

4 September 2015

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **USP marks successful graduation**



One of the six PhD graduates Rosiana Lagi being conferred her award by the new USP Chancellor, His Excellency Womtelo Rev. Baldwin Lonsdale, President of the Republic of Vanuatu.

A total of about 980 students from 23 nationalities graduated from The University of the South Pacific (USP) at the Vodafone Arena in Suva today.

The graduation featured the installation of the new USP Chancellor, His Excellency Womtelo Rev. Baldwin Lonsdale, President of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Around 60 per cent of the graduates were females. In addition to this, 40 per cent graduated with postgraduate qualifications.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, USP Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Rajesh Chandra highlighted that this was very significant and pleasing since the University aims to shift the balance between undergraduate and postgraduate completions.

He was particularly pleased to note that six students graduated with PhDs, making it the biggest number of PhD students to graduate together in USP's history.

"I hope that we will build on this number as USP consolidates its position as a research University," he added

Of the 980 graduates, 17 were from 13 non-member countries from places such as Lebanon, Bahamas and St Lucia, indicating the international reach and interest in USP's programmes.

In congratulating the graduates, Professor Chandra said that they have yearned for this day since they began their journey at USP.

He told graduates that although their journey would have had its challenges and frustrations, they are now equipped with the knowledge and skills to contribute to and serve their countries, families, the region and humanity at large.

Professor Chandra challenged the graduates to strive for excellence and to be good ambassadors of USP.

"Do your best to grow as worthwhile citizens and contribute to the development and uplifting of your communities, your country and of course your families. Always have a positive attitude, do not be afraid to take risks because those who takes risks go the furthest. If you fall down, don't let that discourage you. Always get up and move on with confidence and always focus on your future," he advised.

He further said that the graduates will be joining more than 44,000 USP alumni throughout the region and overseas.

Professor Chandra provided an update on USP's progress on major achievements since April 2015. Some of these include:

- Approval for building of a 440-bed student hostel on Laucala Campus costing \$21m;
- Highest ever student enrolments reaching 29, 500;
- Appointment of a new Dean for the Faculty of Business and Economics and a new interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and International);
- Approval by Senate for the Quality of Teaching Policy and Quality of Research Policy. Both policies represent the University's determination to improve the quality of teaching and research, in order to deliver greater value to our Government, students and stakeholders;
- Development of an online postgraduate research monitoring system that will greatly improve the student experience and completion of Masters and PhD; and
- Construction of a new Kiribati campus to be completed later this month and will be officially opened in November this year and the allocation of land to develop a new campus in the Solomon Islands.

Professor Chandra said that the University continues to make good progress on its focus of transforming USP from a good university to an excellent one.

The graduation ceremony was broadcasted live across the region on Fiji TV and Sky Pacific channels.

Those present at the ceremony included Ms Fekita 'Utoikamanu the Acting Pro Chancellor and Chair of Council; Hon. John Usamate, Fijian Minister of Health; excellencies and members of the Diplomatic Corps; heads of international and regional organisations; members of USP Council and Senate; senior government officials; members of the USP Senior Management Team; graduates and their families and friends and the media.

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