically, to advance this knowledge-based development framework, where knowledge and not physical capital is the source of wealth for social and economic development, this University, through constant, quality, relevant and significant research studies, strives to generate new strategic knowledge and innovation.

The University now operates as a fully operational Suva Campus with a State-of-the-art lecture theatre. And the expanded MBBS programme at the Suva Campus stands tall in its contribution to alleviate the growing shortage of medical doctors in Fiji.

Today, the University has circa 2000 alumni, inclusive of 109 medical graduates, many with full employment in the world of work; and, indeed, a continuing source of motivation to receive tertiary education at this FHEC-fully registered and recognized local University. Without a doubt, too, the University of Fiji feels doubly proud about its FHEC-approved Master's degree in Renewable Energy Management, the first of its kind in Fiji.

And its Decree enables it to fulfill these post-secondary educational needs of the varying Fiji communities and global communities desiring to obtain tertiary education at the University.

Undoubtedly, today, the University displays a distinct prominence of articulating and operationalizing a widening and deepening student access for academically qualified students, especially for students with a low socioeconomic status.

In consonance with the essence of the new strategic plan, the University now reaches out to the corporate world through its two successful Academic-Industry collaboration events in June 2016 in Nadi and August 2016 Suva, respectively, all in aid of generating sponsored funding, providing work-ready graduates for meeting employability demands, and offering Online and Short Courses/workshops.

Also, the Schools and Centres are now working toward an internal review of their respective programs and courses, and, in this context, the School of Humanities and Arts (SOHA) took the lead in this endeavor, culminating in a positive feedback from the reviewers.

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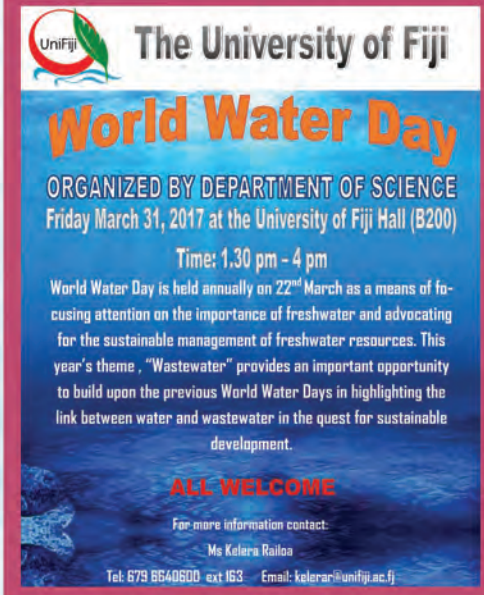

KNOWLEDGE BASED DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE of UNIFIJI

- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Date: Saturday 6th May, 2017

UniFiji Celebrates 12th Anniversary

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The game plan of the internal reviews is to bring this University into a state of institutional readiness for external accreditation of its programs.

It is exciting times for the University as it now has a fully operational Rabindranath Tagore Centre (RTC), with formal inauguration through the Indian High Commissioner to Fiji, and with its housing quarters in the University Library. Note also the newly-formed BEMA for the School of Law at the Suva Campus.

The University of Fiji's sponsorship of the centennial commemoration of the Abolition of Indian Indentureship entails a global academic conference from March 22-24, 2017, further institutionalizing and recognizing the University of Fiji as the South Pacific's Global University.

The University also will host the upcoming Knowledge-Based Development Conference and Research Day at Saweni Campus on May 6, 2017.

With myriad developments fast becoming a reality, the Quality Assurance Department, as another new development, now has leverage to provide professional guidance to ensure quality learning and teaching, with appropriate back-up support from the FHEC. And consistent with its progressive outlook, the University is venturing into evidenced-based and research-based learning and teaching, gradually utilizing a polymath approach; as well as ensuring that early-career academics actively engage in interdisciplinary and international collaborative research to generate a new knowledge.

And so, in this new thrust to develop a knowledge society in Fiji, the overall strategic objectives of this University are to deliver the long-term resources to support and advance its pre-eminent position – nationally, regionally, and internationally – as an intellectual powerhouse of excellent learning, teaching, and research; and to enable it to offer added support to its five fundamental priorities of students, research, academics, partnerships, and people; priorities that will make the University progressively competitive in the tertiary education market.

I salute the University Community on its mammoth contributions, catapulting this University to scale new heights and new horizons!!!
Happy Birthday to the University of Fiji!!!

Professor Misir presents new Book

Professor Misir presents new book.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Prem Misir presented his new book Indian Indentured Women: Domination and Social Degradation during the Plenary Session of the International Conference Indian Indentureship and Girmitiya Descendants: Past, Present and Future.

His new book documents the plight of indentured Indian women, how they are exploited and their fight against race, gender and class oppression abetted by the women of the Indian subcontinent.

Palgrave Macmillan, the publisher of the book, in a document said that it also expands the feminist perspective on the race, gender and class paradigm to include class power as the determinant of social interactions.

"The book particularly presents Indian women's fight against the system of indentured labour, while also acknowledging that people located in different structures (race, gender and class) are eventually influenced by their varied experiences and opportunities," stated Palgrave Macmillan's document.

Dr. Rajni Kaushal Chand, Senior Lecturer, School of Language, Arts and Media at The University of the South Pacific said "Misir's Indian Indentured Woman: Domination and Social Degradation is one of the few books that discusses girmit women's degrading treatment, meagre wages, exploitation and a quest for survival. Misir's book is a timely addition to the 'girmit literature' as we celebrate the 100 years of the end of the Indenture system."

While Dr. Pramila Devi, Director of Lautoka Campus at The University of the South Pacific, said "[This book] is a welcome addition to the literature on indentured Indian women, and their social being in Girmit nations from 1834 to 1917 … This is a must read for anyone interested in indenture, social and political transformation, colonial studies, and gender studies."

Professor Prem discussed his book on Friday, March 24, 2017 at 9:00 a.m at the Plenary Session of the International Conference Indian Indentureship and Girmitiya Descendants held at The University of Fiji, March 22-24, 2017.

No Development without Quality Education

The education sector is highly important for a country's development as without quality education there could be no development, said Professor Prem Misir the Vice-Chancellor of UniFiji.

Speaking at the Education Forum meeting held at the Tanoa Hotel in Nadi on Monday (6/03/2017), he said that there needed to be enhancement of the poor education system.

"The education sector is highly important for the country's development, and, therefore, there must be some alleviation of the poor education quality through progressive policies, programs, and projects, even in rural areas hence, quality teaching, necessary for quality learning, is one of the prerequisites to develop a knowledge society," he stated.

He also said that the pursuit of a knowledge society requires a revolution in education that would remove all traditional barriers to teaching, accessibility, curriculum, and quality.

"Schools need to develop the capacity of students to learn on their own; to become involved with lifelong learning; and to develop a coping capacity for risk and change. Honing this capacity for using new learning and teaching strategies is not on the radar of traditional primary and secondary education," he explained.

He further explained that schools needed to be sure that inputs such as school buildings, textbooks, and trained teachers accelerated learning.

"This means bringing into line management of schools and teachers, financing protocols, and incentive systems with the purpose of learning," he reinforced.

The Education Forum was organized by the Minister of Education Dr. Mahendra Reddy and was attended by the Vice-Chancellors of the three universities as well other participants.

CIS targets traditional leadership

Dr. Litiana Kuridrani

The Centre of iTaukei Studies (CIS) at UniFiji offers a unique programme Bachelor of Arts in iTaukei Management whose chief motive is to address leadership and management at community levels, says Dr. Litiana Kuridrani, Centre Director of CIS.

"We are targeting Provisional Administrators, Roko Tui's and provincial office staffs, government workers, tourism sector, teachers, and all that have an interest on ITaukei studies and management. We are also targeting traditional leaders in modern societies for the iTaukei people and we are hoping to go much deeper to the tikina (district) and Turaga-ni-Koro (village headman) level. They need to be taught all these basics about participatory integrated community development plans," she said.

Dr. Kuridrani also stated that the main objective of the programme is to help make our students and their communities more knowledgeable. In other words, building knowledge-based society.

"That would link to the national development plan of Fiji, filtering to the provincial and district level and come to the village level to establish inventories of natural, social, physical and financial capital and their abilities to contribute to national economic development, she explained.

She further said that the programme is more participatory than a trickle down approach (planning and management with the people). "It matches well with the "solesolevaki" approach in traditional Fiji.

Students are also taught the tools for integrated local community development where the people identify the problem and they work around that, develop it in their community and link it to the national level," she reinforced.

CIS has started with inter-disciplinary teaching with the Department of Management and later with SoL.

SoBE's Young Academic writes in International Journal

Mr. Nikeel Kumar, the youngest academic in the Department of Economics has recently co-authored in 2 international journals. The journals are; The Effect of Energy on Output per Worker in the Balkan Peninsula: A Country-Specific Study of 12 nations in the Energy Community and Effect of Tourism on Economic Growth of Sri Lanka: Accounting for Capital per Worker, Exchange Rate and Structural Breaks.

Mr. Kumar joined as a tutor in for the Department of Economics in the School of Business and Economics last year. Mr. Kumar said that he feels encouraged that the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Prem Misir and senior management are supportive towards young academics like him. He is looking forward to achieving a higher academic qualification in near future.

The University of Fiji strongly supports early career academics to undertake research projects and journal writing as it enables them to think critically, analyze concepts and apply what they have learnt.

UniFiji Donates Equipment to Lautoka Hospital

Dr. Fred Merchant at Lautoka Hospital

The University of Fiji through Umanand Prasad School of Medicine (UPSM) donated an X-Ray Viewing Carousel to the Lautoka Hospital on March 16. The Carousel is worth $2000FJD.

Speaking at the event, Ms Shirley Sangita Prasad, Marketing and Public Relations Officer said that X-Ray board was presented as a compliment to Lautoka Hospital. "We present an X-Ray view box through Umanand Prasad of School of Medicine as our compliment to Lautoka Hospital.

The University of Fiji appreciates the generosity of the Medical Superintendent and the staff of the hospital for accommodating and assisting our Umanand Prasad School of Medicine students during their clinical studies at the hospital," she said.

Dr. Fred Merchant of UPSM, the person who initiated the donation said he was very happy to donate the equipment and that it would be useful for the hospital.

"This carousel will be used by various departments and general staff primarily in the Central Staff Meeting Room. Currently there is no available functioning general use mobile X-Ray viewing unit," he explained.

The event was attended by various staff as well as interns at the Lautoka Hospital.

UniFiji Employs New Marketing Strategy

The University of Fiji is employing a new marketing strategy whereby each school at the University would be responsible for their own targeted sub-marketing plans.

Marketing and Public Relations Officer Shirley Sangita Prasad explained that the new strategy was employed in order to have a maximum and direct outreach to potential students.

"The new enrolment planning and projections process will emphasize on the importance of the inter-relationships between individual school recruitment and marketing activities, in-class curriculum and pedagogy, academic support programmes, student services, and the total campus student experience," said Prasad.

She also said that process would enable the University to specifically plan the size and composition of the student body, enhance the student experience, and support student success."The process will direct us about the type of institution we want to be, the quality and programme discipline of students we want to recruit, and establish goals and strategies to help us get there," she stated.

Speaking further she explained that the University was focusing on targeted marketing because it is cost effective."The beauty of target marketing is that by aiming our marketing efforts at specific groups, and here we are focusing on mostly secondary school students, it makes the promotion, our programmes and courses easier and more cost-effective," said Shirley.

The university is also aiming for more community engagements this year.

The University will continue to use of the new age digital marketing as well as carefully scrutinised mass marketing mediums which will help in the branding of UniFiji to a wide variety of audiences.

Internationalization to benefit students

The Vice-Chancellor Professor Prem Misir explaining to the students the importance of internationalization.

The University of Fiji with its emerging focus on internationalization through functioning multilaterally and not unilaterally will have more to its advantage in relation to research-based teaching, research, and knowledge transfer, says Vice-Chancellor Professor Prem Misir.

Speaking at the University's School of Science and Technology (SoST) student orientation, he added that developing a global network was crucial for the University.

"The University of Fiji is forging ahead with the task of developing a global network of academic and commercial partners; The University of Fiji's South Pacific location and cultural dimensions of its student body symbolize a huge asset to facilitate interactions with global alumni and graduate networks," stated Professor Misir.

He advised the SoST students that they would have a fundamental association with the staff to help develop a knowledge based society.

"Through the Strategic Plan, you would have an intrinsic collaboration with the University's staff to contribute to develop a knowledge society in Fiji. Indeed, when you complete your studies, your input to develop this knowledge society continues by virtue of your achievements at The University of Fiji," he reinforced.

The Vice-Chancellor Professor Misir also said that after graduating from the University students would have certain qualities that would build a knowledge society.

"We want our graduates to be a creative thinker; to develop interpersonal skills; to have ICT literacy; to have an innovative ability; to acquire an internationally - oriented mind-set; to have an environmentally-responsible outlook; and to build a commitment to ethical values," he concluded.

The orientation was attended by over 50 first year students and was a success.

UniFiji Orientation a massive success

Mr Seru Ramakita speaking to the students.

The University of Fiji on 10th February conducted its student orientation and was a massive success attended by hundreds of students.

Speaking at the event the motivational speaker Mr Seru Ramakita shared the importance of hard work and determination.

"When you enter the University, I know you would be scared but remember to work. If you are ever in doubt seek assistance from your lecturers and always complete your work on time. If you work hard, you will never fail a unit and you would never get in trouble with the school or the TSLB," he explained.

The Vice-Chancellor Professor Prem Misir said joining UniFiji would provide building blocks of a knowledge-based society that the current Government is striving towards.

"I harbour no illusions that your entrance into the intellectual halls of this University would provide face-to-face interactions with three components as building blocks of a knowledge society, among others; these building blocks are internationalization, interdisciplinarity, and academic-industry collaboration," he stated.

He further added that as students at The University of Fiji, they would experience both disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity.

"Disciplinarity is the expertise within a particular discipline; and interdisciplinarity will enable students to study problems and their solutions that require inputs from several disciplines," he explained.

Students who attended the orientation said that they were overwhelmed and were very appreciative of the orientation.

"The orientation was really informative and I learnt a lot including information on the University and its facilities as well as the strategic plan," said Sheenal Aashna, a first year BSc student.

"I found this orientation really interesting and I learnt a lot of things like the courses being offered," said Swashna, a first year BA student.

Suva Campus had its orientation on the 13th of February which was well attended.

UniFiji focuses in building international networks

International study experiences assist students from both visiting and hosting universities in building international networks, increases cross-cultural competency, and encourages the students to step outside of their comfort zones, says Shirley Prasad, Marketing and Public Relations Officer at University of Fiji.

This comes about as the University is hosting 10 students from Curtin University, Australia.

The students are here from School of Science and Engineering and this is part of their Internationalisation programme.

"For UniFiji, hosting international visitors can lead to greater international outlook and intercultural understanding.

Also, UniFiji students can apply for New Colombo Plan Scholarship and study at Australian University," said Prasad.

One of the visiting students Thomas Smedley who studying chemical engineering at Curtin University said that the curriculum taught at UniFiji is similar to that of his own University.

"I think it is very cool and it is very interesting to learn about how other countries and cultures teach their students, very surprising how similar it is to our current syllabus," he said.

Another student Marko Petrovic said that staff and students at UniFiji are the most welcoming and warm people he had ever met.

"The communal atmosphere makes learning here pleasure as classes are smaller and more interactive and I wish I didn't have to leave," he stated.

The students would sit in everyday classes and lectures to observe Fijian teaching and learning methods. The classes were not of any discipline specific, but more for the students to get an authentic experience.

This group is the second one to come to UniFiji. Professor Shawkat Ali, the Dean for School of Science and Technology initiated this programme last year with Curtin University.

Getting a MoU between the two universities would be the next step.

Leadership Graduates from UniFiji awarded Minister's Excellence Awards

The 119th Fiji Principals Association Conference Education Minister's Excellence Award recipients with their awards.

It is a proud moment for the Education Department as four of its graduates from Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership Program were recognized for their hard work by the Ministry of Education and were awarded Minister's Excellence Awards during the 119th Fiji Principals' Association Conference at Studio 6 Apartment in Suva on Wednesday 15th March 2017.

The ex-graduates have also had promotions along the way and are now principals at leading high schools in Fiji. According to the Head of the Education Department, Ms. Prathika Gounder, it was an overwhelming achievement for the Education Department as four out of eight principals being awarded the Minister's Excellence Awards were its graduates.

Mrs Vikashni Sharma won the Minister's Excellence Award for her hard work at Rakiraki Public High School. She took charge of the school in 2016 and kept the morale of the teachers and students high despite having great damages and loses incurred due to Tropical Cyclone Winston last year.

According to Mrs. Sharma, she is a visionary leader and believes in teamwork as according to her "one can achieve a lot when responsibilities are distributed fairly among the staff members and there is mutual understanding and respect for all".

She is currently the principal of Jasper High School and the Education Department congratulates her on her fine achievement. She has been also elected as the Junior President of the Fiji Principals' Association.

Another recipient of the Minister's Excellence Award was Mr. Ahmed Mohd Tauwab from Valebasoga Secondary School in Labasa. Mr. Tauwab received two awards for producing excellent results and being a dedicated leader in the school and the community at large. According to the Education Department, Mr. Tauwab was an industrious student and completed his Master of Educational Leadership Degree in 2015.

Mr. Chandra Segran Pillay who is a principal at Suva Grammar School was also a recipient of the Minister's Excellence Award for his dedicated service as a teacher leader and for producing excellent results in the external examinations. Similar case is for Mr. Muni Kumar who is currently the principal at Balata High School.

According to the Dean of the School of Humanities and Arts, Associate Professor, Dr. Wahab Ali, the awarding of the Minister's Excellence Awards to four of its graduates is a big milestone for the Education Department. "I always tell our graduates that it is through their hard work and making a difference in their work places that true recognition can be achieved" stated Dr. Ali. The Educational Leadership program offered by the Education Department is ideal for prospective heads of schools. Similar sentiments were also shared by our external reviewer, Professor Charles Kivunja who stated in his report that our "programs were undergirded by relevant theoretical frameworks and the curricula were in alignment with the Fiji Qualifications Framework and requirements specified by the University of Fiji". We wish all the recipients of the Minister's Excellence Awards the very best in their future endeavours.

UniFiji successfully evaluates PAFCO

The University of Fiji was awarded the job evaluation of Pacific Fishing Company (PACFO) in November last year.

Dr. Ranasinghe Amaradasa and his team from School of Business and Economics went to Levuka and successfully evaluated the staff.

This assignment was taken by the University through a successful tender bid.

The job evaluation report was well received by the management of PAFCO as it met all their terms of requirement. PAFCO's CEO, Mr Bhan Pratap said that evaluation was done within a short period of time and the Board of Directors found the recommendations very informative.

The report provided an insight of how best PAFCO could accommodate the changes in line with that of the company's strategic plan.

Prefects Investiture at Tilak High School

Professor Prem Misir with Mr. Sashi Bhupendra Singhthe Principal of Tilak High School .

Prefects should know that the pursuit of truth, honesty, and compassion could be a practical framework for honing your leadership skills said Vice-Chancellor of UniFiji, Professor Prem Misir.

Speaking at the prefect's investiture programme at Tilak High School as the Chief Guest today (24th February, 2017), Professor Misir highlighted the importance of compassion in building leadership capacity.

"Knowledge may give us considerable power, but we achieve fullness through compassion, according to Tagore. Prefects in developing and refining your leadership capacity to make the world a better place and to provide service to humanity, take this cue from Tagore, thus: "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence," he explained.

He further discussed the role that prefect leaders would have in making Tilak High School a more harmonious place.

"As prefects, your leadership could recreate Tilak High School as a meeting ground of cultures, where conflicts of interest become less potent, and where all students come together in a common pursuit of truth and appreciate," said Professor Misir.

"As prefects of this high school, you have a moral and social responsibility to develop and sharpen your leadership capabilities not only to enhance the school's new approach to education, but to enrich the social consciousness of your fellow students to ensure that they do the right thing, in the same way that Tilak marshaled ordinary Indians to resist the British in India," reinforced Professor Misir.

The day saw various students being accorded with leadership roles in environment, form monitors, school prefects, head boy and girl and various other roles.

The ceremony was attended by over 1000 students of the school, parents as well as teachers from various schools.

Dr Wahab Ali presents at Education Forum

Dr. Wahab Ali presenting in Nadi

Associate Professor Dr. Wahab Ali did a presentation on Teaching Methodology and Pedagogy for Primary and High School Teachers at the Education Forum on 7th March, 2017 at Tanoa International Hotel. Dr. Ali stated that teaching methodology compromised of a number of principles such as teaching philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy and classroom management strategies.

Foremost, the teaching philosophy determines the teaching approach that will be implemented by the teacher. For example, constructivism is a student centered philosophy that emphasizes hands on learning and students actively participating in lessons. Likewise, a teacher who has a constructivist philosophy believes that students should construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through a relevant curriculum. A rigorous and relevant curriculum is one that is cognitively demanding and challenging to students as they apply the essential concepts and skills to real world, complex and open ended situations. Our nation's workforce continues to evolve in a workplace transformed by new ideas, products, processes and services that have a direct impact on the content. The content should not just be knowledge based but involve particular intellectual challenges and skills students will need to take on the challenges and opportunities that we can't yet even imagine now.

In essence, quality education in the contemporary world is about developing pedagogies and practices for effective learning and teaching so that our students are ready to engage in the real world in a creative, productive and positive manner. Key in our classroom is the building of critical thinkers who are able to critique the answers and question their own answers, rather than recite the answers when prompted. Pedagogy needs to be supported by effective classroom management strategies. While there is no magic elixir that will confer skills in this area of professional responsibility, teachers try to create a safe and an ideal learning environment for the students.

Classroom management involves more than just discipline and rules as it encompasses a myriad of tasks that take place in the classroom each day. Subsequently, the teaching philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy and classroom management strategies collectively contribute towards effective teaching methodology that in turn leads to meaningful lifelong learning.

As we move to transform the lives of our students, it must be established that our students have changed radically from that of the past. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach because they think and process information differently from their predecessors. This is because these students have gone through a digital upbringing. These days even small babies get to play with mobile phones as toys. So at the tender age of one or two years they get the feel of an incoming call and the vibrations. These different kinds of experiences lead to different brain structures and affects different thinking patterns in children. Behavioural and social theorists, confirm that physical environment and language do have impact on brain development. These students are known as the digital natives as they are born during the digital revolution and are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet.

Subsequently, teaching methodologies implemented in schools need to consider these changes. Our students need to be taught differently as they are able to process and do multi-tasking with ease. They are able to access information quickly from multiple sources and have shorter attention spans for old ways of learning. This has implications for teachers who are digital immigrants as they need to revisit their teaching philosophies so that they are able to engage the students in meaningful learning and teaching experiences. The new teachers joining the task force are digital natives themselves and they need to be supported so that they are able to digitalise their teaching wherever possible. These days there are many educational applications and softwares that can complement the teaching methodology making learning a motivational and an enjoyable exercise.

The curriculum is no longer content based textbook-driven or fragmented, but is thematic, outcome based, project-based and integrated. Knowledge is no longer memorization of facts and figures, but is constructed through research and application, and connected to previous knowledge and experiences. All these innovations and changes have implications for the selection of appropriate teaching methodologies.

For in our world, knowledge is power, and education empowers. It is an indispensable part of the growth equation in creating a knowledge based society that in turn can propel innovation and entrepreneurship towards knowledge based development.

UniFiji Free Bus initiative commences

The UniFiji free bus fare initiative which was launched in January has kick starterd from Monday March 20, 2017.

Speaking at the momentous occasion, the Vice-Chancellor Professor Prem Misir said the Classic Buses' initiative was an enormous milestone for The University of Fiji, coming on the heels of the University's 12th birth anniversary.

"The Classic Buses' initiative represents historic moments for The University of Fiji, especially with the University's active thrust toward the diffusion of higher education for all Fiji and all socioeconomic groups," he said. He further elaborated that the initiative tied in well with the Strategic Plan for the University in developing a knowledge society in Fiji. "The Initiative is quite consonant with the Strategic Plan's strategic priorities, in terms of its potency to widen and deepen access to the University, to increase the spread of tertiary education, and eventually to contribute to the development of a knowledge society in Fiji," he explained.

The bus service is free for all staff and students of the University. The University would also like to thank Executive Director Finance, Mr Ravineet Sami and Registrar Mr Kamlesh Arya for their continuous efforts to make this initiative a reality.

SoST making Strides towards Climate Change Research

Ms. Priyatma Singh with her Poster at ANU, Australia.

Ms. Priyatma Singh from the Department of Science received scholarship to present a scientific poster at the Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (AMOS) and Meteorological Society of New Zealand (MSNZ) conference held at Australian National University in conjunction with the Australian/New Zealand Climate Forum (ANZCF) from Tuesday 7 to Friday 10 February 2017.

The annual AMOS National Conference frequently attracts more than 400 attendees, making it the leading forum in Australia for presenting the cutting-edge study in atmospheric and oceanographic science. The paper on "Customary Land and Climate Change Induced Relocation – A Case Study of Vunidogoloa Village, Vanua Levu, Fiji"was written together with Ms.Dhrishna Charan (Department of Science) and Ms.Manpreet Kaur (Department of Language, Literature and Communication), The University of Fiji.

The Department of Science is also organising information session and awareness programmes leading to the build-up of COP 23 which is being organized by Fiji and will be hosted at the headquarters of the UNFCCC Secretariat in Bonn, Germany.

Launch of the Bema, Suva Campus

The Dean of SoL, Professor Shaista Shameem

The School of Law's Oratory Platform, the Bema was unveiled at the Samabula Campus by the Commissioner of the Fiji Independent Legal Services Commission (ILSC), Dr Thomas V. Hickie on 3rd February.

The Bema was used in Ancient Greece by famous lawyers and philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle and Plato as a speaking platform from which new and interesting ideas about law, philosophy, democracy, freedoms and other views were discussed and debated.

The wording on the Bema marble states:

- In Ancient Greece the Bema was a platform for orators who spent hours voicing their philosophies and opinions.. In Greek Law Courts, parties to a dispute presented their arguments and addressed citizens from the Bema.

- The Old Testament referred to the Bema as a place of judgment. In early Christian architecture the Bema was a raised platform with a lectern and seats for the clergy who used it to deliver sermons.

- In Eastern Christianity the Bema represented a sanctuary for freedom of speech. All societies have used the concept of the Bema to represent freedom of speech, expression and opinion.

- The University of Fiji School of Law has erected its Bema in memory of the great orators of the past and to provide an opportunity for its community to practise advocacy for the public good.

While introducing the Bema and the Chief Guest, the Dean of the School of Law, Professor Shaista Shameem said, 'We are training our Law students for sensitive knowledge-based leadership of the country, and this is our practice platform. Certain Bema days will be open to others by invitation, for example, judges, lawyers, politicians and civil society members. They will express their views and no doubt be challenged by the audience."

The Chief Guest, Dr Hickie, referred to the Bema as a 'wonderful innovation' by the School of Law and one that will educate Unifiji law students to become great orators in Fiji.

In honour of the Unveiling the School of Law students performed three works: 'The Merchant of Venice (Portia's The quality of mercy is not strained)', 'Invictus' by Henley and 'The Lawyers' Ways' by Dunbar. The students were trained for the performance by Ms Kathleen Taito, who has taught English for University Purposes at the Samabula Campus for 6 years. Ms Taito and Professor Shameem will now form a Theatre Group at the School of Law to give students additional skills in public speaking.

The unveiling was attended by the Chief Justice, Hon. Justice Anthony Gates, the Chief Magistrate, Mr Usaia Ratuvili, the Acting Chief Registrar, Mr Krishan Prasad, members of the legal community, staff of the School of Law Saweni and Samabula Campuses, and students. Pt Bhuwan Dutt represented the University Council. The Acting Vice-Chancellor, Associate Professor Wahab Ali, attended and delivered concluding remarks full of wisdom. The Registrar, Mr Kamlesh Arya also attended on behalf of the University management and was instrumental, along with Executive Director Finance, Mr Ravineet Sami, and his staff in providing facilities for the construction of the Bema and the unveiling for which the School of Law is grateful.

Professor Shameem said that the Bema days at the School of Law will be well publicised so anyone from the University community can attend and take part. A Bema Society will be offered as a club option to students to join on Orientation Day 13th February.

MREM programme to help achieve COP21 outcomes

The pioneering group of students for the newly-launched Masters in Renewable Energy Management (MREM) programme.

The Masters in Renewable Energy Management (MREM) being offered by The University of Fiji will help in human capacity building towards the implementation of renewable energy, which is an essential tool for climate change mitigation, said Dr. Anirudh Singh, Coordinator of the MREM programme at UniFiji.

"If you want to implement renewable energy, you ought to have the capacity to do it and one of the aspects of capacity building is human capacity building. This is where the MREM programme has taken a lead as it trains people to participate in these projects," said Dr Singh. He further explained that the programme ties in well with the outcomes of COP21.

"The outcomes of COP21 are that the world has agreed to support the poorer nations to carry out their climate change mitigation activities and one of the main methods for climate change mitigation is implementation of renewable energy," he stated. He also said the MREM programme, which is one of its kind in Fiji, came at a very suitable time when Fiji held the presidency of COP23.

"MREM programme comes in at a very opportune time; this is something that we ought to be proud about that UniFiji has actually chosen to offer this course at this time of the history of the country," he reinforced. He further explained that students who finished the MREM programme would be working at the cutting edge of Fiji's socio-economic development.

Meanwhile he said that the student numbers for the course had exceeded expectations.

Fees Payment Made Easier

Executive Director Finance, Mr Ravineet Sami

The UniFiji students will soon be able to pay their fees at any post Fiji outlet during their operating hours from Monday to Saturday. This means that the sponsors or parents of the students who are catering for the fees of their children do not have to come down to the university to pay the fees.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has already being signed between the university and Post Fiji. The Bill Pay Agreement between the University of Fiji and Post Fiji Limited will be launched on March 29 at Post Fiji head office in Suva.

The design of data has been implemented and a trial has been successfully conducted. The annual cost that the university will pay is $1000 which involves bank transfer fees and charges. Post Fiji will update the daily transaction to the University every close of business, so that student account is updated.

This is another great initiative by the Executive Director Finance, Mr Ravineet Sami.

The University has accessible teaching and service delivery and our primary focus is always to deliver best service delivery to our students in line with our strategic plan.

Major Facelift

The Saweni Campus recently went through a total uplift. The upgrade was necessary to accommodate the growing number of students and provide them with better learning environment.

The following upgrades were done at Saweni Campus since December;

- Fence upgraded for security reasons,
- Rooms painted for better learning environment.
- Washroom upgraded with shower facilities,
- Free Wi-Fi on main areas of the campus
- Air conditioners installed in lecture rooms,
- Lights installed in ground for training,
- Lecture room teaching facilities have been upgraded with new white boards and projectors
- New computers have been placed in the computer labs and some work is in progress.
- Free bus services provided for students.
- More books are available in the bookshop for students education
- UPSM facilities in Nadi, Ba, Lautoka and Sigatoka are also upgraded.

Students desks, chairs, tables and benches would be arriving on campus soon. Further upgrades are in progress with the ground facilities and water tanks will be installed soon as well. All these upgrades were part of capital expenditure, approximating to about $850,000. The management hopes that the upgrade will create a better teaching and learning environment and the purpose of education will not be defeated.

Next in the things- to- do list is to construct new building to accommodate bigger lecture rooms and computer lab. This building will also provide space for students recreational activities. With lots of hard work and extra hours put in by the Executive Director Finance, Mr Ravineet Sami, the university now will have an ATM installed by Westpac Banking Corporation. The University is also working towards in partnership with corporate sectors to build hostel facilities.

Suva Campus, on the other hand went through a major upgrade of lecture rooms, staff rooms, IT lab and is now nearing the completion of new development of the lecture theatres.

Alumni Corner

Name: Vishal Raj
Programme: Bachelor of Information Technology
Currently Employed by: Westpac Banking Corporation
Designation: Application Development & Support Analyst
Best Moment: The best days of our life-Uni Days. They were good years 2005-2007.

UniFiji made me realize that I did not have to be an intelligent person or need to transform myself and my values in order to fit in or contribute, but rather helped me understand what I already possess and learn what I had interests in.

Being a pioneer, and having a smaller class size, more lecturer concentration was the luxury we enjoyed.

Having an open atmosphere to having football breaks with 7 units per semester, is something other students will ponder on, we managed with 'A's. With an exciting bunch of friends, life at UniFiji each day was always looked forward to.

Now, the reality of work life, family, good memories still hold. I would rather say, I am not the best, but I am good enough, I am not the brightest, but I am a graduate, and I'm not the same person as you, so I want to urge each and every student to get up, do what you like most and excel which earns you comfort and at the same time, "Dollars". UniFiji has a lot to offer, go to the extreme and success will follow.

Message from the President: Miss Sandhiya Gounder UniFiji Alumni Association

Alumni associations exist to support the parent organization's goals, and to strengthen the ties between alumni, the community, and the parent organization.

The same are visions of the UniFiji Alumni Association. Alumni relations are an important part of the University's activities for many reasons:

1. Alumni are the University's most loyal supporters and ambassadors. They take their knowledge of the institution to their hometowns and countries and into their professional and social networks.

2. Alumni are fundraising prospects.

3. Alumni generate invaluable word-of-mouth marketing among their social and professional networks.

4. By engaging alumni, the University can continue to benefit from their skills and experience.

5. Alumni are great role models for current students and are often well placed to offer practical support to students as they start their careers.

The University of Fiji Alumni Association was formulated in July, 2015 with the primary objective of allowing the involvement of Alumni in the activities of the University of Fiji.

The overall mission of the Association is to sustain and strengthen the University of Fiji through programs and activities designed to:

- Encourage communication among alumni and between alumni and the university community.
- Promote opportunities for lifelong relationships.
- Facilitate participation in the affairs and activities of the University.
- Foster partnerships between the University and the public.

Lastly, the Alumni Association invites all graduates of the University of Fiji to join the Association to fulfil its responsibility to the prestigious institution. Let us remember always the solid education and morale foundation The University of Fiji gave us that have contributed in no small measure, in making us who we are today. Then, let us resolve to give back and help to improve teaching and learning as well as student life in general for the current and future students of our beloved University. That should be our goal; that will be our legacy to UniFiji.

RANDOM SHOTS

Ambassador Mr Kamlesh Arya with students from Belize

Professor Satendra Nandan with students during Girmit Convention