

# USP RESEARCH

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## Banking on Pacific Researchers

Professor Derrick Armstrong

Bula Vinaka and welcome to the third issue of the 2019 Research Newsletter! In this issue we are highlighting some of the incredible work our Pacific researchers are undertaking. The University, in collaboration with regional and international partners, has secured a number of research grants. The Pacific Island Universities Research Network [PIURN] secured €1.3m in funding from the European Commission Horizon 2020 to carry out a multidisciplinary project focusing on family farming and food in the Pacific Islands. The Micronesian Center for Sustainable Transport (MCST) has a number of ongoing research projects focused on the region's transition to sustainable transport. The One Ocean Hub team attended a planning workshop in August in South Africa and have since embarked on the first phase of this £1.6m project.

With USP's increasing success in securing research grants, the University has been in need of a system which would allow efficient management and reporting of these grants. The Research Office, in collaboration with USP Finance has been working behind the scenes in

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planning the implementation of the Research Accounting and Grants Billing [RAGB] via the Ellucian Banner system due to roll-out at the beginning of 2020. The centralised system will ensure optimum processing and reporting time while maintaining transparency.

As we enter the last quarter of the year, we look to reflect on our undertakings over the year and reward those of us who have performed exceptionally well. It is my hope that you have taken the opportunity to apply for the 2018 Vice-Chancellor's Prizes for Research. We look forward to hosting you to our annual Research Excellence Awards ceremony in November.

## Sailing into a Sustainable Future

The Micronesian Center for Sustainable Transport (MCST) is jointly funded by USP and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Based on USP's RMI campus, it aims to establish itself as a center of excellence, and to help instigate and implement a transition to sustainable transport in the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and the wider region. While still a young center, it is working on a portfolio of projects in pursuit of that vision.

On a recent national holiday in the Marshall Islands, Waan Aelōñ in Majel—the canoes of the Marshall Islands or, in short, WAM—organised a sailing race on Majuro lagoon. Sailing canoes have provided a sustainable means of transport for millennia. Through the Transitioning to Low Carbon Sea Transport (TLCSeaT) project, in partnership with WAM, GIZ, and the University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer in Germany, MCST are working to revitalise this great technology. Another main component of the project is to address transport of cargo and passengers between atolls on the open ocean.



Picture Supplied - MCST

The plan foresees a new-build vessel to be operated by the Marshall Islands Shipping Corporation, with a focus on enabling training and education in low carbon shipping – i.e. the future of this sector.

MCST is also working with private sector partner Swire Shipping on the Cerulean project. The main outcome from the current first project phase will be a business case for a Pacific cargo route and a small, low-carbon cargo ship to serve this route. If successful, the ship will be built and operated in phase 2 of the project. Navigating the course towards a sustainable transport future will be helped by establishing the right policy frameworks. On the global level, MCST provides technical support to Pacific delegates to climate policy meetings of the International Maritime Organization in London. More locally, MCST are planning a project to develop a transport roadmap for the Marshall Islands.

With a view to a more comprehensive transition to low carbon sea transport, MCST have helped drive the Pacific Blue Shipping Partnership (PBSP), seeking a major, country-led financing programme for such a transition.

**Dr Michael Traut**  
Director - MCST

## Promoting Pacific Researchers: PIURN

Shaiza Janif

The Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN) is made up of 13 regional universities located across the Pacific in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia. PIURN was established in 2014 with the vision to become a strategic instrument, promoting the agreed perspectives of collaborating universities when it comes to the identification of research priorities for the Pacific, and to be a pro-active operational entity offering new educational and personal development opportunities to teachers and researchers.

In the five years since its establishment, PIURN has hosted three international conferences and has undertaken ten collaborative research projects. More impressively, a joint proposal submitted on behalf of PIURN by The University of the South Pacific and the University of New Caledonia was awarded the European Commission Horizon 2020 fund. The research project titled "Family Farming, Lifestyle and Health" [FALAH] will bring in €1.3million in research funding.

The Chair Person and President of the network, Professor Derrick Armstrong, said that it was a matter of great pride for the two universities and PIURN to be awarded such a competitive grant. He added that "within a short time since its inception, PIURN has made great strides towards achieving its vision through collaborative quality research and promoting linkages and interactions between academia, industries, governments and the society at large".

Going ahead, PIURN will be focusing on its core business; that is, research collaboration. At present, there are about a dozen collaborative projects between PIURN members. The projects focus on climate change to IT, addressing social issues, environmental challenges and economic growth in the Pacific Region, and are aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals\*. Other opportunities to collaborate will be pursued in 2020. PIURN will also continue with its biannual conferences. The 4th PIURN Conference will be held at the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) in 2020.

\* Read more on research projects undertaken by the PIURN here: <https://piurn.org/projects/>

## DIRECTORY OF EXPERTS & SUPERVISORS

The USP Directory of Experts and Supervisors, which is a searchable database of the research interests of university staff. This resource is a guide to specialized knowledge at USP, with a particular focus on:

- assisting prospective graduate research students to find appropriate supervisors;
- assisting (external) researchers find staff with similar interest for research collaboration;
- assisting with external queries on consultancy expertise at USP.

[experts.usp.ac.fj](https://experts.usp.ac.fj)

Staff can log into their account using their USP username and password. The account has been automatically populated by research publications stored in the research repository. Staff will need to update their basic information such as bibliography and research interests, and click on: **UPDATE BASIC DETAILS**

By default, all profiles are private unless changed to public visibility view by the user.

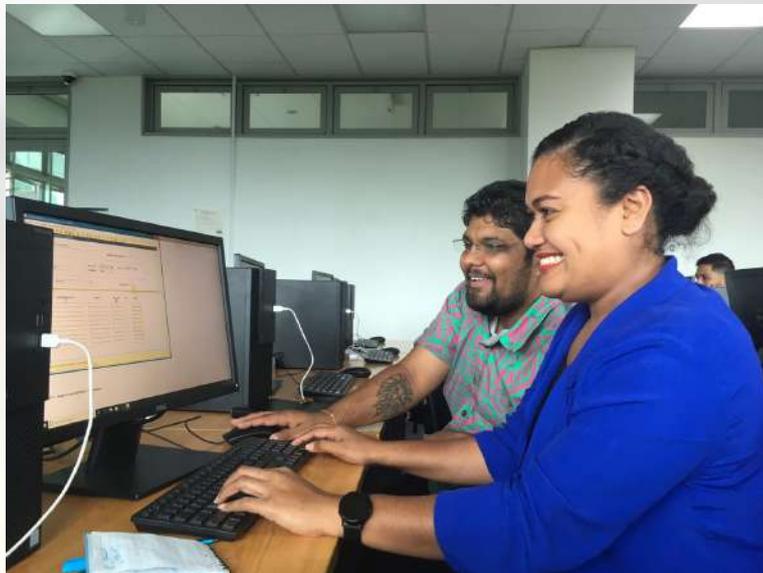
For any queries or concerns, email: [research@usp.ac.fj](mailto:research@usp.ac.fj)

## Re-engineering Reporting: A Look at RAGB

Avinesh Kumar

The Research Office has launched a comprehensive effort to assess the current research operations and to automate key operating processes. Over the past decade the research profile of the University has taken an exponential growth. Over the past five years, research income has grown from FJD5.5m in 2014 to FJD12.2m in 2018.

The management, monitoring, and reporting of research funds is an important aspect of the Research Office operations and the Office has been working with Ellucian in rolling out the Research Accounting and Grants Billing.



USP Research Office Staff undergoing RAGB training

The Ellucian Banner team facilitated a 9-day training of relevant sections of the University to:

- define system controls for grant processing
- maintain system data for reporting purposes
- set up the basis for indirect cost/cost share calculations
- define the indirect cost/cost share distribution codes
- identify the rates for indirect cost/cost share calculations
- create and maintain sponsor's (agency codes) classify user-defined codes and values

Once implemented, the Research Accounting and Grants Billing will enable the management of research projects to improve transparency, efficiency, and on-time delivery of those projects. The centralised system will also facilitate uniformity of research finance management and reporting processes while eliminating inefficiencies and enhance accountability at all levels.

# Scholarship Opportunities

Pacific Scholarship for Excellence in Research & Innovation (PSERI):

<https://research.usp.ac.fj/postgraduate-affairs-unit/opportunities/pseri/>

Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF) Scholarship: <https://research.usp.ac.fj/postgraduate-affairs-unit/opportunities/sylff/>

Pacific Regional Sports Research Scholarship (PRSR):

<https://research.usp.ac.fj/pacific-regional-sports-research-scholarship/>

Contact:

Research Student Coordinator

Ms Anushka Maharaj

Phone: (+679) 323 1888 or Email: [research@usp.ac.fj](mailto:research@usp.ac.fj)

# Strengthening Physical Education at USP

Jackie Lauff



Dr Dean Dudley with staff of the School of Education at Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji.

The School of Education is taking the first steps towards strengthening courses in Physical Education at USP. Dr Dean Dudley, an expert in Physical Education and Health from Macquarie University in Sydney, spent two weeks at USP's Laucala Campus in September working with the School of Education to develop physical education courses at USP.

The School of Education hosted a stakeholder consultation to provide input to the development of the new courses and ensure the curriculum addresses key challenges faced by teachers in Pacific Island Countries and Territories. During the stakeholder consultation Dr Dudley introduced key aspects of physical literacy, quality physical education and the latest international developments that will inform the curriculum design at USP.

Dr Dudley's research over the last 5 years has examined the concept of physical literacy. He is a member of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Open Ended Working Group on Sport and the SDGs and the technical lead on UNESCO's Worldwide Survey of Physical Education that will be rolled out from 2020 – 2022.

Dr Dudley also took the time to speak with USP students and staff during his visit. He provided valuable insights in the fields of education, health and recreation at a talaga session hosted by the School of Education and delivered an address to research scholarship students at the USP-UNDP Innovation Hub.

Dr Dudley was hosted by the Head of School of Education, Professor Govinda Lingam, and Senior Lecturer, Dr Jeremy Dorovolomo. Strengthening Physical Education courses is one of the priority actions of USP's Sport and Sustainable Development Coordination Committee (SSDCC) under the pillar of Learning and Teaching.

The School of Education at the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE) will next consult with regional education stakeholders and conduct a curriculum alignment workshop to test the proposed course content and structure. The new and revised courses in physical education are expected to be open for enrolment in 2021.

## Research Profile: Tammy Tabe

Lecturer  
PaCE-SD

Adiel Gounder

Climate Change has significant implications for Pacific Island Countries and its people. One of the adverse impacts include the increasing risk of climate-induced migration and displacement in the Pacific Islands.

Dr Tammy Tabe's research interest in climate change migration and displacement developed during her Master's Studies at the University of Hawaii, Manoa in Honolulu. Her work explored the forced relocation and displacement of the Gilbertese people from their home islands. "One of my supervisors and mentors suggested that I should explore the historical relocation of the Gilbertese people from the Gilbert Islands to Solomon Islands during the Colonial period as a Gilbertese descent. I was pursuing a Master's Degree in Pacific Islands Studies at that time when I started documenting our history," she revealed. Tammy was then able to deeply explore this movement later during her PhD studies in Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen in Norway.

Recognising the challenges and detrimental outcomes associated with past migrations are important in guiding policies for any future climate related migrations. Tammy explained that "it is important to learn from past migrations to inform future migrations of Pacific Island people and communities in order to understand the procedures involved in relocating large groups of people and how to prepare, plan and implement the processes effectively to evade potential challenges that may be faced during the relocation and also to prevent the displacement of people."

She believes that this is the greatest human security threat in the Pacific Islands and has invested a lot of her time working and discussing issues on climate change migration and displacement. This issue of forced migration and displacement is close to her heart. She considers her greatest contribution to this field of research is being a voice for her people (Gilbertese) on their forced relocation and displacement and towards Pacific Islands scholarship, policies and dialogues on climate change migration and displacement of Pacific Islands communities who may be forced to relocate in the future as a result of climate change.

"The Pacific Islands need to be heard - and must be heard, and my voice and research contributes to the ongoing advocacy and pool of knowledge that other Pacific Islands



Picture: Supplied

scholars, practitioners, communities, institutions, activists, organisations, stakeholders and governments have also contributed towards, and who also share the same vision, passion, and ownership for the Pacific," she affirmed.

In the future, she intends to expand her research and involve other Pacific Island scholars and students to explore deeply Pacific Islands epistemologies and the cultural and spirituality aspects of climate change migration and displacement in the Pacific Islands.

Working together with Pacific Islanders and communities, international, regional and national stakeholders, universities, churches, NGOs, and governments to discuss issues that affect the Pacific Islands and exploring alternative solutions that address these problems, especially in the context of the Pacific, is the most exciting part of her research. She adds that "my research empowers me to be a voice for my people and for communities across the Pacific Islands whose livelihoods and sovereignties are threatened by the impacts of climate change. It also provides me the opportunity as a young Pacific Islands scholar to also learn and work alongside other scholars and practitioners to encourage and support the articulation of Pacific Islands voices, and most significantly to nurture young Pacific Islanders to be ambassadors and agents of change in their communities and countries, and wherever they may be across the globe."

## Research Profile: Kiali Molu

### Masters of Arts - Politics and International Affairs FBE

Adiel Gounder

Kiali Molu's core research interest explores the integration of sports participation and achieving the obligations of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS).

Kiali is from Tuvalu and one of the recipients of the Pacific Regional Sports Research Scholarship, funded by the USP Research Office and the Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC). "The assistance from this award, will enable me to contribute and influence policymakers in my country and within the Pacific, and positively contribute to tackling some of the pressing issues fiercely faced by the region, more importantly to confidently assist PSIDS in their efforts to achieve SDGs."

He highlights that research on sports in relation to meeting SDGs is a fairly new direction of study that has not been extensively studied. The continuous rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which is one of the biggest contributors to early mortality in PSIDS, triggered his interest in this area of research. Also, after taking some time off from his civil duties, he realised that "the number of unemployed youth was on a meteoric rise". Moreover, he revealed that a recent publication by the UN indicated that Pacific Island countries are, thus far, off target to meet their 2030 SDG obligations.

"So I am setting out to prove that sports is an important and great enabler for PSIDS to consider in their efforts to achieve their SDGs and also provide hope to unemployed youths that there are many routes one can take for a successful life and things can get better even without success in the formal education sector," he stresses.

He believes his research is exciting because of the possibility to contribute positively to the social, economic and healthy livelihoods of Pacific people through sports. In addition, he hopes his research will influence government policymakers to focus more efforts in recognising the importance of sports from a young age, when formulating or reviewing their national policies for development in various sectors in order to achieve their SDGs.



His best research experience so far, has been "re-connecting with his former USP lecturers and colleagues from previous studies and work, meeting expats with vast experience in his research field, and reading and re-reading scholarly articles for hours and still struggling to understand it; a challenging yet positive experience." Kiali advises those who intend on pursuing research studies to "really understand the difference between the coursework and research route when planning for Postgraduate studies, it really does make a huge difference particularly if you are interested in planning to go further academically, i.e. to PhD. As a researcher, the work is challenging, but also fulfilling because it's your own work throughout the whole process."

Kiali emphasises that USP is the leading institution to do Pasifika research. "As someone who has done studies outside the Pacific, the focus is more on those regions or countries standpoint/view because they are developed countries, none in relation to Pasifika. With USP, they teach you from a global context but with more of a Pasifika context. This is why I choose to do research studies with USP, it's USP's ability to connect with diverse stakeholders/actors in any field and crumble things down to make sure there is a Pasifika taste to it that will be more applicable to our diverse region."

# PIURN Secures H2020 Grant

Moira Vilsoni-Raduva



The University of the South Pacific Vice-Chancellor Professor Pal Ahluwalia and University of New Caledonia's Professor Jean-Marie Fotsing with some of the FALAH project team members at Laucala Campus. Picture: Supplied

The Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN) has secured a €1.3million European Commission Horizon 2020 research grant for a project focusing on family farming and food in the Pacific Islands. Under the European Commission's [EC's] Horizon 2020 initiative, the Family Farming, Lifestyle and Health (FALAH) project will explore, strengthen, mobilise and build a network of research teams operating in the Pacific Islands that have a common interest in food security and its relationship with the environment, lifestyle and health. The FALAH project falls under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions within the EC's Horizon 2020 strategy contributing to excellent research, amplifying employment opportunities, and growth and investments by arming researchers with new knowledge, skills, and an inter-sectoral platform to fill the top positions of tomorrow.

The proposal was jointly submitted by The University of the South Pacific and University of New Caledonia. Professor Ahluwalia complimented the H2020 win by encouraging the project team to produce the scientific publications in high-ranking journals as well as work on the submissions of other projects for funding. USP's Director of Research and Co-director of PIURN, Professor Jito Vanualailai also praised the team effort and said that the H2020 is one of the most prestigious and competitive research funding sources.

Professor Fotsing of the University of New Caledonia is the project coordinator and will foresee all research and knowledge sharing of the four-year project. He stated that the goal of the project is "to promote and revitalise family agriculture to improve the health of the population in the Pacific and ensure food security in the context of rapid social and economic transformations and climate change, effects of which are particularly harmful to the Pacific".

The FALAH project involves some 15 multi-disciplinary teams from local, regional and international networks. The partners of the project are; University of New Caledonia, The University of the South Pacific, Institut Agronomique néo-Calédonien, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université Toulouse 1 Jean-Jaurès, Ludwig Maximilians Universität München, Solomon Islands National University, Vanuatu Agricultural Research and Technical Centre, The University of Sydney, The University of New South Wales, The University of Wollongong, Western Sydney University, and South Pacific Community. USP's participants in the FALAH project include the Research Office, Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD), School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT), Institute of Applied Science (IAS), Institute of Marine Resources (IMR) and the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE).