

# **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix One**

**Written Response by the University of the South Pacific**

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Our Reference: 2019/27

15<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Honourable Mr. Viam Pillay  
Chairman  
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Affairs  
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji  
PO Box 2352  
Government Building,  
Suva

Dear Honourable Chair

Re: **USP's Responses to Issues raised by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Regarding USP 2017 Annual Report**

I refer to your letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 in regards to the above-mentioned matter.

The University has compiled a response matrix (refer to the attachment) to clarify issues raised by the Committee on the USP 2017 Annual Report. In addition to these responses, we have prepared presentation slides in readiness for the meeting on Tuesday, 19 March 2019 from 1.30pm at the Parliament Committee Room (West Wing).

I will be attending this important meeting together with Professor Arvind Patel, Acting Dean Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE) and Mr. Kolinio Boila, Executive Director Finance (EDF) to provide responses and clarifications on queries from the members of the Committee.

I look forward to meeting you and the other honourable members of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Pal Ahluwalia**  
**Vice Chancellor & President**

Professor Arvind Patel, Acting Dean Faculty of Business and Economics  
Mr. Kolinio Boila, Executive Director Finance  
Mr. Jaindra Karan, Executive Director Strategic Partnership, Advancement and Communications



## **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Affairs**

Responses to Issues Raised on the  
USP 2017 Annual Report

**Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor &  
President, USP**

*18 March 2019*



### **1. Functions of The University**

- Quality education;
- Research & innovation;
- Dialogue with member countries to address major development challenges;
- Foster regional integration services with CROP agencies and development partners; and
- Operates Pacific TAFE for pathways to higher education & upskilling.

## 2. Key challenges faced on the implementation of the University's strategic objectives and plans to address these challenges



- Limited financial resources addressed by ensuring that it is used efficiently and further revenue is sourced through development partners and commercial activities;
- The low number of academic staff; and
- Shortage of accommodation at Laucala and lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities/support services at the regional campuses.

## 3. Ensuring equal treatment of both male and female employees in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion

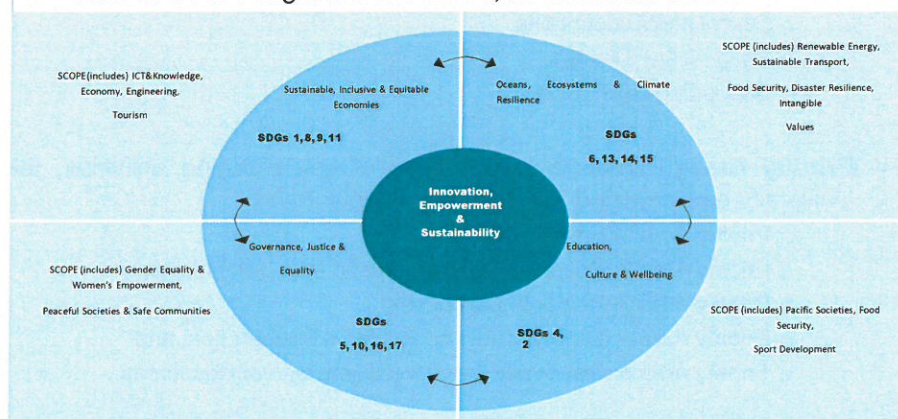


- Sound recruitment process guided by MQR for equal treatment of all applicants;
- Established Staff Development Committee for decisions on all applications for training;
- Academic Staff promotions through SRC and based on QOT and QOR criteria; and
- Professional Staff- advertisement of the position providing opportunities for local/regional candidates to apply.

#### 4. USP's alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



- USP Strategic Plan aligned with SDGs; the SAMOA Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR)
- Five SRTs are aligned to the SDGs, as illustrated below:



#### 5. USP's future plans and initiatives



- New Strategic Plan is being reviewed to align with UGC Cycle (2019-2021).
- Changes to the new Strategic Plan to be endorsed by Council in May 2019 :
  - ✓ **Vision** - to shape Pacific futures by empowering students, staff and alumni to become inspirational agents of development;
  - ✓ **Mission** - to positively influence Pacific Islanders through the pursuit of excellence in creating, shaping and transferring knowledge by providing world-class education and research that transforms the lives of individuals and communities.

## 5. USP's future plans and initiatives...cont'd



- ✓ **Our Values** - to be guided by Pacific Values of inclusive family and participatory and transparent dialogue and encompasses:
  - Excellence and Creativity
  - Ethical and Accountable
  - Respect and Diversity
  - Supporting our People
- ✓ **Priority Areas:** Through the process of key planning activities, the University has identified the following Priority Areas:
  - Priority Area 1: Education;
  - Priority Area 2: Research, Innovation and Internationalisation;
  - Priority Area 3: Regional Campuses;
  - Priority Area 4: International and Regional Cooperation; and
  - Priority Area 5: Governance and Intelligent Use of Resources.

## 6. Three inventions registered as innovation patents and other innovations in progress



- **2017 Patent Certifications:**
  - ✓ Braille Slate to Teach Children with Visual Disabilities;
  - ✓ Aromatic Network for Power Distribution System; and
  - ✓ GSM Based Early Flood Warning and Monitoring System.
- **In 2018 patents recorded:**
  - ✓ Foot Steps Waste Energy Harvesting System Using Hydro Generator;
  - ✓ An Emi Sensor For Non-Destructive Corrosion Estimation In Concrete; and
  - ✓ My Kana – A Mobile App To Promote Healthy Eating In The South Pacific.
- **In 2019, USP focusses on:**
  - ✓ patents in Improved Automotive Oil Filter Wrench; and
  - ✓ Established an Innovation Centre which will promote further inventions.

## 7. Update on member countries levies and issues addressed



- 2017- Fiji and RMI- outstanding debts, settled in Q1 of 2018;
- 2018- RMI- outstanding debt of F\$168,000, to be paid once clearance is provided Ministry of Finance, expected by March 2019; and
- Monthly follow-ups on outstanding contributions from member countries.

## 8. Approvals on changes to the [Royal] Charter and linkage of the Crown to USP



- The Royal Charter lays out the objects and framework;
- Legal locus in Fiji and an operating presence in 11 other member countries;
- The linkage of the member countries to make it one legal entity, initially in Fiji, but with full legal effect across all the countries stated in the Charter;
- Grant of a Royal Charter - exclusive privilege of the British Crown;
- The Privy Council retains some limited, formal functions and plays an important role as a body of review for Chartered Institutions;
- The Council may amend the Royal Charter by Special Resolution (2 meetings) and approval from the Crown on advice/ recommendation of the Privy Council; and
- The Statutes and USP Convention can be amended by the USP Council.

## 9. (a) Trust Fund & its benefits (b) Establishment of Trust Fund Board



- Yet to be established;
- Failed expectation to raise more Endowment Funds through 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; and
- Unavailability of sufficient funds to warrant a separate fund- USP has \$5.8m with limited investments.
- The Trust Fund Board is yet to be formed;
- Prospective Board members approached had declined the invitations; and
- Full membership of 5 Board Members is yet to be met.

## 10. (a) Pay review of USP staff and last review undertaken (b) Selection of Remuneration Committee members



- Guided by Job Evaluation (JE) process;
- Committee established by the Council; and
- As per Terms of Reference set for the Remuneration Committee.

## 11. Benefits from the NZ-USP Partnership



- Financial support towards the University's core budget - teaching, learning and student services;
- Enables USP to serve the Pacific region with ICT, research, education and regional integration services;
- 2016-2018: NZ has provided NZD 15 million in core funding;
- Extension of the current Partnership till 31 December 2019 signed on 7 February 2019;
  - ✓ total core funding of NZD 5.15 million; and
  - ✓ 3% increase from the immediate prior arrangement.
- Additional NZD 100,000 - support USP progress with emerging priorities through 2019;
- USP-New Zealand Partnership Agreement; and
- NZD 4.5 million to support the implementation of PacREF.

## 12. Benefits & Outcomes from HLC with Australian Government



- USP-Australia Partnership - to be finalised during our upcoming bilateral HLC in Canberra on 29 April 2019;
- Commitment of AUD 84 million for Strategic Plan initiative (2019 to 2024);
- Support in forging partnerships with Australian universities and institutions; and
- HLC outcomes included the following:
  - ✓ Support towards the PacREF;
  - ✓ Potential support towards infrastructure development (regional campuses); and
  - ✓ Development of a Child Protection Policy by USP and plans to undertake a Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Survey.

### 13. Academic staff turnover - USP's attempt to cater & promote young scholars from the region



- The requirement for Assistant Lectures to have PhD is a move towards enhancing competencies and qualifications;
- Staff are given opportunities to be committed to continuous professional improvement
- Aligned to the criteria and requirement of the QOR and QOT; and
- This effort will ensure an increased number of PhDs in the region and well qualified Assistant Lecturers.

### 14. (a) Addressing the issue of high accommodation costs



- Student accommodation costs kept at a minimum;
- University operates on a breakeven policy;
- USP accommodation is not operated with a view to profits;
- New student's block 10th and 11th Hall charges are higher than the older blocks due the high construction costs in Fiji;
- Demand for student accommodation outstrips supply;
- USP has preferential access policy for student accommodation:
  - ✓ First-year students from the outer islands and the region are given first preference; and
- Separate international lodge to accommodate the international students demand.

## 15. Gender mainstreaming advisory committee – It's mandate and benefits



- The Gender Mainstream Advisory Committee is one of three sub committees under the Senate approved Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Committee - reports to DEIC.
- Mandate of the Committee is:
  - ✓ Oversee the implementation and further development of the University's Gender Policy;
  - ✓ Support the achievement of the University's KPIs and equality objectives, by raising awareness of gender equality and acting as a body of expertise on gender issues; and
  - ✓ To advise DEIC and HR on measures addressing gender equality.

## 16. Emergency Management Plan

(1)



- Lessons from TC Winston resulted in:
  - ✓ Creation of a Disaster Management Policy;
  - ✓ Establishment of a Disaster Management Committee/ DISMAC; and
  - ✓ Formulation of a Disaster Management Plan (2017).
- Disaster Management procedures in place in all campuses & aligned National Disaster Management Policies & Procedures;
- Campus Directors are "Resident Disaster Managers" & work in liaison with USP DISMAC
- USP DISMAC Office – available 24/7 (main campus); and
- All University-related disaster management policies & procedures: Fire; Cyclone; Earthquake; Tsunami; Civil unrest; Flooding; and Utility outage.

## 16. Emergency Management Plan



(2)

Disaster policies & plans were put to test to manage the following incidents:

| Disaster          |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Fire (2)          | i. Lautoka Campus (Nov 2016)<br>ii. Communication Building, Laucala Campus (Nov 2018)  |
| Cyclones (10)     | i. TC Cook (Cat 3), Vanuatu – Apr 2017<br>ii. TC Donna (Cat 5), Fiji – May 2017<br>iii. TC Gita (Cat 5), Fiji, Tonga & Samoa – Feb 2018<br>iv. TC Hola (Cat 4), Vanuatu – Mar 2018<br>v. TC Josie (Cat 1), Fiji – Mar 2018<br>vi. TC Keni (Cat 3), Fiji – Apr 2018<br>vii. TC Mona (Cat 2), Fiji – Jan 2019<br>viii. TC Neil (Cat 1), Tonga – Feb 2019<br>ix. TC Oma (Cat 3), Vanuatu – Feb 2019<br>x. TC Pola (Cat 4), Tonga – Feb 2019 |
| Tsunami Drill (1) | 2800 Students & Staff participated (Laucala Campus) – 7 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2019   |

## 17. Alternative Financing Schemes for Tertiary Students



(1)

Four (4) University campuses have financing schemes for tertiary students as follows:

- 1) Tuvalu;
- 2) Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI);
- 3) Nauru; and
- 4) Kiribati

### Tuvalu

- SELF (Student Education Loan Fund):
  - ✓ Similar to TELS (Fiji);
  - ✓ Students can study in any USP Campus outside of Tuvalu; and
  - ✓ Majority study in Laucala.
- MEDU (Medical & Education):
  - ✓ Similar to FNPF (Fiji);
  - ✓ Student fees paid via Education Benefit – Tuvalu National Provident Fund; and
  - ✓ Current MEDU sponsored students – 122

## 17. Alternative Financing Schemes for Tertiary Students

(2)

### Tuvalu

- Cohort-based Sponsored Programmes:
  - ✓ Sponsored by Development Partners;
  - ✓ Pre-service students – funds managed by Min. of Education;
  - ✓ In-service students – funds managed by Office of the Prime Minister; and
  - ✓ 3 cohorts at present – 94 students in total .
- Govt of Tuvalu & DFAT Scholarships:
  - ✓ Focus – sponsor students whose programs cannot be offered at the Tuvalu Campus.

### RMI

- RMI – USP Joint Project:
  - ✓ Now funded by RMI Govt – US\$600,000 per annum.
- US Federal Pell Grants:
  - ✓ Granted to undergraduate students for 4 years of full-time or part-time studies in accredited institutions.
- Marshall Islands Scholarships & Loans Board:
  - ✓ Funded by Government & Compact funds; and
  - ✓ Granted to full-time students who meet program requirements.

## 17. Alternative Financing Schemes for Tertiary Students

(3)

### RMI

- Grants:
  - ✓ Granted to ECE Teachers through US funding provided to Ministry of Education (Supplemental Education Grants).
- Donor Funded Projects:
  - ✓ Used to meet tuition costs.

### Nauru

- Self funding (Private Students):
  - ✓ Through savings or members of Parliament.
- Sponsored Students:
  - ✓ Partial and full sponsorship by various sectors through Nauruan Govt's HR and Labour.
- Cohort Based Programmes:
  - ✓ Tuition fees covered by respective sponsors; and
  - ✓ 35 students currently completing Cert IV program.

## 17. Alternative Financing Schemes for Tertiary Students (4)



### Kiribati

- Loan Scheme:
  - ✓ Managed by Ministry of Education; and
  - ✓ Open to all students to apply prior to start of semester.
- In-country Scholarship:
  - ✓ Managed by Ministry of Education for pre-service students.
- Cohort Scholarship:
  - ✓ For Civil Servants;
  - ✓ Managed by the Public Service Office; and
  - ✓ Approved funding is need-based & subject to program on offer.

### Kiribati

- AusAID/ NZAID Scholarships:
  - ✓ For pre-service & in-service students to further their studies in Fiji, Australia and NZ; and
  - ✓ Managed by the Australian & NZ High Commission Offices.
- Students from Underprivileged Families:
  - ✓ Financial assistance provided by the Ministry of Women & Youth Development; and
  - ✓ For students, whose parent(s) have passed or have some form of disability

## 18. 12<sup>th</sup> Hall Project Construction



- Project reconfigured to implement a modular approach as initial project of 400 beds not viable;
- Project to progress with an incremental approach of 100 beds at a time; and
- Preference: *internally generated funding* as opposed to *debt financing*.

## 19. Renewable Energy Proposal



- University Goal: all campuses to become 100% renewable & fully self-reliant for its electricity needs by 2020;
- Part of USP's Green Campus Initiative focused on embedding solar PV power facilities in selected campuses; and
- Six (6) selected campuses: Fiji (Laucala Campus) – largest project component; Vanuatu; Samoa; RMI; Kiribati; and Tonga.
- **Project Status:**
  - ✓ *Major setback* – no provision of sovereign guarantee by the Fijian Govt
  - ✓ **ADB:** project not feasible given its small scale (excluding the largest project component – Laucala campus)
  - ✓ Currently in negotiation with ADB to seek other funding sources

## 20. Micronesian Centre for Sustainable Transport – RMI



(1)

- **MCST Background:**
  - ✓ Centre of excellence to prepare & implement transition to sustainable transport;
  - ✓ Establishment in RMI endorsed by USP Council (2016);
  - ✓ Co-funded by USP & RMI Govt; and
  - ✓ Total of 4 Staff members – 2 based in RMI Office & 2 at Laucala campus office.
- **MCST Projects:**
  - ✓ Completed (2):
    - i. Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) – Maritime Transport Section of Fiji; and
    - ii. Marshall Islands Ship Registry Research Project.

## 20. Micronesian Centre for Sustainable Transport (MCST) – RMI



(2)

### MCST Projects

#### Ongoing (4):

- i. Transitioning to Low Carbon Sea Transport (TLCSeaT) – RMI;
- ii. Project Cerulean – build a business case for low carbon sail cargo ship to commercially ply a Pacific trade route;
- iii. study of medium & long-term measures to control greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping; and
- iv. provide technical assistance to Pacific countries' delegations (including Fiji), to the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

### MCST Projects

- *Future Projects* – under discussion, including plans to develop a bid to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for the implementation of a transition to sustainable sea transport in the Pacific region.

## 21. University Strategic Plans



(1)

### 2013 – 2018 Strategic Plan Implementation Challenges

- ✓ Limited financial resources to fully implement key deliverables, e.g.:
  - Unmet KPI for recruitment of Professors;
  - Unable to build enough accommodation at Laucala campus; and
  - Repercussion on attracting more foreign students as required by the University Governance Council (UGC).

### Percentage Achievement of 2013 – 2018 Strategic Plan – 100%?

- ✓ 84% of University's overall objectives and KPIs set out in the 2013 – 2018 SP was achieved.

### New Draft Strategic Plan 2019 - 2024

- ✓ Draft SP approved by the Council;
- ✓ Flexibility provided to the new Vice-Chancellor & President to review plan;
- ✓ VCP to present revised Plan at the May 2019 Council Meeting for consideration & endorsement;
- ✓ Currently being reviewed to be strategically focused & aligned to the University Grants Committee Cycle (2019 – 2021); and
- ✓ A consultation with all Staff & Students on the new SP will be held on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2019.

## 22. USP Convention



### Countries yet to ratify the USP Convention?

- ✓ By 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2019, all 12 member countries have signed the Convention; and
- ✓ 7 member countries have ratified the Convention whilst 5 countries are yet to ratify ([USP Convention Ratification Status](#)).

## 23. USP 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration



### Fifty events

- Events unfolded – one per week – spreading throughout the year, across all campuses in member countries;
- range of events, all very different, designed to resonate across USP's broad family of stakeholders; and
- Campus "Moments to Shine" was central to the year's activities.

### Key Outcomes

- Strengthened relationships through the following stakeholders direct involvement in 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary events:
  - ✓ All member nation governments;
  - ✓ Major donor & partner organizations; and
  - ✓ USP Alumni (forging greater links);
- Promotion & preservation of Pacific Culture; and
- Improved standing of USP in the Academic Community

**Total Cost – FJ\$1.5m**

## 24. New Income Streams Pursued by USP

Will come from (i) *Development Assistance*, (ii) *Commercial Revenue*; and (iii) *International Students*.

### **Development Assistance**

- assistance to be extended & increased from current partners;
- new opportunities to be explored; and
- Tap into other avenues – philanthropic organizations.

### **Commercial Revenue**

- Huge investments needed to yield long-term benefits
- 1<sup>st</sup> step currently in progress:
  - re-zoning of prime land in Laucala Campus to commercial zone
  - Currently with Ministry of Town & Country Planning for consideration; and
  - USP to pursue with Joint Venture partners once re-zoning approval is obtained.

## 25. Membership of the Senate

### **Senate Composition**

- Prescribed by statutes 27 of the University statutes; and
- Divided into three (3) categories:
  - Ex-officio members;
  - Elected members; and
  - Member appointed from any academic institution with affiliation/ association with the University.

## 26. Arrears in Tuition Fee Collection



### Solomon Islands

- Outstanding debt from Semester 2, 2018 stands at \$0.8m; and
- Debt expected to be settled before March end, 2019 as per commitment of Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance.

## 27. Decrease in Uptake of MBA Course



### Laucala Campus

- Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> for highest decrease in enrollment numbers (27%);
- Drop in enrollment is attributed to:
  - Lack of interest to start a PG Cert. in Financial Administration & PG Dip. in Advanced Analytical Skills (*programme not offered in 2017 as a result*);
  - Further applicant elimination through admission process eligibility checks & admission test; and
  - Low number of overall applications received.

### Lautoka Campus

- Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> for highest decrease in enrollment numbers (60%);
- Drop in enrollment is attributed to:
  - A drop in courses offered, i.e. from 9 courses in 2016 to 6 courses in 2017; and
  - A reduction in the number of cohorts undertaking the course, i.e. from 2 cohorts in 2015 to 1 cohort in 2016.

### Tonga Campus

- Recorded the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest registration/ enrollment count in 2016;
- Drop in enrollment in 2017 is attributed to:
  - No new cohort to start in 2017 given the *little to no applications received*; and
  - usually the case for regional campuses given their relative small work force size (in comparison to Fiji).

## 28. Issues/ Concerns by Student Associations



(1)

### Platforms in place to address Student Issues & Concerns

- Student Forum – held twice, yearly;
- Student Grievance Policy & Procedures; and
- Regular contact with USP SA including biannual USP SA Council meetings.

### Student Forum

- ✓ Conducted by the Vice-Chancellor;
- ✓ Students are welcomed & invited to raise any issues/concerns;
- ✓ Also attended by the Senior Management Team (SMT), who respond to concerns relating to their portfolios; and
- ✓ In events where SMT members cannot address the issues at the time, they undertake to consider student questions & respond soon after.
- ✓ **Issues include** Cost of fees and on-campus accommodation; Lack of on-campus accommodation; and Issues about specific services or facilities, etc.

### Student Grievance Policy & Procedure

- ✓ Well publicized;
- ✓ Available at the Policy Library on the University website;
- ✓ Also sent to students regularly via the University 'all-student' email service; and
- ✓ Available online from 2018.

## 28. Issues/ Concerns by Student Associations



(2)

Some issues/ concerns raised by Students at this platform, include:

- ✓ Appeals against academic decisions;
- ✓ Appeals against a prerequisite waiver;
- ✓ Request to not abide by Senate rules, such as the 75% progression rule;
- ✓ Not wanting to do University-wide courses;
- ✓ Request for re-entry after failing all courses, etc;
- ✓ SMT members dealing with appeals relevant to their respective portfolios;
- ✓ Students having the right & routinely exercising their right to appeal to the Vice-Chancellor; and
- ✓ Data analysis allowing the University to consider changes to regulations & processes.

## 28. Issues/ Concerns by Student Associations



(3)

### USP SA Council Meetings

- ✓ Meets twice yearly, once in Fiji & once in one of the member countries;
- ✓ 2019 1<sup>st</sup> USP SA Council meeting will be attended by VCP in Cook Islands; and
- ✓ USP SA Council members reiterate issues raised in Student Forums and Student Grievance Policy & Procedures.

Some issues raised through this platform:

- facilities in some regional campuses;
- requests for more graduations in regional campuses;
- requests to relax the University Religion & Belief Policy;
- requests for more Flexi-Schools;
- request for more local tutors; and
- requests for more face-to-face teaching.

## 29. Costs Involved in Development of Regional Campuses



(1)

| Campus      | Cost (FJ\$) | Status update  |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| Cook Is     | 40,000      | Work was completed in May 2017. The space is used for students enrolled in Post-Graduate to PhD studies  |
| Solomon Is  | 2,337,369   | Preparatory work for the Solomon Islands Project is currently being undertaking in terms of design and the tender process  |
| Marshall Is | 2,800,000   | Total project was for US\$9 million. The rest of the development was funded by Government of RMI. The project is completed. The Campus opened in 2017 and the USP Council meeting was held at the Campus from 24 <sup>th</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> May                           |
| Nauru       | 285,000     | This project was funded by Government of Nauru and Australia. USP's contribution was IT infrastructure for USP Nauru Campus. The Campus opened last year in May and the USP Council meeting was held at the Campus from 22nd to 23rd May, 2018                                   |
| Tonga       | 20,000      | This was purchase of science equipment. The Face to Face Science Programme has started in Semester 1, 2017 with 150 students enrolled in:<br>Bachelor of Science in Marine Science, Bachelor of Science in Chemistry & Biology and Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science. |

## 29. Costs Involved in Development of Regional Campuses



(2)

| Campus   | Cost (FJ\$) | Status update  |
|----------|-------------|--|
| Kiribati | 5,000       | Minor renovation carried out to convert existing space into classroom. This space is now used for Face to Face teaching.   |
| Tuvalu   | 62,000      | Tuvaluan Govt informed USP in June 2017 of cabinet's decision to award USP Tuvalu Campus a plot of land for development of additional facilities.<br>In February 2018, USP contracted the services of I AM Designs, a Sydney based architectural firm to prepare a concept plan and cost estimate for a USP Tuvalu Campus Development at the new site. The project to develop the Concept plan occurred over a 20 week period & included a site visit and consultations with the Campus Development Task Force, students, staff and key stakeholders in Tuvalu as well as senior management in Fiji. USP is seeking donor funding of the expansion with Govt of Tuvalu |
| Emalus   | 266,000     | The funding was allocated by the Government of Vanuatu. The fencing is progressing.  |

## 30. Increase in Write-offs of Student Debts



### Reasons for Increase in Student Debts

- Large number of students who owed debt have chosen to discontinue their studies; and
- Debts cannot be recovered due to deaths, migration, unemployment and students not being able to be reached.

### Debt Recovery Mechanism

- Students owing debt are not granted permission to access results, discontinued studies & thus cannot graduate; and
- New practice in 2017: students owing fees are de-registered from the system by the deadline. Student debt has drastically reduced from \$16m in 2017 to \$4m in 2018.

# **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Affairs - Responses to Issues Raised on the USP 2017 Annual Report**

| No. | Questions  | USP's Responses   |
|-----|--|---|
| 1   | Brief the Committee on the functions of The University of the South Pacific  | <p>The core function of USP is to deliver quality education that enables our graduates to inherit knowledge, skills and abilities to effectively and sustainably address the social and economic needs of the Pacific region. The University also has a mandate to undertake research that is relevant to the region and supports policy level dialogue and decision making that affect lives of the Pacific People. Innovation is also an inherent function of the University.</p> <p>USP proactively engages and takes a leading role in engaging with its member countries and finding solutions on major development challenges such as education, climate change, oceans, marine, renewable energy; public administration; digitalisation; gender and health. Besides being a tertiary institution promoting quality education and research &amp; innovation, USP is also focused on fostering regional cooperation and integration in collaboration with the respective CROP agencies and development partners.</p>   |
| 2   | Inform the committee on the key challenges USP faces whilst trying to achieve its strategic objectives and how it is planning to overcome these challenges | <p>USP also has Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE), which provides alternative pathways to higher education as well as TVET programmes.</p> <p>One of the key impediments faced by the University is limited financial resources that inhibits our ability to fully deliver our strategic objectives. This is being addressed by ensuring that the available resources are used efficiently and additional efforts are vested in raising revenue through sources such as development partners and commercial activities. Lack of funds has affected our capital works and substantially deferred maintenance programmes.</p> <p>We also face the problem of having a large number of academic staff positions vacant which affects our overall mandate. While the University is resorting to blended modes of learning, the presence of high caliber academic staff is a prerequisite to ensuring effective teaching and learning and equitable sharing of workloads. The University is prioritising the recruitment of academic staff to reduce this gap.</p> <p>Shortage of accommodation at Laucala and lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities and support services at the regional campuses and centres is a major concern that serves as hindrance in furthering our strategic aspirations. Discussions and work are being pursued bilaterally with member countries and assistance is being sought from development partners to address this critical issue.</p> |
| 3   | How does USP ensure that both male and female employees are treated equally in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion?                                | <p>USP has a sound process for recruitment and is guided by Minimum Qualification Requirement (MQR) to ensure that every applicant is treated fairly and equally. One of the ways which USP is achieving this is through equal opportunity recruitment practices which includes the development of job descriptions and advertisements, to short listing and interviewing candidates. USP focuses on the</p>  |

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses   |
|-----|---|---|
|     |   | <p>skills and experience required for a position which limits discrimination and bias and ensures equality of opportunity at every stage of the recruitment process.</p> <p>For training, the University has an established Staff Development Committee (SDC) and all applications for training are reviewed and decided by this Committee to ensure fair treatment for all applications received. For Academic Staff promotions, the University has a promotion process that goes through the Staff Review Committee (SRC) and are assessed on basis of the Quality of Teaching (QOT) and Quality of Research (QOR) criteria. For promotion of Professional Staff, the process includes advertisement of the position providing opportunities for local candidates to apply. Expatriates are only recruited if the required expertise and experience for positions is not locally available.</p> |
| 4   | Does USP align itself to any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? If so, can you further enlighten the Committee on this? | <p>The University very closely aligns its work, through the Strategic Plan, with that of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the SAMOA Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR). This is to ensure that our education outcomes, research and innovation efforts and regional cooperation and integration effectively address the key medium and long-term priorities of the region. The University has ensured that its five Research Strategic Themes (SRTs) are aligned to the SDGs, as described in the diagram below:</p>  |

| No. | Questions  | USP's Responses  |
|-----|--|--|
|     |  |  |
| 5   | Update the Committee on USP's future plans and initiatives | <p>The University is currently in the process of reviewing the Strategic Plan (SP) 2019-2024 to be considered and endorsed at the 2019 May Council meeting, prior to which an online consultation of the proposed changes will be done with staff and students on 26<sup>th</sup> March. The proposed revisions to the SP are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redesign of the SP to be more focused and aligned to the University Grants Committee Triennium Cycle (2019-2021).</li> <li>2. Reconstruction of Vision, Mission and Values to strongly reflect our Pacific as provided below:</li> </ol> <p><b>Our Vision</b><br/> <i>To shape Pacific futures by empowering students, staff and alumni to become inspirational agents of development leading to innovative, cohesive and sustainable communities.</i></p> <p><b>Our Mission</b></p> |

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses  |
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|     |   | <p>To positively influence Pacific Islanders through the pursuit of excellence in creating, shaping and transferring knowledge by providing world-class education and research that transforms the lives of individuals and communities.</p> <p><b>Our Values</b><br/>To be guided by Pacific Values of inclusive family and participatory and transparent dialogue.</p> <p><u>Excellence and Creativity</u><br/>We will embody excellence and inspire students and staff to embrace innovation for the benefit of our communities.</p> <p><u>Ethical and Accountable</u><br/>We will uphold the highest ethical standards and operate with integrity. We are committed to fostering a culture of transparency and accountability ensuring that we uphold high academic and professional standards.</p> <p><u>Respect and Diversity</u><br/>We will honour our Pacific heritage and traditions as well as respect, recognise and celebrate the diversity of our students and staff ensuring that there are equal opportunities for all through an inclusive culture.</p> <p><u>Supporting our People</u><br/>The safety, wellbeing and needs of our students and staff are paramount and fundamental to our success. We are committed to ensuring that our staff and students achieve their potential to shape better Pacific futures.</p> |
| 6   | The Committee notes that in 2017, three inventions created by USP were registered as innovation patents. What were they and can the Committee be informed if there are other innovations currently in progress? | <p>The three <b>2017 Patent Certifications</b> were for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Braille Slate to Teach Children with Visual Disabilities;</li> <li>2. Aromatic Network for Power Distribution System; and</li> <li>3. GSM Based Early Flood Warning and Monitoring System.</li> </ol> <p>In 2018, the University recorded the following patents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Foot Steps Waste Energy Harvesting System Using Hydro Generator;</li> <li>2. An Emi Sensor For Non-Destructive Corrosion Estimation In Concrete; and</li> <li>3. My Kana – A Mobile App to Promote Healthy Eating In The South Pacific.</li> </ol> <p>Earlier this year, USP recorded patents in Improved Automotive Oil Filter Wrench.</p>  |

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses   |
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|     |   | <p>Please note that to date none of these have resulted in any commercialisation activity.</p> <p>Recently an Innovation Hub has also been established at USP in partnership with UNDP to further promote innovation and creativity.</p>  |
| 7   | <p>Which member countries are up to date with their levies and which ones are not? How is USP addressing this issue given the fact that it has financial commitments in as far as administration costs and other costs are concerned?</p>                                       | <p>As of 31 December 2017, Fiji and Marshall Islands had outstanding debts, which were settled in first quarter of 2018.</p> <p>Republic of Marshall Islands have an outstanding debt of F\$168,000 and it is anticipated that the payments will be received by end of March 2019</p> <p>The University follows up on outstanding contributions from member countries on a monthly basis.</p>   |
| 8   | <p>The Committee notes the following from page 10 of the Annual Report, "Any changes to the [Royal] Charter need to go to the Privy Council for approval with final assent by Her Majesty." Please provide further clarification on this and how the Crown is linked to USP</p> | <p>The Royal Charter is one of three governing instruments for USP, the other two being the University Statutes and the USP Convention. The Charter forms a complete legal basis for the establishment of the University, and by virtue of the Charter, the University possesses full legal capacity in all respects and for all purposes in any jurisdiction in which it is recognised. The Charter prescribes the objects and framework of USP.</p> <p>USP is a body corporate ("Chartered body") formed under the Royal Charter, with its primary legal locus in Fiji and an operating presence in 11 other member countries. A body incorporated by Royal Charter has all the powers of a natural person, including the power to own property in its own right. USP is subject to the respective local laws in its 12 member countries.</p> <p>The linkage and connection of the USP member countries brought the University together to make it one legal entity and give it the necessary legal personality, initially in Fiji, but with full legal force and effect across all the countries stated in the Charter. In much the same way, the Members of other corporate forms (not under Charter) come together to form the incorporated entity.</p> <p>The grant of a Royal Charter is the exclusive privilege of the British Crown. Under today's system of constitutional monarchy, where the roles of Government and Parliament are extensive, the Privy Council retains some limited, formal functions. A grant of Royal Charter remains reserved for only the most eminent professional bodies, which have a solid record of public achievement and are financially sound: "They must act in the public interest". To that end, the Privy Council continues to play an important role as a body of review for Chartered Institutions, particularly in the world of higher education, where amongst its oldest are Cambridge (1231) and Oxford (1248) Universities.</p> <p>The Council may amend the Royal Charter by Special Resolution (2 meetings) and approval from the Crown on advice/ recommendation of the Privy Council. The Statutes and USP Convention on the other hand can be amended by the USP Council.</p> |

| No. Questions |  | USP's Responses   |
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| 9             | <b>University Trust Fund</b>   |   |
| a             | Has the Trust Fund been established and who has benefited from it?   | The Trust Fund is yet to be established. The University anticipated to raise more Endowment Funds as part of its 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary, but unfortunately it was not able to meet the target. Currently, with only FJD 5.8 m and limited predefined investments from donors, USP lacks sufficient finances to warrant a Trust Fund.  |
| b             | Has work on the establishment of the Board completed?  | The University Trust Fund Board is yet to be formed. Prospective Board members, who were approached had declined the invitations; hence a Board comprising of five members are yet to be filled.  |
| 10            | <b>Remuneration Committee</b>  |   |
| a             | Is there any recent recommendation by the Remuneration Committee for USP Staff and wage earners for a pay review of its workers? If none, when was the last review conducted?      | The University is guided by the Job Evaluation (JE) process and this is in progress for Intermediate and Junior (I&J) Staff. There is a salary review currently being considered for I&J Staff and this will be effected once the review report is considered and approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT). For Academic Staff, there was a salary alignment from 2016 to 2018. Currently, the Union has begun negotiations for 2019 to 2021 period.  |
| b             | How are members of the Committee selected, the criteria that needs to be met (if any), and who is responsible for the selection of the members?                                    | The Committee has been established by the Council as per the Terms of Reference set for the Remuneration Committee.   |
| 11            | Apart from the NZD 5.68 million fund given to USP for the upgrade of the USPNet, how else has USP benefited from the NZ-USP Partnership in as far as student welfare is concerned? | <p>The University's partnership with New Zealand has been long-standing since the establishment of USP. NZ continues to provide financial support towards the core budget for teaching, learning and student services. It also positions the University well to serve the Pacific region with ICT, research, education and regional integration services. Over the last three years (2016-2018), NZ has provided NZD 15 million in core funding to the University.</p> <p>In early February, a Partnership Agreement between USP and New Zealand, worth a core funding of NZD 5.15 million, was signed. The partnership extends till 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, and is a three per cent increase from the previous arrangement. Besides the core funding, an additional NZD 100, 000 has also been received to support USP's progress in areas of emerging priorities.</p> <p>The NZ Government is also providing a sum of NZD 4.5 million to support the implementation of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF), which is being implemented by the University's Institute of Education and School of Education, UNESCO and SPC's EQAP. USP is overall</p> |

| No. | Questions  | USP's Responses  |
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|     |  | responsible for the facilitation of the Framework, in its capacity as the Lead CROP agency for the Human Resource Development (HRD) Working Group. This funding will be shared amongst the respective partnering institutions as per approved work programmes.   |
| 12  | Page 30 of Annual Report – How has USP benefited from the High Level Consultations with the Australian Government and what are some of the outcomes?   | <p>The direct benefits of the High Level Consultation (HLC) is the strategic level discussion with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on the USP-Australia Partnership, which has been progressed over the course of 2018. The Commitment from Australia is to provide AUD 84 million (Announced also in January by Prime Minister of Australian during his public lecture at USP) to support the University's Strategic Plan initiative for the period 2019 to 2024. This new USP-Australia Partnership is expected to be finalised during our upcoming bilateral HLC in Canberra on 29 April 2019.</p> <p>Australia has been also been supporting USP in forging partnerships with Australian universities and institutions with a view to promoting academic, research and technical cooperation. One good example is the resulting partnership with Monash University, which is working with USP's School of Education to assist with strengthening internal capacities in areas of education and more broadly, quality of teacher training.</p> <p>The other good outcomes of the HLCs are Australia's support towards the PacREF and the on-going discussion pertaining to potential support towards infrastructure development (regional campuses). The University also has developed a Child Protection Policy and is planning to undertake a Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Survey, which are outcomes of the HLC with Australia.</p> |
| 13  | In light of the academic staff turnover, what is USP doing to cater for young scholars from around the region to be given the opportunity to move up the hierarchy? For example, there was a moratorium in 2017 by the Vice-Chancellor for Assistant Lecturers to have a PhD and this denies regional people's progression | <p>The requirement for Assistant Lectures (ALs) to have PhD is a move towards enhancing competencies and qualifications whereby staff are given opportunities to be committed to continuous professional improvement. This is aligned to the criteria and requirement of the QOR and QOT. In the longer run, this effort will also ensure an increased number of PhDs in the region. It also ensures that Assistant Lecturers at USP are well qualified and it means that the region will have better qualified staff that will enhance the student experience.</p>  |
| 14  | <b>Student Accommodation</b>   |  |
| a   | How is USP addressing the issue of high accommodation costs?   | <p>Student accommodation costs are kept at a minimum and the University operates on a breakeven policy. USP accommodation is not operated with a view to make profits. The new student's block 10th and 11th Hall charges are higher than the older blocks due the high construction costs in Fiji.</p>  |

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses  |
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| b   | Does USP have sufficient space to accommodate regional and international students?  | Currently demand for student accommodation outstrips supply at USP. USP has preferential access policy for student accommodation. First-year students from the outer islands and the region are given first preference. We have a separate international lodge and this is able to accommodate the international student demand.   |
| 15  | Can we be provided further information on the gender mainstreaming advisory committee? What is the mandate of this committee and how will it benefit USP?   | <p>The Gender Mainstream Advisory Committee is one of three sub committees under the Senate approved Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEIC). It reports to DEIC. The following is the mandate of the Gender Mainstream Advisory Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To oversee the implementation and further development of the University's Gender Policy: <a href="http://policy/lib.usp.ac.fj/form.readdoc.php?id=167">http://policy/lib.usp.ac.fj/form.readdoc.php?id=167</a>;</li> <li>2. To support the achievement of the University's KPIs and equality objectives, by raising awareness of gender equality and acting as a body of expertise on gender issues; and</li> <li>3. To advise DEIC and Human Resources on measures addressing gender equality at USP.</li> </ol>   |
| 16  | The committee notes that a University-wide Emergency Management Policy was adopted incorporating the lessons learnt from the sever cyclone of 2016. Can clarifications be provided on what this policy encompasses? | <p>Learning from effects of TC Winston in 2016, USP created university wide Disaster Management Policy; established Disaster Management Committee (DISMAC) and have developed a Disaster Management Plan in 2017.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor and President chairs the USP Disaster Management Committee (USP DISMAC) based at Laucala campus.</p> <p>Each Campus Director is the Resident Disaster Manager for respective in country campuses and liaises directly with USP DISMAC based at Laucala.</p> <p>Each campus has Campus Disaster Management Procedures, which they use in responding to their campus emergencies / disasters in alignment with their National Disaster Management Policies and Procedures.</p> <p>A Disaster Management Office is available 24/7 for use by USP DISMAC at Laucala campus</p> <p>These policies and plans encompasses the university actions in managing the following disaster situations where the university campuses is vulnerable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fire</li> <li>2. Cyclone</li> <li>3. Earthquake</li> <li>4. Tsunami</li> </ol> |

| No. | Questions | USP's Responses   |
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|     |           | <p>5. Civil Unrest</p> <p>6. Flooding and Utility Outage</p> <p>Since the inception of these policy and plans, the university Disaster Management Committee has used these plans in managing the following disaster events affecting the university:</p> <p><b>Fires ( 2 )</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lautoka Campus Fire : November 2016; and</li> <li>2. Communication Building Fire Laucala Campus: November 2018.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cyclones ( 10 )</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TC Cook Category 3 : April 2017 Vanuatu;</li> <li>2. TC Donna Category 5 : May 2017 Fiji;</li> <li>3. TC Gita Category 5 : February 2018 : Fiji , Tonga and Samoa;</li> <li>4. TC Hola Category 4 : March 2018 : Vanuatu;</li> <li>5. TC Josie Category 1 : March 2018 : Fiji;</li> <li>6. TC Keni Category 3 : April 2018 : Fiji;</li> <li>7. TC Mona Category 2 : January 2019 : Fiji;</li> <li>8. TC Neil Category 1 : February 2019 : Tonga;</li> <li>9. TC Oma Category 3 : February 2019 : Vanuatu; and</li> <li>10. TC Pola Category 4: February 2019: Tonga.</li> </ol> <p><b>Earthquake ( 0 )</b></p> <p><b>Tsunami ( 0 )</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. USP Laucala tsunami drill held March 7<sup>th</sup> 2019: 2800 staff and students participated.</li> </ol> <p><b>Civil Unrest ( 0 )</b></p> <p><b>Major Utility Outage / Flooding ( 0 )</b></p> <p>The University Disaster Management Committee continues to promote Disaster Risk Resilience in normal day to day operations and safety of students and staff is of paramount importance in its operations.</p> <p>So far, the university is fortunate that no life has been lost or injured in regards to the above disaster events.</p> |

| No. | Questions  | USP's Responses  |
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| 17  | <p>In addition to the current financial assistance available to students, how has the University worked with member countries and major financial institutions to develop alternative financing schemes for tertiary students?</p> | <p>Apart from the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS) and Toppes Scheme in Fiji, only four University's Campuses have such scheme, which include Tuvalu, RMI, Nauru and Kiribati.</p> <p><b>Tuvalu</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Student Education Loan Fund (SELF)</b> – which is similar to TELS and students can go and study in any USP Campus outside of Tuvalu. Majority of these students are at Laucala;</li> <li>2. <b>Tuition</b> – For USP Students only. The government sponsors 1 – 2 courses per student per semester – Discussion are on-going for increasing their sponsorship to 3 – 4 courses per semester so students can complete quickly – especially full time students. Seeing that many programmes are offered online and blended mode, there is an ongoing discussion that Tuition sponsored students complete the 100 and 200 level courses in Tuvalu and move to Laucala or any other campus to do 300 level courses if the need arises. This will mean an increase in number of students at the Tuvalu campus. There are 162 students under the Tuition Scheme;</li> <li>3. <b>Medical and Education (MEDU)</b> – This is similar to FNPF. Students fees are paid via Education Benefit from the Tuvalu National Provident Fund. Currently 122 students are sponsored via MEDU;</li> <li>4. <b>Consultation with Island Community Councils</b> – consultations are held with Island Community Councils (Kaupule) to sponsor students from their Island's fees. Island Communities have scholarship funds for their students and currently, the Funafuti Kaupule (Island Council) provides 6 scholarships for 6 students from Funafuti who are studying at the Tuvalu Campus.</li> <li>5. <b>Cohort Based Sponsored Programmes</b> – sponsored by development partners via government departments. The Ministry of Education manages funds for Education for pre service students while the Office of the Prime Minister via the Human Resources Management Department manages funds for In-service students. Currently, there are 3 sponsored cohorts with 94 students. Another cohort is to start in April; and</li> <li>6. <b>The Government of Tuvalu and DFAT Scholarships</b> are the other on going scholarships. They are focusing on sponsoring students whose programs cannot be offered at the Tuvalu campus. In the recent visit of the DPM New Zealand and his delegations, a suggestion was made for scholarships for students studying at the Tuvalu Campus.</li> </ol> <p><b>RMI</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>RMI-USP Joint project</b> - which the government now funds at US\$600k per annum;</li> <li>2. <b>US Federal Grants (PELL)</b> - RMI students are eligible for 4 years of full or part time undergraduate study in Accredited Institutions (for example by WASC or WSCUC). This is based on a means test, which most RMI citizens meet;</li> <li>3. <b>Marshall Islands Scholarship and Loans Board</b> provides scholarships for full time students who meet the requirements of the program. The Board's funding comes from both Government and Compact funds;</li> </ol> |

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses   |
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|     |   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Grants</b> - for example our ECE teachers fees are paid by US funds provided to the Ministry of Education as Supplemental Education Grants; and</li> <li><b>Donor funded projects</b> also meet tuition costs.</li> </ol> <p><b>Nauru</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Self-funding</b> – private students either out of their savings or through their Members of Parliaments;</li> <li><b>Sponsored students</b> – partially but mostly fully sponsored by various sectors particularly through Human Resource and Labor (Government of Nauru); and</li> <li><b>Cohort Based Programs</b> – There are 35 students currently completing the last two units in the Cert IV program. Tuition fees are covered by respective sponsors.</li> </ol> <p><b>Kiribati</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Loan Scheme</b> - This is managed by the Ministry of Education where anyone can apply for it before Semester starts.</li> <li><b>In-country Scholarship</b> - managed by the Ministry of Education for pre-service students. They are placed at USP Kiribati campus for two years before they can be transferred to Laucala campus;</li> <li><b>Cohort Scholarship</b> - This is managed by the Public Service Office for civil servants. The funding is approved once the need has been confirmed that the programme will be offered by the Campus within the required period;</li> <li><b>AusAID and NZAID Scholarship</b> - Managed by the Australian and NZ High Commission Offices for pre-service and in-service students who wish to further their educations in Fiji, Australia and New Zealand; and</li> <li><b>Students from Underprivileged Families</b> - This is a financial assistance provided by the Ministry of Women and Youth Development for those students, whose parents have passed away or have some form of disability.</li> </ol> |
| 18  | Has the 12 <sup>th</sup> hall project construction commenced and when is it anticipated to complete?  | The 12th Hall project is being reconfigured to implement a modular approach. The business case for initial project with 400 beds was not viable. We are planning to progress the project with an incremental approach of building 100 beds at a time, with internally generated funding as opposed to debt financing.   |
| 19  | Page 74 of the annual report states that a Renewable Energy proposal was submitted to ADB for greening of USP's campuses worth approximately USD24.73m. Can you advise what is the status of this project and if funding has been | The <i>renewable energy component</i> primarily focusses on embedding several solar PV power facilities in in each selected USP campuses as part of the University's green Campus initiative. The University has set a goal to become 100% renewable fully self-reliant for its electricity needs by 2020 for all 14 campuses. As a first step, the USP plans to integrate renewables in six (6) including Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, RMI, Kiribati and Tonga out of the fourteen (14) campuses. With ADB's assistance, funding was secured with endorsements Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, RMI, and Vanuatu from the Asian Development Fund (ADF) allocations towards the implementation of the project at the respective   |

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses   |
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|     | <p>finalized? What will be some of the benefits once this project is completed?</p>   | <p>campuses. The project timeframe was expected to be initiated from 2020 to 2022 with an overall budget of USD 8.82m for the five smaller countries.</p> <p>It was agreed with ADB that the project be focused initially on the five countries (Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, RMI, and Vanuatu), whilst we continue to strategise on how best to deal with Fiji's larger component of the broader project in absence of sovereign guarantee from the Fijian Government to enable USP receive a loan from ADB. We had ensured that the challenge with Fiji should not impede on the broader project and as such, the University and ADB collectively agreed that work on the five remaining countries ought to be prioritised.</p> <p>However, late last year, the project has faced a major setback as the Government of Fiji is not in a position to provide sovereign guarantee for a soft loan for the Laucala Campus, which is the largest component of the project. In light of this, ADB does not find it feasible to continue with the rest of the project component; mainly given its small scale and also that the grant secured thus far was for the overall project and not only the five remaining countries. We are, however still negotiating this with ADB, while seeking other sources of funding to support the implementation of the project.</p>  |
| 20  | <p>The committee notes that the University has established a new USP Research and Development Centre in the Marshall Islands known as the Micronesian Centre for Sustainable Transport. Can you enlighten the Committee on this initiative?</p> | <p>The Micronesian Center for Sustainable Transport (MCST) aims to be a center of excellence to prepare and implement a transition to sustainable transport. Its establishment on RMI's USP campus was endorsed by USP Council in 2016. Currently, it has a team of four staff, two of them are based at the MCST office in RMI, while the other two are based at Laucala Campus. It is core-funded by USP and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. It has also attracted funding through a portfolio of projects. Recently completed projects include the maritime transport section of Fiji's Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS), and a Marshall Islands ship registry research projects.</p> <p>Ongoing projects include the Transitioning to Low Carbon Sea Transport (TLCSaT) project in the Marshall Islands, with partners GLZ, WAM, and Hochschule Emden-Leer; Project Cerulean with partner Swire Shipping, which seeks to build a business case for a low carbon sail cargo ship to commercially ply a Pacific trade route, and in a second phase build and operate the ship; a study of medium- and long-term measures to control greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping with partners UCL, CE Delft, Lloyd's Register, and Texas Tech University. MCST have also been providing technical assistance to a number of Pacific countries' delegations, including Fiji's, to the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Further projects are under discussion, including plans to develop a bid to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for the implementation of a transition to sustainable sea transport in the Pacific region.</p> |
| 21  | <p><b><i>Strategic Plans of the University</i></b></p>  |   |
| a   | <p>What has been some of the challenges in the implementation of the 2013 – 2018 Strategic Plan?</p>  | <p>Limited financial resources to fully implement the key deliverables in the SP. For example for the KPIs on recruitment of Professors, which was set at 60 couldn't be met because of funds. Lack of adequate funding also meant that USP was not able to build enough accommodation at Laucala</p>   |

| No.  |   | USP's Responses  |   |           |              |            |      |                                |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Questions  |   |  |   |           |              |            |      |                                |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| b  | Has the University been able to achieve 100% of the SP 2013 – 2018 aims and objectives?                           | campus to provide accommodation to our students at the campus and also attract more foreign students. The UGC has asked the University to increase the intake of foreign students. The University achieved 84% of the overall objective and KPIs it had set out to achieve for the period 2013-2018.   |   |           |              |            |      |                                |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| c  | Provide further information on the current Strategic Plan 2019 - 2024   | The Council has approved a new SP but also provided flexibility to the new Vice-Chancellor and President to review the plan and present the revised Plan at the May 2019 Council Meeting for its consideration and endorsement.  |   |           |              |            |      |                                |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22   | Which countries are still to ratify the USP Convention and what are the challenges these countries may be facing? | The new Strategic Plan is being reviewed to make it more strategically focused and aligned to the University Grants Committee Cycle (2019-2021). This will be consulted with all staff and students of the University on 26 March 2019.<br><br>As of 11 March 2019, all 12 USP-member countries have signed the USP Convention and 7 have ratified. On the part of USP, all requirements have been fulfilled (e.g. depository arrangements) and relevant documents (e.g. USP Convention, Model Law, Information paper, relevant templates) and support (e.g. on-going advice, workshop for legal officers, workshop for Ministers) provided. These are the remaining countries yet to ratify:                          |   |           |              |            |      |                                |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |   | <table><tr><th>USP MEMBER COUNTRY</th><th>SIGNATURE</th><th>RATIFICATION</th><th>CHALLENGES</th></tr><tr><td>Fiji</td><td>Signed on 17 August 2017, Suva</td><td>The last update received was on 20 March 2018 from Mr David Ali, Executive Support Unit, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts: "<i>Cabinet also agreed that the Fijian Government ratify the convention subject to parliamentary approval.</i>"</td><td>Ratification of the USP Convention may be low on the list of Government priorities as Fiji signed in August 2017.</td></tr><tr><td colspan="4">The latest follow up email from USP was sent to PS Education on 4 February 2018 and no update has been received to date.</td></tr></table> | USP MEMBER COUNTRY  | SIGNATURE | RATIFICATION | CHALLENGES | Fiji | Signed on 17 August 2017, Suva | The last update received was on 20 March 2018 from Mr David Ali, Executive Support Unit, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts: " <i>Cabinet also agreed that the Fijian Government ratify the convention subject to parliamentary approval.</i> " | Ratification of the USP Convention may be low on the list of Government priorities as Fiji signed in August 2017. | The latest follow up email from USP was sent to PS Education on 4 February 2018 and no update has been received to date. |  |  |  |  |  |
| USP MEMBER COUNTRY   | SIGNATURE   | RATIFICATION   | CHALLENGES  |           |              |            |      |                                |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fiji   | Signed on 17 August 2017, Suva  | The last update received was on 20 March 2018 from Mr David Ali, Executive Support Unit, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts: " <i>Cabinet also agreed that the Fijian Government ratify the convention subject to parliamentary approval.</i> "  | Ratification of the USP Convention may be low on the list of Government priorities as Fiji signed in August 2017. |           |              |            |      |                                |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| No. | Questions | USP's Responses |                                 |   |  |
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|     |           | Niue            | Signed on 22 May 2018, Yaren    | Update received on 4 February 2018 from Mr Aldric Hipa, Assistant Crown Counsel, Crown Law Office, Niue.<br><br>The USP Convention Bill was passed in December 2018 and the USP Convention Act is now in force. Niue will sign the Instrument of Accession at the next Council meeting.   | Will ratify at USP Council meeting on 16 & 17 May 2019 in Port Vila, Vanuatu |
|     |           | Solomon Islands | Signed on 25 October 2017, Nadi | Update received on 4 February 2018 from PS Education, Dr Franco Rodie:<br><br>“...I cannot predict at the moment whether the Solomon Islands Parliament will be able to deliberate on the USP convention by May this year. This is mainly due to the fact that I do not know how soon the new Government may be formed after the National General Elections as well as when the 10 Parliament may meet. However, one thing I can assure you is that my Ministry will do all it can to table the USP Convention first to the new Government Cabinet (after it has been formed) and then to the Bills and Legislation Committee and to Parliament.” | Waiting for new government   |

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|----|---|--|--|---|
|    |   | Tokelau  |  |   |
|    |   | Signed on 25 May 2017, Majuro  | Email sent to Mr Junior Aleta on 4 February 2019 and no response received yet.   | No response despite regular follow-ups  |
|    |   | Tonga<br>Signed on 25 May 2017, Majuro   | Update received on 5 February 2018 from Ms Lucy Moala-Mafi, Deputy CEO Corporate Services/ UNESCO Affairs Division, Ministry of Education & Training: "I will send a reminder to our Crown Law Department."<br>No update from Crown Law office received yet. | Ratification of the USP Convention may be low on the list of Government priorities as Tonga signed in May 2017. |
| 23 | Elaborate on the 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorations, its outcomes and the total costs of the Project | <p>In October 2017, the USP Council approved a budget of FJD \$1.8 million for the 50th Anniversary project which was spread across three financial years, 2017, 2018 and 2019. The final payments are still being processed, and therefore the final reconciliation is yet to be completed. We anticipate the project actuals to be \$300,000 below budget.</p> <p>At the Council meeting of October 2017, ambitious programme of fifty events, nearly one per week was presented, which spread throughout the year and across all campuses in the member nations. This range of events, all very different, were designed to resonate across USP's broad family of stakeholders. Central to the year's activities were the campus "Moments to Shine". These were a point during the year when each campus was the only 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event occurring and each campus had the opportunity to celebrate their unique contribution to USP's development over the last half century.</p> <p><i>Key outcomes of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary are outlined below:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthened relationships with all member nation governments through the recognition of their contributions and involvement of senior government officials in 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities. In the case of Fiji this included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Official opening of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by the President of Fiji</li> <li>b. Opening of 1997 Time capsule by the President of Fiji and the High Commissioner of Australia</li> <li>c. Unveiling of the RNZAF Commemorative Monument by the Prime Minister of Fiji and the New Zealand Defence Minister</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |  |   |

| No. | Questions | USP's Responses  |
|-----|-----------|--|
|     |           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Opening of the Sports Research Symposium by the President of Fiji and the Fiji Minister for Sport</li> <li>e. Official closing of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by the President of Fiji</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Strengthened relationships with major donor and partner organisations through direct involvement with 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events including:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Australian Government – Opening of 1997 Time Capsule and video message from Australian Foreign Minister</li> <li>b. New Zealand Government - Unveiling of RNZAF Commemorative Monument allowing for a visit by New Zealand Defence Minister, Head of New Zealand Armed Forces and 300 former RNZAF members.</li> <li>c. Japan Government – Conduct of a JICA international Conference (January) and the launch of the JICA Leap program (October)</li> <li>d. United Nations and European Union – Involvement of key individuals and programs in the Sports Research Symposium (June) and Pacific Islands Transport Forum (November)</li> <li>e. Pacific Islands Forum – Research Week (August) opened by the Chairman of the PIF as his last official act as Chairman</li> <li>f. British Government – Royal Visit to USP by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex (October)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Forging greater links to the USP Alumni through:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Huge involvement with all USP Campus “Moments to Shine” throughout the member nations</li> <li>b. Specific Alumni dinners and functions on all campuses</li> <li>c. Collection of contact details by the USP Alumni Department through 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events</li> <li>d. Involvement as contributors to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Book “A University for the Pacific”</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Promotion and Preservation of Pacific Culture through:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Commissioning and showcasing of local Fijian artist, Shane Bower, to design and build the RNZAF Commemorative Monument now installed on the Laucala Campus</li> <li>b. Commissioning and showcasing of 5 local Fijian artists to paint the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mural now hanging in the Japan – Pacific ICT Centre on Laucala Campus</li> <li>c. 5-day long Pacific Arts Festival that showcased; fashion designers, sculptors, weavers, dancers, singers and other performers from across the Pacific region</li> <li>d. Production of the “Mana – Voyaging Oceania” Theatrical performance, part of which was used in the presentation to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex during the Royal Visit</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses  |
|-----|---|--|
| 24  | What are some of the new income streams that are being pursued by the University? | <p>e. Preparation of traditional and contemporary performances by Pasifika Voices and the USP Dance Troupe for a range of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events including: the Royal Visit, Closing Dinner, Research Week, Pacific Island Transport Forum and Fiji's "Moment to Shine"</p> <p>f. Commissioning of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Book "A University for the Pacific – 50 years of USP" written by Ass. Prof. Jacqui Leckie</p> <p>5. Improved standing of USP in the Academic Community through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports Research Symposium where Prof. Wladimir Andreff of the Sorbonne, Paris and Prof. Emma Sherry of Swinburne University, Melbourne were key note speakers and USP research on the economic impact of sport in Samoa and Fiji was presented</li> <li>Hosting of the Pacific Islands Transport Forum where a collaboration with the China Navigation Company, Swire Shipping and USP to research, build and trial a low carbon freighter as demonstration of a more appropriate and affordable maritime transport solution servicing inter-regional routes was announced.</li> <li>Research Seminars presented by world leading researchers including: Prof GP Yeh (one of the world's leading physicist), Prof. Ciro Rico (Biology), Kete Retzki (World Mosquito Program), Thomas Bauer (Tourism) and Prof Som Naidu (Education).</li> </ol> <p>The Total Cost for the activities is in the margins of FJ\$1.5 million.</p>                   |
| 25  | Provide details on the membership of the Senate                                   | <p>The major new stream is from commercial revenue and development assistance. Development assistance involves extending and increasing assistance from current partners, and also exploring new opportunities and through philanthropic organisations.</p> <p>The commercial revenue will need huge investments to yield the benefits over the long term. The first step currently in progress is the re-zoning of prime land in Laucala Campus to commercial zone. This is currently with the Ministry of Town Country Planning for consideration. The University will pursue with Joint Venture partners once the re-zoning approval is obtained as the "separate commercial title" is an important pre-requisite to negotiate with a possible commercial partner. The University is also seeking to recruit full fee paying international students. However, this is a challenge given the visa requirements and the very competitive nature of higher education with students choosing Australia and New Zealand first.</p> <p>The Senate composition is prescribed by the Statutes of the University:</p> <p>Statutes 27. Composition of Senate</p> <p>(1) <i>The Senate shall consist of the following persons, namely:</i></p> <p>(a) <i>Ex-officio members being:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Vice-Chancellor (who shall be Chair of the Senate);</i></li> <li><i>The Deputy Vice-Chancellor(s) and the Vice-President(s);</i></li> <li><i>The Pro Vice-Chancellor(s);</i></li> </ol> |

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
|    |   | <p>(iv) <i>The Deans;</i></p> <p>(v) <i>The Director, Information Technology Services;</i></p> <p>(vi) <i>The University Librarian.</i></p> <p>(vii) <i>The Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Technical and Further Education</i></p> <p>(b) <i>Elected members being:</i></p> <p>(i) <i>Two Heads of School per faculty to be elected by academic staff of the faculty;</i></p> <p>(ii) <i>Three Professors per faculty elected by academic staff of the faculty;</i></p> <p>(iii) <i>Five non-professorial academic staff to be elected by all academic staff, at least three of whom shall be women;</i></p> <p>(iv) <i>Three Directors of Campus outside Fiji, at least one of whom shall be a woman, to be elected by all Directors of Campus;</i></p> <p>(v) <i>Four student members, at least two of who shall be women, to be appointed or elected in accordance with Ordinances of the University;</i></p> <p>(c) <i>A member appointed from any academic institution, which is affiliated or otherwise associated with the University, on such terms as the Council may from time to time determine.</i></p>   |
| 26 | Are there any arrears in tuition fee collection from any member country?                                | <p>As at 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019, the government of Solomon Islands has outstanding debt from Semester 2, 2018 for their sponsored students of \$0.8m, the University has been following this up on a continuous basis. Based on the commitment of their Finance Ministry, this is expected to be settled before end of March 2019.</p>  |
| 27 | Explain the possible reasons for the decrease in uptake of MBA course from 124 in 2016 to 94.2 in 2017? | <p>1. <u>Laucala campus</u>- Laucala recorded the second highest decrease (27%) in enrolment numbers compared to other USP campuses from 76.85 EFTS in 2016 to 55.693 in 2017. Laucala is the only USP campus in which the MBA programme is consistently offered with almost all of its students residing along Navua-Suva-Nausori Corridor. <i>One of the main reason of the decrease in enrolments was due to the lack of interest to start a new Postgraduate Certificate in Financial Administration &amp; Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Analytical skills cohort in 2017 resulting in the non-offer of the programmes. This resulted in the decrease in number of courses offered in 2017. Other reasons may also be attributed to the low number of overall applications received. Moreover, we have an admission process comprising of eligibility checks as per AMBA (Association of MBAs) our accreditation agency requirements and an admission test. Therefore, we have to screen out ineligible candidates and those not passing the admission test resulting in further decrease in enrolments.</i></p> <p>2. <u>Lautoka Campus</u> – Lautoka recorded the highest decrease in enrolment numbers with a fall of 60% from 2016. There were a total of 9 courses offered for the 3 programme / cohort of 2016</p> |

| No. | Questions  | USP's Responses   |
|-----|--|---|
| 28  | What are some of the issues/concerns raised by student associations and what is the process followed to resolve such issues? | <p>compared to 6 courses for the 2 programmes offered in 2017. From the 2016 numbers, 2 cohorts (Masters of Business Administration &amp; Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration (GM)) were from the Postgraduate Certificate in Business Administration (HR) cohort that started in 2015 and completed Masters in Business Administration (MBA) in 2016. There was only 1 new Postgraduate Certificate in Business Administration (HR) cohort that started in 2016 compared to 2 new cohorts in 2015.</p> <p>3. <u>Tonga campus</u> – The Tonga offering completed its MBA offering in 2016 after starting in 2015 and recorded the third highest registration/ enrolment count in 2016. <i>There were no new cohorts to start in 2017 as there were little to no applications received. This is usually the case for regional campuses given their relative small work force size (in comparison to Fiji).</i></p> <p><b>Notable Achievements</b></p> <p>GSB recorded an overall increase of 2.4% in terms of the number of courses offered in 2017 (43) compared to 2016 (42). In 2017, the number of USP campuses offering GSB programmes increased by 40% from 2016 with new offerings in Tuvalu, Cook Islands and Kiribati. This fulfilled part of USP's commitment and GSB's plan in regional human capital development and making Postgraduate studies access convenient.</p> <p>USP has 3 main ways of understanding and addressing student concerns and issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student Forum, twice yearly</li> <li>2. Student Grievance Policy &amp; Procedures</li> <li>3. Regular contact with USP SA including biannual USP SA Council meetings.</li> </ol> <p><b>Student Forum</b></p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor conducts two Student Forums annually, held in one of the main lecture theaters. Here students are welcome and invited to raise any issues/concerns. All of the Senior Management Team (SMT) are present, and can respond to concerns relating to their portfolios. In the event that SMT members cannot address the issues at the time, they undertake to consider student questions and respond soon after and this is reported at the next Forum. Some issues include cost of fees, cost and lack of on-campus accommodation, issues about specific services or facilities, etc.</p> <p><b>Student Grievance Policy &amp; Procedures</b></p> <p>The University has a well-publicized Student Grievance Policy &amp; Procedures (SGP), available from the Policy Library on the University website (<a href="http://policy/lib.usp.ac.fj/form.read.doc.php?id=460">http://policy/lib.usp.ac.fj/form.read.doc.php?id=460</a>). It is also sent to students regularly via the University 'all-student' email service. From 2018, the SGP was available online. Although all types of student grievances/appeals can be made using this service, most relate to appeals against academic decisions such as the requests to repeat courses, to bypass the 75% progression rule, re-entry into programme after failing all courses, appeals against a prerequisite</p> |

| No.           | Questions  | USP's Responses  |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
|---------------|--|--|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------|--------|--|------------|-----------|--|-------------|-----------|---|-------|---------|--|-------|--------|---|----------|-------|---|
|               |  | <p>waiver and so on.. Most appeals are dealt with by the relevant SMT member, but students have the right (and routinely exercise this right) to appeal to the Vice-Chancellor. Analysis of data allows the University to consider changes to regulations and processes. Examples include clarifying regulations about the 75% progression rule (to make it clear the University-wide course also are compulsory before progressing), and development and implementation of an Academic Advice Framework (also now online from 2018), which dramatically reduced the number of complaints about students reporting receiving wrong advice.</p> <p><b>USP SA Council Meetings</b></p> <p>The USP SA Council meets twice yearly, once in Fiji and once in one of the member countries. Up until this year, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) attended each meeting. In 2019, the Vice-Chancellor shall attend the first USP SA Council meeting in the Cook Islands. Issues that arise in these meetings include complaints about facilities in some regional campuses (e.g., security at Vanuatu, lack of space at Kiribati, RMI, Lautoka, Labasa and the Solomon Islands), requests for more graduations in regional campuses, requests to relax the University Religion &amp; Belief Policy, requests for more Flexi-Schools, request for more local tutors, and requests for more face-to-face teaching.</p>         |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
| 29            | What costs have been involved in the development of regional campuses as outlined on pages 62 and 63 of the annual report? Provide a status update on these campuses and whether the developments have completed | <table> <tr> <th><i>Campus</i></th><th><i>Cost (FJS)</i></th><th><i>Status update</i></th></tr> <tr> <td>Cook Is</td><td>40,000</td><td>Work was completed in May 2017. The space is used by post graduate students.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Solomon Is</td><td>2,337,369</td><td>Preparatory work in terms of design and the tender processes are underway.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Marshall Is</td><td>2,800,000</td><td>Total project was for USD 9 million. The rest of the development was funded by Government of RMI. The project is completed. The Campus opened in 2017 and the USP Council meeting was held at the Campus from 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> May.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Nauru</td><td>285,000</td><td>This project was funded by Government of Nauru and Australia. USP's contribution was towards the IT infrastructure. The Campus opened last year and the 2018 USP May Council meeting was held there.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Tonga</td><td>20,000</td><td>Purchase of science equipment for the Face to Face Science Programme which started in Semester 1, 2017 with 150 students enrolled in:</td></tr> <tr> <td>Kiribati</td><td>5,000</td><td>Bachelor of Science in Marine Science, Bachelor of Science in Chemistry &amp; Biology and Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science.<br/>Minor renovation to convert existing space into a classroom for Face to Face teaching.</td></tr> </table> | <i>Campus</i> | <i>Cost (FJS)</i> | <i>Status update</i> | Cook Is | 40,000 | Work was completed in May 2017. The space is used by post graduate students. | Solomon Is | 2,337,369 | Preparatory work in terms of design and the tender processes are underway. | Marshall Is | 2,800,000 | Total project was for USD 9 million. The rest of the development was funded by Government of RMI. The project is completed. The Campus opened in 2017 and the USP Council meeting was held at the Campus from 24 <sup>th</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> May. | Nauru | 285,000 | This project was funded by Government of Nauru and Australia. USP's contribution was towards the IT infrastructure. The Campus opened last year and the 2018 USP May Council meeting was held there. | Tonga | 20,000 | Purchase of science equipment for the Face to Face Science Programme which started in Semester 1, 2017 with 150 students enrolled in: | Kiribati | 5,000 | Bachelor of Science in Marine Science, Bachelor of Science in Chemistry & Biology and Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science.<br>Minor renovation to convert existing space into a classroom for Face to Face teaching. |
| <i>Campus</i> | <i>Cost (FJS)</i>  | <i>Status update</i>   |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
| Cook Is       | 40,000   | Work was completed in May 2017. The space is used by post graduate students.   |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
| Solomon Is    | 2,337,369  | Preparatory work in terms of design and the tender processes are underway.   |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
| Marshall Is   | 2,800,000  | Total project was for USD 9 million. The rest of the development was funded by Government of RMI. The project is completed. The Campus opened in 2017 and the USP Council meeting was held at the Campus from 24 <sup>th</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> May.  |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
| Nauru         | 285,000  | This project was funded by Government of Nauru and Australia. USP's contribution was towards the IT infrastructure. The Campus opened last year and the 2018 USP May Council meeting was held there.   |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
| Tonga         | 20,000   | Purchase of science equipment for the Face to Face Science Programme which started in Semester 1, 2017 with 150 students enrolled in:  |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |
| Kiribati      | 5,000  | Bachelor of Science in Marine Science, Bachelor of Science in Chemistry & Biology and Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science.<br>Minor renovation to convert existing space into a classroom for Face to Face teaching.  |               |                   |                      |         |        |  |            |           |  |             |           |   |       |         |  |       |        |   |          |       |   |

| No.          | Questions  | USP's Responses   |  |  |        |        |  |  |  |        |         |              |                  |
|--------------|--|---|--|--|--------|--------|--|--|--|--------|---------|--------------|------------------|
|              |  | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Tuvalu</td><td>62,000</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="3"> <p>The Government of Tuvalu informed USP on the June 2017 of the cabinet's decision to award USP Tuvalu Campus a plot of land for the development of additional facilities.</p> <p>In February 2018, USP contracted the services of I AM Designs, a Sydney based architectural firm to prepare a concept plan and cost estimate for a USP Tuvalu Campus Development at the new site. The project to develop the Concept plan occurred over a 20 week period and included a site visit and consultations with the Campus Development Task Force, students, staff and key stakeholders in Tuvalu as well as senior management in Fiji. USP is seeking donor funding of the expansion with Government of Tuvalu</p> </td></tr> <tr> <td>Emalus</td><td>266,000</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>TOTAL</b></td><td><b>5,815,369</b></td></tr> </table>   |  |  | Tuvalu | 62,000 | <p>The Government of Tuvalu informed USP on the June 2017 of the cabinet's decision to award USP Tuvalu Campus a plot of land for the development of additional facilities.</p> <p>In February 2018, USP contracted the services of I AM Designs, a Sydney based architectural firm to prepare a concept plan and cost estimate for a USP Tuvalu Campus Development at the new site. The project to develop the Concept plan occurred over a 20 week period and included a site visit and consultations with the Campus Development Task Force, students, staff and key stakeholders in Tuvalu as well as senior management in Fiji. USP is seeking donor funding of the expansion with Government of Tuvalu</p> |  |  | Emalus | 266,000 | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>5,815,369</b> |
| Tuvalu       | 62,000   | <p>The Government of Tuvalu informed USP on the June 2017 of the cabinet's decision to award USP Tuvalu Campus a plot of land for the development of additional facilities.</p> <p>In February 2018, USP contracted the services of I AM Designs, a Sydney based architectural firm to prepare a concept plan and cost estimate for a USP Tuvalu Campus Development at the new site. The project to develop the Concept plan occurred over a 20 week period and included a site visit and consultations with the Campus Development Task Force, students, staff and key stakeholders in Tuvalu as well as senior management in Fiji. USP is seeking donor funding of the expansion with Government of Tuvalu</p>  |  |  |        |        |  |  |  |        |         |              |                  |
| Emalus       | 266,000  |   |  |  |        |        |  |  |  |        |         |              |                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>5,815,369</b>   |   |  |  |        |        |  |  |  |        |         |              |                  |
| 30           | <p>The committee notes the increase in the write-off of student debts from \$232,352 in 2016 to \$1,969,172 in 2017. Provide reasons for the increase in write-off and outline the debt recovery mechanism in place at the University.</p> | <p>The University follows a stringent process for write-offs, by ensuring that the University has first exhausted all avenues to collect debts in each country. The debts are then proposed to be written off if they are confirmed that this cannot be recovered due to deaths, migration, unemployment and students not being able to be reached. The increase in 2017 is due to various exercises that the University had undertaken to review all debts over 3 years. This exercise is currently being handled as a project and more write-offs are expected in 2019. The increase in write-offs in 2017 is due to a large number of students who owed debt and have chosen not to continue studies at this time. The only recourse the University has for these students is to ensure they do not graduate, access their results or continue studies until their previous years debts are fully settled. While the debts are written-off in the books, they still exist in the University's system and students must pay them in full if they wish to return in the future.</p> <p>Since 2017, the University had changed its practice by enforcing de-registration if students do not pay fees by the deadline (4th week of lectures). This has improved the collections effort by ensuring that only fee paying students continue studies. The total students' debt as a result had reduced by \$4m as at end of 2018 compared to \$16m in 2017.</p> |  |  |        |        |  |  |  |        |         |              |                  |

| No. | Questions | USP's Responses  |
|-----|-----------|--|
|     |           | The University is intending to implement an “advance payment” process, similar to the practices in other Universities. |

## **Appendix Two**

### **Appendix Two – Supplementary Response**

**Professor Pal Ahluwalia**, FASSA  
Vice-Chancellor and President

 The University of the South Pacific  
Laulala Campus, Private Mail Bag  
Suva, Fiji

Ph: (679) 323 2313 or 323 2119

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[www.usp.ac.fj](http://www.usp.ac.fj)

Our Ref: 2019/45

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019

Honourable Viam Pillay  
Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Affairs  
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji  
PO Box 2352  
Government Building,  
Suva

Dear Chairman,

Re: USP Parliamentary Response to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Regarding the USP 2017 Annual Report – Supplementary Questions

I refer to your letter of 15 April 2019 regarding the above subject.

As required, the University has compiled a response (refer to Appendix) to each of the supplementary questions related to the USP 2017 Annual Report.

I trust that the responses provided meet the requirements of the Standing Committee.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Pal Ahluwalia**  
Vice Chancellor & President

## Appendix

### Supplementary Questions - Responses to Issues Raised on the USP 2017 Annual Report

| No. | Questions   | USP's Responses   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1   | <i>Inform the Committee on the total cost of the damage to the Communications Building at Laucala Campus as a result of the major fire in November last year. Clarify whether the building was insured and what has been the progress with respect to acquisition of funds to replace the building.</i> | The Communications Building was insured for \$20m. The value of the damage is still to be confirmed as the assessment is being carried out by the engineers appointed by the insurer. This report is expected to be received before the end of May 2019. The assessment will determine the extent of the insurance claim to be made, which will be utilised to re-build on the site. The University will also seek support from development partners as well as member countries to contribute to the re-building process.  |
| 2   | <i>Elaborate on the governance and management issues affecting the USP, which has led to the extreme financial burden to the University.</i>  | The University launched a whistle blowing policy in 2018 and is encouraging people to raise pertinent governance and management issues that the University would need to address. These are being reviewed and investigated where necessary through the University's internal and external audit system. The University has actioned a number of recommendations from these audits while others are in process. Some of these action points include enforcing compliance to policies and procedures in the areas of recruitment, appointments, and reviewing practices with regards various payments (bonuses, allowances, benefits, rewards, etc.) to staff. The University is working to ensure that any long-term financial burden is mitigated. |
| 3   | <i>Provide details on the purpose of the USP Trust Fund and how it will benefit the University and its students.</i>  | The USP Trust Fund is the investment arm of the University, formed to encourage investments from various donors, development partners and corporations. It gives the opportunity for the University to engage the right level of expertise to govern and invest the funds to maximise returns. The returns on these investments will be largely used to benefit education through the provision of scholarships and research opportunities. Other similar arrangements exists in other Universities, which help them to raise third stream of revenues and also build their research funds and capabilities.  |

## **Appendix Three**

### **Verbatim Report**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**[Verbatim Report of Meeting]**

**HELD IN THE**

**COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING)**

**ON**

**TUESDAY, 19TH MARCH, 2019**

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE SMALL COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON TUESDAY, 19TH MARCH, 2019 AT 1.30 P.M.**

**Interviewee/Submittee:            University of the South Pacific (USP)**

**In Attendance:**

- |    |                         |   |  |
|----|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Professor Pal Ahluwalia | - | Vice-Chancellor and President of USP           |
| 2. | Professor Arvind Patel  | - | Acting Dean, Faculty of Business and Economics |
| 3. | Mr. Kolinio Boila       | - | Executive Director Finance                     |

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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Members, welcome back.

Honourable Members, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I would like to welcome Professor Pal Ahluwalia, the Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of South Pacific; together with him is Professor Arvind Patel, the Acting Dean, Faculty of Business and Economics; and Mr. Kolinio Boila, Executive Director Finance, I believe you all know him. He has been presenting to the Committee.

Sir, welcome to today's meeting. For your information, the 2017 Annual Report was given to the Committee by Parliament of Fiji and our role is to scrutinise the Report and then report back to Parliament.

For your information, we have gone through page by page, as far as the Report is concerned. Then we formulated the questions which was sent to you with the invitation. Although I see the presentation, together with the answers and there is a lot of information is there, but if you see that during your presentation some of the questions are being answered, Sir, you can just refer to that and let us know. In the end, we will allow our Honourable Members to ask some supplementary questions.

Thank you very much for coming in, and thank you very much for your time. I will now give you the opportunity to present to the Committee. Thank you.

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Thank you, your Excellency. I might just start by pointing out that, of course, 2017 was a year when I was not at USP. I have only joined as Vice-Chancellor from 1st January this year, which is why my two colleagues are here so that if there are issues that are raised during that period, they can help answer those questions.

I also wanted to say, "thank you", for inviting for us and giving us the opportunity to tell you a bit more about USP and I thought some of the questions were very helpful. And I am hoping that this can be an interactive session so while I am presenting, I will not mind if you want to interrupt me and ask me a question. Sometimes it is better to take the questions immediately rather than waiting till the end, so please be free to ask question as we go along.

Let me begin by taking on the first slide which is really about the functions of the University. As you said, some of these I am not going to go through a lot in detail. You can see here that the function of the University is to provide quality education and the opportunity for our staff and students to engage in quality research and innovation.

I think this one is rather important, the key challenges faced by us which are that we operate with limited financial resources, especially because a large part of our budget comes from development assistance, particularly from Australia and New Zealand.

We also are incurring a little bit of a problem and that we have very few academic staff and it is difficult to recruit within this environment for two reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to get quality Academics. We have a very high standard of what we expect of Academics to come with, but additionally we do have issues with their work permit to operate within Fiji, which limits our ability to recruit quality staff. It is not just in Fiji, I mean, that problem exists throughout the 12 countries that we operate in.

There is also a shortage of accommodation and lack of adequate learning and teaching facility support, particularly at our regional Campuses. But also in November 2018, we had a very big fire at our Laucala Campus, which means that one of our largest buildings has been lost to a fire and to replace that building is going to be a big challenge, and it also meant that we have lost a lot of accommodation.

We are very lucky, in that, we have made sure that our front line services to our students are not affected in any way. So we have housed those services by making alternative arrangements, but it is a quite a serious issue for us.

The third was about the equal treatment of both, male and female employees. I want to assure this Committee that we take gender equality very seriously. We have a Staff Development Committee for decisions on all applications, everything is guided by the Minimum Qualification Requirement (MQR) for equal treatment of all applications, and that we really pay very serious attention to making sure that both, male and female applicants are given equal opportunities.

I also then want to move to a question on our alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is part of our Strategic Plan going forward. And you will see that in there, we have clearly articulated which SDGs are being head by a particular research team.

I think I should just tell you a little bit about when I joined the University in January. When I came to my interview in May last year, I did point out that I thought the Strategic Plan was not fit for purpose, a new Vice-Chancellor needed to put his or her own stamp on it and to articulate a vision that was relevant. And so the University Council agreed that I would have some opportunity to revise that.

We are currently in that revision phase of doing that. On 26th March, we will be inviting all our stakeholders and all our staff and alumni to participate in a day long exercise, to comment on the Strategic Plan.

We have decided with my senior team that we will not do a whole scale revision of the plan because I think they, sort of, plan in exhaustion within the University Committee but we will curtail the period, we will do it until 2021, which is in line with our University Grants Commission, which established our funding envelope, and that at that point we will do a major review of the Strategic Plan.

One of the key things that I found in the Strategic Plan was that, there was very little attention paid. Our mission, vision and values were so long that none of our staff or students could remember what the mission or vision of the University was, so you have it there I am not going to read it. You have it in your paperwork which shows that this is one of areas we are asking our staff and students to comment, along with our stakeholders.

You also asked us about inventions and you can see there were three patents in 2017, three in 2018 and, of course, there were two in 2019. I must tell you that just before I came to USP, I was the Pro

Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Portsmouth, I know a lot about patents. Patents mean nothing until you commercialise them. So to have a patent is no big deal, it costs \$250 to register a patent, so when people tell me, "We got this patent like we have for improved automotive oil filter wrench, the question I always ask is, "Have we got the commercial partners which will take this to the next stage."

I am really pleased with the Fiji Government has done something fantastic which is to give Research and Development (R&D) incentives to industry, so that for every dollar that is invested in R&D, there is \$2.50 tax credit. Now, I would expect us to be really focussing on taking this to commercialisation because at the moment, you might have a patent but it does not really mean anything.

The other thing you asked was about levies and issues and you can see that a lot of those outstanding levies were cleared up and we have a small outstanding debt which is about \$168,000. Of course, the Executive Director for Finance spends a lot of time chasing this up.

One question I was asked also was something very important to us which is our Royal Charter. The Charter actually defines the key functions of the University and it is a Charter that has come with royal assent, which means the Charter cannot be changed unless it goes to the Privy Council, and then to her Majesty the Queen. So this was the way the University was established and I am very pleased that recently, members of the Royal Family came to USP, but the Charter is something that I think makes this University special. It gives it that particular regional flavour but it also protects the University.

There are some very clear things articulated in the Charter, including the position of the Chancellor, who is usually the Head of State from one of our 12 member countries; the Pro-Chancellor, who is the Head of our Governing Council, the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar. Unfortunately, over the last 10 years, we have not filled the position of Registrar which I am not sure why that has not happened but it is something that I think the University will have to attend to, to be compliant with the Charter.

Then we have a Trust Fund; it is yet to be established primarily because the expectation was that, we would be able to raise a lot of Endowment Funds during the 50th year. That did not materialise, so we have very limited investments and the Board is yet to be formed and neither is a full membership or five Board members are yet to meet. Do you want to add anything Mr. Boila? So please, if there are any questions, feel free to interrupt.

The pay review at the University is done by Job Evaluation process. The Remuneration Committee is established by Council and there are Terms of Reference which are set for the Remuneration Committee. The question that was asked from us was about our partnership with New Zealand.

You can see as I have said at the outset, we are highly dependent on Australia and New Zealand Development Assistance, so I am very pleased to report that we have been extended by the New Zealand Government to give us our aid for this year. We are in the process of signing a larger agreement with them which will be for the next five to six years. I will be going back to New Zealand on 8th and 9th April to finalise that discussion.

Those high level consultations, I think, are very important, they allow us to articulate our needs, so one of the needs we have been talking to them about is that building that I talked about and the importance of securing facilities for us. They have been very kind, they have given us, as you can see, \$5.5 million in total core funding but also an additional \$100,000 to allow me particularly to introduce new initiatives into the University as we are revising our Strategic Plan.

The same with Australia, as you know when the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, was here he announced the \$84 million to come to USP. That will be over a six-year period which makes it roughly about \$14 million a year.

One of the key parts of that agreement with Australia is that, there should be a regional focus on teacher training and that was Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) is. Our work as a Council of Regional Organisation in the Pacific (CROP) agency, we are also expected to deliver quality education not only for Fiji, although Fiji is the major beneficiary, given our largest campus is located here, but also to do work for the Region.

Academic Staff Turnover; you heard me saying earlier how difficult it is for us to attract quality staff, but we do have very stringent regulations about academic staff and qualifications. I think if we look at our staffing profile, I would say our core academic staff are on par with the best in the world in terms of the proportion of our staff with Doctorate is very, very high. It is over 80 percent which makes us very competitive.

But because we do not have enough academic staff, some of my staff are faltering to do quality research which is where this University really needs to go forward because I think it is the only university in the region which is ranked globally and we have great aspirations to be even climb those global rankings and enter the *Times Higher Education* and the QS rankings. And for that, we will need even more staff with PhDs and we need them more to demonstrate we have a global workforce, not just a Pacific Island workforce because that is what those rankings require.

I know that the Government of Fiji is very keen that we become very much like Singapore, I think Singapore is fantastic model. It demonstrates that education is at the heart of any country in the 21st Century and a 'knowledge economy' is essential, so I am really pleased to say that we are poised to make a game changing contribution to Fiji and to the Region. But for that, we need assistance in terms of work permit and we need assistance for making sure that we can bring the best minds to Fiji.

You will see the student accommodation, in aggregate a loss on student accommodation which we cover up with other activities that the University does. The Director of Commerce is Professor Arvind Patel at the moment, the demand completely outstrips supply. We were going to build a 12th Hall but we have actually delayed it because the business case does not stack up at the moment, so we are reviewing, revising and revisiting.

What we do, we will probably build more accommodation but we will build it in a modular fashion rather than doing it all in one go because, of course, we have to be sustainable. We really cannot borrow beyond our means and our commitment in the Solomon Islands to build the Solomon Islands Campus means that we are really stretched at the moment.

Gender Mainstreaming; we have a committee on this which is one of the three Committees under Senate and the mandate as you can see there is to:

- Implement the development of the University's Gender Policy;
- Achieve University KPIs; and
- Advice Human Resources (HR) on measures addressing gender equality.

Just on that, I might add that one thing that we have not done in our University yet is we have not done a Gender Pay Gap Analysis which actually I do not think it is done in most places in Fiji. That will be something that I think should be done over the long period and there is something that we will look at but I am pleased to say that on gender equality we are way ahead of even the Public Service. We have a

very good record. We have roughly equal men and women. Where we do have a slight problem is in our senior most positions where we do not have enough females represented but I think overall we are doing exceptionally well.

Emergency Management Plan; we have a very robust system in the University. We have a DISMAC which I have got first time experience of. During Christmas and New Year we had a threat about a cyclone and I was really impressed with the way the University manages this process and our communications. We used the local radio system, we sent out messages, et cetera, and we closed the University very quickly when we felt there was a threat. So, I am really pleased with this.

A few days ago we had a tsunami drill and that was exceptionally done in conjunction with the police. We had drones checking the location of where our students and staff were. I can report that this was an area I felt that the University was doing really exceptionally well in.

The question is, Alternative Financing Schemes for Tertiary Students. You can see that a lot of our students come through the TELS Programme but are Government sponsored. We do need to look at how we bring more.

The only other revenue the University can get is to recruit international students and again, while we have ambitions to grow our international students into all our Campuses, the real issue we have there is not being able to attract international students for two reasons:

1. Our own process internally mean that our fees are quite high for international students so we are not competitive with Australia and New Zealand. No one is going to come here when our fees are on par with Australia and New Zealand, so we are going to revise this.
2. More importantly both, Australia and New Zealand, will allow international students to go and work for upto 20 hours a week. We now realise that we are in a developing country context, we cannot do that but at the same time we are finding it very difficult for our international students to get student visas to come, not only for our international students but even sometimes for our local students from the Region. So, this is quite a challenge for us and I think something that we are continuously working with the Department of Immigration.

I have said something about the 12th Hall Project Construction.

Renewable Energy Proposal; we are really trying to make sure that we become 100 percent renewal and self-reliant for electricity needs by 2020. I can predict now that we are not going to meet that goal as much as that is what our goal is.

We are trying to do a lot of things. We have a solar farm on our lower campus which we are using and in some of our regional campuses, we do have very good solar initiatives predominantly funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). So, you can see that one of our major setbacks on this is that, we could not get sovereign guarantee by the Fijian Government for the funding we were trying to get from the ADB because ADB really does bilateral funding rather than with an institution by itself.

The Micronesian Centre for Sustainable Transport, I am pleased to say is working really well in the Marshall Islands. It is already producing some wins for us in terms of research which I am really pleased and you can see that they have two completed projects. One on low emission and the other on the ship registry research project.

I would say a little bit about our new strategic plan which as I said, if I can explain it very quickly. The draft that I inherited had or the Council-approved plan that I inherited had eight priority areas. I have reduced it to make it far more focused and it really focuses on; first on education for our students and it is very student-centred. The second bit is about research and innovation, and the need for research and innovation not only for Fiji but for the region. The third is the importance of our regional campuses. The fourth priority area is about us operating as a Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agency and then the fifth is what I call enabling strategies which include; ICT, Governance, Finance, Marketing and HR. So all these are what I call an intelligent use of resources to enable us to do our core business which is teaching and learning, and research and innovation.

You asked us about the Convention. Seven members have ratified the Convention while five have yet to ratify it.

The 50th Anniversary Commemoration, many have seen last year, I think there were a lot of events at USP to commemorate it. This is quite a momentous moment. I was actually hoping that we did not make so much about our 50th year because I was going to argue with the ranking agencies that not all our campuses are 50 years old and we should be included in what is called the young universities, you know, of the times and the QS, but because we have made such a big deal about it we cannot sort of pretend now, actually we are not 50.

Some of our Campuses are younger. What that means is the competition to go into the main ranking system is much higher; the rules are more stringent because by the age of 50, they expect a university to be quite developed. I mean, if you can imagine, if you as a human being, if you have turned 50, you should have done a lot of things in your life compared to where you should be at 50 so nevertheless you can see we did a lot of things and we were asked, what the total cost was?

The Council actually approved a budget of \$1.9 million on the celebrations but I think we have to date only spent \$1.5 million and the expectation was that a large amount of funding would come from our alumni et cetera, we would get sponsorship. Unfortunately, I can only report that none of that happened. We did not get the kind of attraction and so we have had to meet those costs out of our own budget.

New income streams as I have said, there are only really three avenues for us. One is development assistance which we are pursuing actively. Secondly, our commercial operations which as I have said, we make sure that our students are not affected anywhere which means that we have to charge for a housing, we have to charge for other areas but we of course, are constrained very much by the regulations and laws of the countries we operate in. The third bit, of course, is international students which I have talked about quite extensively.

The Senate is, as you can see, is prescribed under the University's statutes. They have:

- Ex-officio members;
- Elected members; and
- Members appointed from any academic institution with affiliation/association with the University.

You asked us about arrears. We have arrears currently from the Solomon Islands of \$0.8 million and we are expecting that that will be settled before the end of March. Again the Executive Director is constantly following up on this.

The decrease in the uptake of MBA courses: Let me just quickly explain to you. All courses like the MBA always have fluctuations because there is only a finite number of people who are ready to undertake that kind of study. So from year to year this will fluctuate so in that particular year we saw a decrease. We have actually have an uptake and when that pool of people who really want to do an MBA finishes, we will have another down turn, because there are only a fixed number of people within the region who want to do MBAs. This is the case with all professionals, doctorates as well. We are starting Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) and I am pretty confident that it will also have a cyclical type of pattern as we go along.

Issues/concerns by Student Associations: We engage constantly with our students, there are Student Forums and there are Student Grievance Policies. In fact, next week I will be travelling to the Cook Islands where our Students' Association has its Annual Meetings to make sure that the Vice-Chancellor is present for any major policy decisions that they take and to make sure that our students are supported and that they know that there are independent ways in which they can make complaints if they so feel that they need to.

Costs involved in the development of regional campuses: I am not going to read through this but you all have it. You can see that these are some quite extensive costs as I had said, we have some substantial problems in some of our campuses. There has been under investment and also we have deferred a lot of maintenance on our campuses because these are very expensive things to do. I might ask Mr. Boila later on if people want to know a bit more about the deferred maintenance. We are really struggling with coming to terms with how we fund this and of course the fire has compounded our overall issue with, we are taking on more debts.

The one major issue for us, of course, is, there has been year to year increase in student debt because we do not collect fees upfront. It is a bit controversial, I think a lot of our countries get very nervous when USP says that we need to collect fees upfront. These are predominantly from private students, they do not pay fees. This is something that I am trying to work with our Council to point out that, "Look we will go broke if we do not collect fees upfront."

Our competitors, all the national universities collect fees upfront, but I think there is sort of a feeling that we have to tread gently. We have tried to recover this and to make things a bit more stringent but I think this will require some serious attention on our part.

That is all and I am happy to take any questions or any comments that anyone would like to make.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Vice-Chancellor and President of USP for the presentation and also within your presentation you managed to provide some answers to the questions that we had sent.

Honourable Members, supplementary questions. Honourable Salote Radrodro?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman and Vice-Chancellor and the Team for your presentation this afternoon enlightening this Committee on pertinent issues that we have raised with the USP.

May I just refer you to Slide No. 2 where you had highlighted key challenges, I note because I was also in Parliament in the last term, there seems to be ongoing challenges and particularly, in regards to the financial resources, the academic staff and also the accommodation. You had also mentioned that your Strategic Plan has been reviewed, so can you explain to us how these challenges will be taken care of in this new Strategic Plan in the hope that in the next Annual Report, we might see some changes in regards to these problems? Thank you, Vice-Chancellor.

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Thank you for your question. I do not think this is going to be fixed in the short-term but this will take some time. The new Strategic Plan, as I said, is only going to be for three years to align with our University Grants Commission funding cycle. This is a problem which has been going on for a very long time and that is why I brought up the question of deferred maintenance. I think what we have to do is living in a very sustainable manner.

One of the things that I inherited is a budget with a forecast surplus of 0.86 percent. Anywhere else in the world where I come from, a minimum of 4 percent surplus is required of a university to be sustainable.

So, of course, my first challenge is to make sure that the University does not go broke and to make sure that the University is robust, it has been here for 50 years, it has faced past challenges, and I have to make sure that it stays sustainable.

My first priority is to bring more academics into the University because I think if we do not have quality academics we will just started going downwards spiral, so before I do anything else, I am trying to attract more academics. Our biggest problem is in Professor Patel's Faculty where we have over 50 academic positions vacant and in some areas, our student:staff ratio is 80:1 which is completely acceptable. That means we are not giving students the best student experience.

Having said that, what is remarkable is that, we are producing some amazing graduates. Just today, I was reading the materials on our prizes and medals which will happen this evening, and despite the awards, our students are performing remarkably well. We have not lowered the academic standards, we have not short-changed our students, our Academics who are there are really committed to our students so the next Strategic Plan does address these issues. It does say we have to deal with this, but we have to do it in a sustainable financial way.

We do not have the kind of backing which our competitive universities would have nationally, it is a very challenging time, we are very dependent and very thankful to the Fiji Government, but equally we are very dependent on development assistance and assistance from our Government. So these are the challenges and I am hoping some magic happens where someone discovers oil or something like that and says "Here at USP, you can have extra \$50 million", I do not know, Mr. Chairman, I am sort of hoping that something happens. I have inherited something from the past, my first job is to make sure that the University is sustainable.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Vice-Chancellor. Honourable Simone Rasova?

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Your key challenges on that same thing, it is inter-related: the limited funds and then the low number of academic staff combined with work permit and then lack of accommodation. These, as you have said, have been the past problems, et cetera. We take it that it is going to be long term to resolve this. You are looking at to how many years?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Yes, Professor Pal Ahluwalia?

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Mr. Chairman, I am hoping that we can tackle it in the first three years. We can at least get more academic staff. I think as our international ranking goes up, we will become more attractive. There is a correlation that the higher you are in the rankings, students will want to come. This is a good destination, particularly our Laucala Campus is absolutely world class. I am confident we can bring along more international students here.

Of course, as I have explained, there are challenges with that where we are competing with countries where they are allowed to work and students like to have part time work when they are studying but regardless we have to become more competitive to allow for that to happen. That will increase our resources and that will help us to re-invest back into the University.

So, I think it will take us two to three years to get our budget in the right place to make sure that we are financially robust so that we can make those strategic investment which we have to make sure that we are competitive. I am very pleased to say that we are the only University in the region which is amongst the top 50 in Oceania which is quite a remarkable fact in itself, and I keep reminding people that as much as a Fijian University as we are for the region, the bulk of our students are from Fiji, the bulk of our staff reside here, we are all taxpayers into the system and so our success is the country's success and vice versa.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable George Vegnathan, Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, going back to the money issue where you had highlighted the need to recruit more academic staff which equates to still tied into the money issue, and I am interested to know how much is Fiji's outstanding debt?

Also, what is the governance issue level in the University of the South Pacific because in the last Report, there was this issue of termination of contracts which resulted in the payment of the balance of contract and also legal fees? How is that going to be taken care of so that that does not happen in the future?

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Thank you for your question. I will ask Mr. Boila to answer the first part about Fiji and I will answer the second part.

MR. K. BOILA.- As of end of 2018, the Fiji Government did not owe any debt, they were all cleared. I think for this year, we are just following up on the second quarter but it will be cleared in time.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Yes, Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ahluwalia, on the same issue in regards to the low number of academic staff, given that the amount of money that is given in regards to TELS, scholarships and vision for our children to get educated, you have also mentioned in regards to issues raised as far as the work permits are concerned. What is the solution, because if this continues then it is obvious that the students will also be affected; what is the solution, what can be done?

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Mr. Chairman, I will just quickly answer the second part of the question and then I will come to that if that is all right.

On the second part about the management and the governance arrangements, am I covered by parliamentary privilege here? There are reporters here so I do not want to say some things, I would rather do that in camera because if I am to be honest, I would like to address the Committee in private.

Having said that I can go to your question, Sir, to say that you are absolutely right, as I said, we will be on a downward spiral but we are absolutely committed to recruit more academic staff. We want to give our students the best opportunity.

Mr. Boila has told me that as our Executive Director of Finance, I should feel confident to go out and recruit staff because we do not want to be in a position to change our students but also the correlation between our research output and our academic staff is very poor because we are making our staff work a lot. So, in a normal University compared to us, when you have so many students and very few academic

staff, part of the challenge for us is that we operate in 12 Countries and 14 Campuses so if I was in the United Kingdom, Australia or New Zealand, the ratio between professional staff to academic staff would be something like 1.5:1 (1.5 professional staff to 1 academic staff).

Given the large number of campuses we have and the kind of issues we face, our ratio for professional to academic staff is closer to 4:1, so that presents a challenge. At the same time, if I was to start cutting jobs, it would be a crisis for the nation, so we have to be very conscious of what our role in the society is, that we are part of the overall framework, so we are operating in a very responsible way. But at the same time, we will make sure over time with natural attrition, that we address that imbalance and make sure that we are more efficient and we deal with things as carefully as we can. So that will take time, but I am pretty confident that we can get more academic staff given our budget situation.

I am sure that by the end of this first triennium, which ends in 2021, we will have at least 500 academic staff compared to the 423 we have and possibly more. We are desperately short of new professors. You need professors, and you need PhD students because a knowledge economy requires really great PhD students for the engine room of research and some very Senior Professors, and this was the way that Singapore transformed its economy and if you look at Singapore today, 10 years ago, it only had one major University which was the National University of Singapore (NUS). Today it has 2 amongst the top 50 Universities of the world, one of which is Nanyang Technological University (NTU). There is a lot of investment by the Government of Singapore in to its Universities.

I speak to Professor Nigel Healey all the time and what we want to see is a very robust higher education system rather than one being in competition with each other. So I see there are relationships with FNU in a very similar way. We are both working together to make sure that we get the best outcomes first for the countries we serve in, and also for our students and for our staff.

If I can put it in a different way, I am very confident that the two Vice-Chancellors, at least, in Fiji are working very closely together, and you know we work together in the United Kingdom and we are trying to deliver our best to lift the entire system rather than one part of the system, as opposed to the other.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Vice-Chancellor. Any final questions? Yes, Honourable Rasova?

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Yes, Honourable Vice-Chancellor. With regards to most of the things you have said that a lot of difficulties have been initiated before you came in.

Thank you and welcome to Fiji. I know that you are from the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom.

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Exactly.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Thank you, welcome to Fiji.

Given that for the last 10 years or so, we have friends and families, school mates, et cetera, that held high positions at the University. Most of them got transferred to the Fiji National University and some to the Fiji University in Nadi. Some of those things have hurt them, and I know, that you will try and tackle those things there and I just want to ask you whether you think that corruption or whatever still exist at the University before you joined, are you going to fix that?

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- I think, Sir, I did say that I want to be covered by the Parliamentary Privilege and I would not want to answer those questions in front of the media, but I would be more than happy to talk to Members. There have been issues, but you have my full commitment that I am trying to solve those.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Vice-Chancellor. Before we finish off the presentation, would you like to add something?

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- No, Sir. I am very happy to take any questions that any of my colleagues might have.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable George, do you have a question?

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.-Yes, Honourable Chairman, just an inquiry, I am from Labasa. Is there any plan to set up University Campus there for our students in Labasa?

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Yes, we are thinking about it, but again, it has to be dependent on a business case. We are very conscious that FNU has been given a lot of money to build a campus and, of course, we cannot compete because we do not get that kind of resources.

At the moment, we are paying a lot of money to private landlords for what we rent in Labasa, and the rent goes up every year which is really, really quite debilitating for us. So ideally, we would like to have a small facility but we are exploring how we might do that with the third party. If they build a building for us, then we might rent it back from them on a very long extended lease, because that is the only way we can do it sustainably.

As I said, I am very concerned that every year our rent in these locations is exponentially rising.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Vice-Chancellor. Once again, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I would like to thank you and the Team for your presentation.

I would like to say that going through your Report and your presentation, as you have said in regards to that low number of academic staff and the issue of the accommodation as far as the students are concerned, it has been coming to our Committee. So we look forward for you as the Vice-Chancellor now and the President of the University of the South Pacific with your Team to resolve this issue, and I would suggest if you can work closely with other Ministries and stakeholders to see how those issues can be resolved, so that our students are not affected.

Indeed, the Committee is really thankful and we appreciate the information you have presented to us. And I must say, it will help us to report back to Parliament, so thank you very much for your time.

PROFESSOR P. AHLUWALIA.- Thank you.

The Committee adjourned at 2.12 p.m.