

UniFiji Watch



Issue No. 4

A publication by the University of Fiji's journalism students

June 2024

UniFiji helps in major win for small island states

THE University of Fiji played its part to help small states win a major legal victory in their efforts to develop a cleaner and greener environment.

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ruled that greenhouse gases constitute marine pollution, in a breakthrough for small island states whose futures are at risk by rising sea levels caused by global warming.

UniFiji was heavily involved with submissions last September, and Vice-Chancellor Dr Shaista Shameem was one of 14 lawyers who helped the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) make its case.

She said the COSIS submission said carbon emissions constitute ocean pollution as defined by the Law of the Sea and that states had a duty not only to prevent, but also to protect oceans from such harm and to provide reparations if they caused it.

The court urged countries to go beyond the demands of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement to protect marine environments, Reuters news agency reported.

Tuvalu, Palau, Niue, and Vanuatu, were the four Pacific states that joined Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines, and St. Kitts and Nevis in bringing the action.

Dr Shameem said the victory showed that small though a state (or a university) may be, we can contribute to social justice on the international stage as effectively as any player.



University of Fiji students, above, giving Navua Hospital a good clean-up, and inset, with Vice-Chancellor Shaista Shameem, second from right

Students clean up at hospital

UNIFIJI students got their gloves and dusters out for a spring-clean at Navua Hospital last month.

They had answered a call for help from the Navua Hospital Board of Visitors. Fourteen students from Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Science scrubbed, ad rubbed and polished to give the hospital premises a new look.

Their efforts were part of the university's efforts to contribute to and connect with the community.

University Vice Chancellor Professor Shaista Shameem, thanked Sugar Taxis which had provided complimentary transport to the staff and students.

University delivers a first with counselling diplomas

SEVEN students made University of Fiji history when they became the first graduates from the Counselling Programme, joining more than 300 others receiving diplomas and degrees at the annual graduation ceremony.

Pro-Chancellor Pundit Bhuwan Dutt conferred the

By Lusiana Rasolo

awards to 321 students from various faculties at the ceremony at the Saweni Campus in April.

Watched by their proud parents, friends and other loved ones, the students strode proudly to the stage to receive

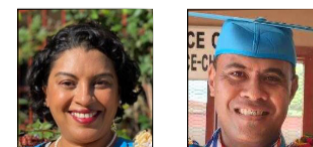
the scrolls that confirmed their educational achievements and recognised their hard work.

There were 137 graduates from the School of Humanities and Arts, 42 from the school of Business and Economics, 29 from the School Of Science And Technology, and 92 from the Justice Devendra Pathik

School of Law.

The Umanand Prasad School of Medicine & Health Sciences (UPSM&HS) produced 17 graduates, and there were four from the Centre of iTaukei Studies (CIS).

There were 100 students gaining their first degrees, and 124 post-graduates.



The gold medallists on their aims and ambitions, and the effort required to attain their dreams

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Delivering for our students during and after university

AT a recent public seminar convened by Dialogue Fiji on quality higher education I presented three sets of graphs on our university's (i) retention (ii) completion and (iii) the employability of our students.

These make up a remarkable record of quality achievement by the University in the five-year period which includes the Covid-19 years. The most recent edition of Islands Business Magazine lists USP's retention and completion records within part of this period as less than 30% and in some cases as less than 20%.

The University of Fiji's record of retention and

completion is similar to New Zealand universities within the same period.

Such comparative statistics show that UniFiji students are staying on and completing their qualifications. The drop-out rate is hardly significant especially at a time when Covid-19 posed many impediments.

During this period the University of Fiji tracked well and exponentially improved its student retention and completion record.

A good reason for this is the Top Hat platform which, over the years, has measured attendance as well as participation of students in each course. This encouraged



Opinion
Vice-Chancellor
Dr. Anaisa Shmeem

students to learn more effectively and remain interested in their studies.

Another good reason is student support. Every student of the University is allocated an Academic Adviser who provides mentorship, guidance and oversight of students' progress.

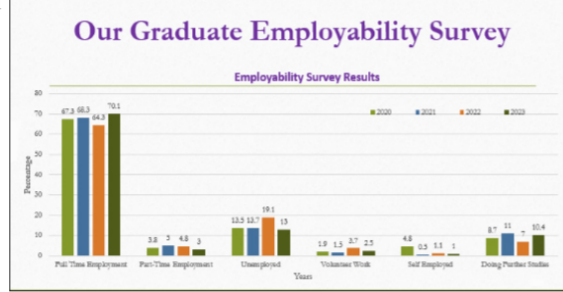
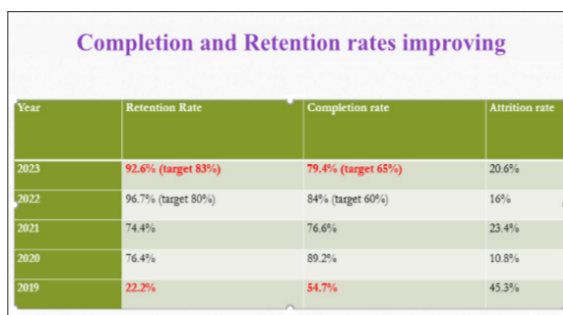
A further reason is that students with GPAs of less than 2.0 are counselled and monitored even more closely to ensure their GPAs improve semester by semester. The last graph provided

on this page shows an important consequence of good education at UniFiji, namely, that more than 70% of our graduates are almost immediately employed after graduation.

Reports provided by employers show that they appreciate the quality of higher education we offer, especially the combination of hard qualifications and soft skills including the holistic human values approach which emphasises integrity, ethics and good communication as key attributes.

The University appreciates these statistics as evidence of student confidence in the University of Fiji.

We hope that we will continue to enjoy such confidence in years to come.



Passion and dedication key for Radhika

RADHIKA RAJ is a gold medal winner through a mixture of hard work and sacrifice, backed up by the support of family members and loved ones.

When she accepted her gold medal at last month's graduation ceremony, she was surrounded by the people who meant the most to her.

The mother-of-two had a burning desire to make a difference in her community, particularly in field of counselling, an area she feels is overlooked.

Driven by her passion, Radhika embarked on a journey to pursue a diploma in counselling.

Balancing her responsibilities as a full-time worker and a loving parent, she faced numerous challenges along the way. Finding the time to sit down and complete assignments seemed like an impossible task, but she never lost sight of her goal, forging on with her passion and her sense of humour.

Her dedication did not go unnoticed. Her commitment to excellence and her genuine empathy for others earned her the gold medal for being the most outstanding student. It was a testa-

By Lusiana Rasolo

ment to her hard work, resilience and unwavering belief in the power of counselling.

Now, armed with her diploma and her hard-won recognition, Radhika said she wants make a lasting impact in her community.

She also wants to become a beacon of hope for those struggling with mental health issues, providing a safe and confidential space for them to share their burdens.

Her advice to first-year students is to pursue an area of discipline that they are passionate about.

"When you are passionate about something, you are able to give it your all," she said.

"Don't focus on the end result but focus on giving your best on what you are doing in the present."

Throughout her journey, Radhika demonstrated unwavering passion and dedication in her chosen field.

So, when she rose to accept her award, with her loved ones watching, she proudly walked across the stage, feeling honoured and privileged to accept her well-deserved diploma with a smile.



Radhika Raj: "Focus on giving your best on what you are doing"



Atunaisa Waqainabete with his wife Kelera and their son Israel after getting his degree

Atunaisa strikes gold in law department

By Riqieta Taka

IT WAS his experiences at work, having to co-ordinate border security agencies and addressing national and other security issues that encouraged Atunaisa Waqainabete to take up law studies.

Atunaisa, 45, who comes from Kiuva, Bau, in Tailevu and shares maternal links to Naroi, Moala, Lau, graduated last month with a Bachelor's degree in law. Not only that, he was the most outstanding student in the Justice Devendra Pathik School of Law, winning the gold medal for his efforts.

"The University of Fiji provided

me with an enabling environment to excel academically," Atunaisa said, adding that the vast experience of the law lecturers helped him develop an analytical mind.

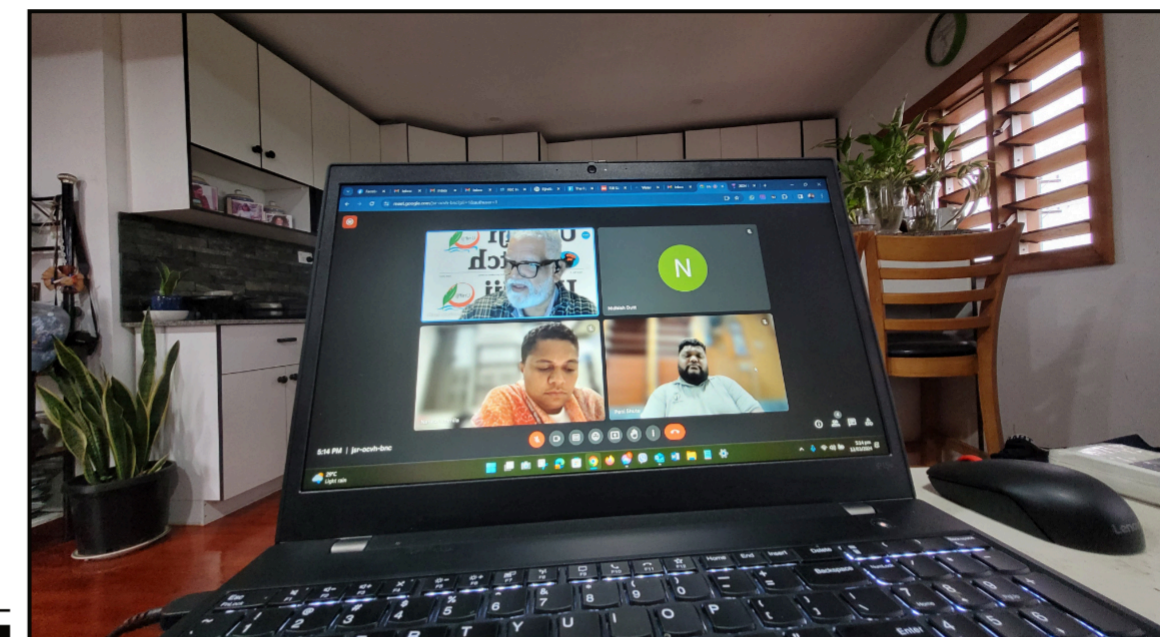
He said his academic success "was a humbling experience and I was deeply honoured to have come this far".

He paid tribute to and thanked his wife whom he described as a pillar of strength for his success.



Studying while you work full-time

AS if studying for a degree or diploma is not difficult enough, many people are doing so while also working full-time. Here we look at the experience of three students, all from the University of Fiji's journalism studies department, on how they manage.



Exhausting, but also fulfilling

By Mereani Gonedua

IN today's fast-moving world, many women are taking on the dual role of being a working mum while studying full-time, a challenge that tests their resilience and time-management skills to the limit.

For myself, a 35-year-old mother of five children, it has never been easy as I try to juggle each role to the best of my abilities.

By day, I work as a communications officer and by night, I hit the books, aiming to complete a degree in Communications and Journalism.

My days usually start before dawn and often end well past midnight.

It's exhausting, but also incredibly fulfilling. I want to show my children that with determination, you can achieve anything.

Online classes have been both a blessing and a curse as while it's convenient to study from home, it's hard to find a quiet moment.

Having good support systems are crucial for women like me. At home my husband and I share household duties, and at work my employer offers flexible working hours. At university we have supportive and understanding tutors and lecturers who know well the circumstances or challenges we face.

Returning to the classroom after more than 10 years is not easy.

"It's tough, but every assignment I complete and every project I manage at work brings me one step closer to my goal.

Pictured from top: Mereani arriving in Buliava village on Kadavu for a work assignment, covering the arrival of Fiji Airways' A350, the first in Fiji, and on an outing with her family



More convenient for most of us

By Peni Shute

THE online delivery of lectures has meant that university education and teaching methods have advanced in line with our faster-paced modern lifestyles.

I am grateful to the management and decision-makers at the University of Fiji for allowing the provision of flexible learning with the use of digital and technological means by encouraging students to attend lectures and tutorials virtually.

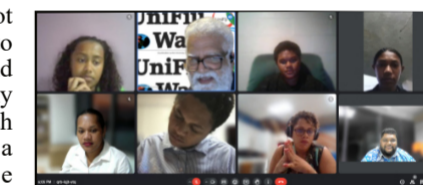
The bonus is that most of these sessions are recorded and placed on Top Hat – making it convenient for those who were unable to make it to class due to work commitment or personal reason. This is also extremely useful for revision purposes.

In a survey I did recently, 50% of the students who responded commended the flexibility aspect of digital and online learning. This meant that students were able to manage their time wisely while another 25% pointed out that digital and online learning at the University of Fiji was much more economical in comparison to face-to-face lessons, with the savings that students managed transportation and meal costs. The remaining students preferred to have classes face-to-face and virtually whenever required.

Over the years, I have checked with other local universities about this particular provision. They strongly encouraged face-to-face classes. This was something not easy for me to comprehend and undertake due to my commitments with my employment as a Corporate Communications Officer, at the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF).

Finally, the provision of having the flexibility of online and virtual classes has given me the determination to better manage my time in both my work duties and what is required of me as a working student – it has motivated me to weigh my options and consider scaling back on some leisure activities such as hanging out with colleagues and friends and, instead, use that time for tutorials and assignments.

I encourage my friends in the media and in communications roles (or even other fields) who wish to further their education to give the University of Fiji a try and experience the journey for themselves.



A screenshot of an online class. Here we were planning the production of this edition of UniFiji Watch

The editorial team for this edition

This edition of UniFiji Watch was produced by a team of journalism students that included Mereani Maisokeni, Riqieta Taka, Peni Shute, Lusiana Rasolo, and

Iva Danford-Naisara. Earlier editions of UniFiji Watch can be found at <https://www.unifiji.ac.fj/unifiji-watch-student-online-paper/>



From left: Mereani Maisokeni, Riqieta Taka, Peni Shute, Lusiana Rasolo, and Iva Danford-Naisara

Deadlines and barriers – in work and the home front

BEING a working mum has not been an easy road for me (nor for other mothers out there who are trying to make ends meet.

Having a passion for the work that I do and the support from my family is my driving force. Just like our iTaukei parents like to say, "Your kids are what you brought into this world, now you have full responsibility to feed them."

I do not take this saying for granted as some might say that it is a harsh view.

Maybe only working mums in the media can relate to the type of work and pressure

By Iva Danford-Naisara

that we are subject to daily. Leaving home late to drop off children in school and then heading to work is just the start of what we call "having deadlines to meet".

The only reason that I am still in this profession is because of my Christian faith and the full support from my family and my husband and his family.

It is a tough position, I guess for females more than males as we have to endure the

harsh reality of patriarchy as it is still very much alive in our country.

I have broken barriers to get my job done in this field, and grown a thicker skin over the verbal abuse or sexist comments. But as a mother, I have learned that everything has its time and we have to move on, no matter the circumstances we face.

Being a journalist in Fiji is challenging for another reason: the majority of the population still has a view that there should be a kind of taboo on women working. I am glad that social media has enlightened some

people's minds and has even gotten them to come out of their comfort zones.

I have also learned that in this field, we need to be at the same level as the person we are interviewing to get the best out of them.

The perks of being a journalist are all the travel you get to do and the people you get to meet.

Making a positive change in people's lives is what I strive for. I also love to tell the untold stories of people from the grassroots level.



UniFiji Leisure Watch



June 2024, Issue 5

YOUR SAY – What’s your favourite and least favourite thing about our university library?



Agnes Shute

I enjoy browsing the latest newspapers after completing my classes, and I appreciate the librarians for their unwavering support for all my requests as in overseas case search or law books.

They make sure we are comfortable in the library.

I may not have a least favourite thing, but it would be good to have extended opening hours throughout the semester to cater for working students, preferably to 10pm.



Amlesh Ram

My favourite things include the extensive collection of books covering various subjects. I also like the access to online databases for research purposes.

The library also has quiet study areas conducive to concentration, and comfortable seating for long study sessions.

The librarians are helpful and knowledgeable.



Sisikeleila Toanikeve

My favourite thing about the library are the librarians, they are literally life-savers, great helpers and so kind.

Also the library is small, which provides easy access, and students can study in a quiet place.

My least favourite thing is that here on the Samabula Campus it is limited in terms of resources. Not every book that is needed is available but they are at the Saweni Campus library which is a struggle for some such as myself.

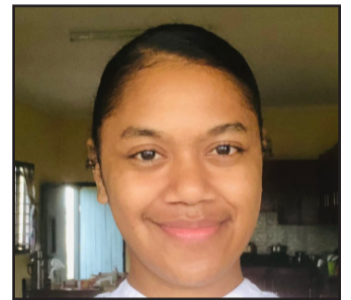


James Madison Shute

What I like the most about our university library is that there are always provisions for daily newspapers to keep up with my current affairs.

Also, because it's quite small the library is not always full.

The thing I dislike about the library is that we cannot bring bags in. Of course it's highly understandable with chances of books going missing but that's what security guards and CCTV cameras are for, right?



Alumita Vosavakadua

My favourite thing about the university library is its vast collection of resources, ranging from books to online databases, offering a wealth of knowledge to explore.

However, if I had to choose a least favourite aspect, it might be the limited hours of operation, which can sometimes make accessing those resources challenging for students with busy schedules.

Five students get RSA honours

FIVE UniFiji students have been named junior Fellows of the Royal Society of Arts.

Their names were announced at a fundraiser hosted for the University by British High Commissioner Dr Brian Jones at his Gordon House home in Suva.

Dr Jones said the Royal Society of Arts was an open and inclusive organisation championing curiosity, creativity and courage.

“The RSA inspires better ways of thinking and doing and that for me at this point of history in the Pacific is incredibly important.

“We face the impacts of climate change and the period of global instability that we have not seen for many decades.

“New ways of thinking and doing and having the courage to be creative should be at the heart of any academic institution,” said Dr Jones.

The new Junior Fellows are Law students Peniasi Ciri, Adi Unaisi Vuidama, Shafeen Ahmed and Sisikeleila Tuvatuva, and School of Science and

By Peni Shute

Technology student, Pranav Prasad.

Speaking from London RSA Chief Executive, Andy Haldane congratulated the university and expressed interest in working with the five nominees.

University Vice Chancellor, Professor Shaista Shameem, herself an RSA Fellow, said the selection of the students was an honour for the University because the students joined a long list of Fellows, all prominent inventors, social reformers, scientists and philosophers who had changed the world for the better.

The new junior fellows were selected from a competition in which they submitted 500-word essays on how their proposed innovations would help the RSA Design for Life mission.

About \$5,000 was raised at the event to help the five junior fellows implement their proposed innovations as part of the RSA Design for Life Mission.



The new fellows, below from left, Pranav Prasad, Adi Unaisi Vuidama, Shafeen Ahmed, Sisikeleila Tuvatuva, and Peniasi Ciri

Left: Akansha Shristi Chan, a member of UniFiji’s Age of Aquarius Band

Vice-Chancellor Shaista Shameem, above, and High Commissioner Dr Brian Jones speaking at the fundraiser

