

V-C's presentation speech
Faculty/staff retreat workshop – July 23, 2016

On behalf of the University of Fiji (UoF) community, I welcome you here this morning to the Faculty/Staff Retreat Workshop. And I want to give special thanks and express extreme gratitude for the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts Dr. Mahendra Reddy to grace this occasion, which is uniquely needed here. This is one of the resource-constraint countries in the South Pacific whereby there is a lot work we have to do in enhancing the quality of higher education with a global thrust. I think it's very critical that we pay attention to some of the comments that the Honourable Minister talked about. He mentioned the knowledge-based society and I think this is the direction we will have to go and it's based on the People's Charter - Pillar 9. So I am very thankful for Dr. Reddy's presentation today and I hope we can comply with the logistics necessary for the development of a knowledge society in Fiji.

I conceptualized this retreat about a week and a half ago after I started to look at a lot of discussions I have had with some of the Ministers of Government and some of the comments were very unique, in terms of improving quality in higher education. I am not from Fiji; I am a foreigner, so it is useful to listen to what the Fijians have to say. I have always worked closely with governments, and understand the implications of the interface between higher education and politics. Given that I worked at the last university and at the Office of the President in Guyana, I can appreciate the Minister's explanation for 'intellectualism', whereby intellectuals provide advice to the President on how some policy matters or how some research findings can be transmitted into policy formulation and into implementation. That was a big task and I had a very powerful team. It is important that the UoF encourages its junior faculty to conduct short-term action-oriented research using the scientific method, so that findings can rapidly become public policies. I wish Dr. Reddy can induce the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) to issue guidelines on eligibility criteria for the award of FHEC grants for action-oriented research.