



# MSG Secretariat Secretariat du GFLM

Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien



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**Peter Forau, Director General of the MSG Secretariat and USP Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Rajesh Chandra following the Signing of the MOU at the MSG Headquarters in Vanuatu.**

## **USP, MSG Partnership to Increase Student Numbers**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony between the University of the South Pacific and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) was held in the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Republic of Vanuatu on 14 February 2014.

The MOU was signed by Professor Rajesh Chandra, USP Vice-Chancellor and President, and Mr Peter Forau, Director General of the MSG.

This is in an effort to deepen collaboration, therefore marking a historic milestone between the two regional organisations.

The MSG represents a large portion of USP's constituency; three out of the five MSG members are USP member countries. Students from MSG countries actually accounted for 83% of USP's enrolment in 2013.

It is therefore extremely important that USP has an effective relationship with the MSG Secretariat.

Today's MOU signing is a gateway to advance the current relationships amongst the two organisations in the areas of Pacific art and culture.

The MOU is designed to foster a closer relationship through mutual cooperation in areas of common interest between USP and MSG. It will also cater for joint collaboration in the implementation of the priorities, and in particular exchange of information; participation in seminars, meetings and short term academic programs; internship and research.

USP and MSG will further facilitate the provision of scholarships and accommodation to MSG member countries including Kanak/FLNKS. For the University this initiative will not only assist with improving the equity of student services but also promote Pacific consciousness and cohesiveness.

Professor Chandra welcomed the opportunity and said that, “USP is region’s premier higher education institution, and, as it grows to meet the demand for student places, USP will have even a greater presence in more Melanesian communities”.

Professor Chandra said that the MSG Secretariat was playing a very important role, and it has been very clear that MSG has had significant achievements in its 25 years and is well set to play an even larger role in the future as the Pacific reconfigures itself. He congratulated the Director-General on his excellent leadership of the MSG Secretariat, and promised his full support for the work of the Secretariat.

The University achieved its highest-ever enrolment figures in 2013. Just over 27,000 students were enrolled across USP’s fourteen campuses, testimony to the fact that USP’s quality and value are well-recognised in an increasingly competitive market. USP now aims to again target for good enrolment for 2015 and this collaboration with the MSG is a way forward.

Prof Chandra said USP has always been committed to regionalism and hosting the 25th Anniversary Celebration of MSG in Fiji early last year was a testimony to this.

“USP welcomes the MOU and it looks forward to collaborating more with MSG on the implementation of the priorities, and in particular exchange of information in the areas of common interest; participation in seminars, meetings and short term academic programs; internship and research,” Prof Chandra said.

Director General of the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Republic of Vanuatu in response said: “We at the MSG Secretariat are pleased that finally this important document has been signed and we accord great importance to it for the many initiatives that we, together with the USP, the premier learning institution in the Pacific, can hopefully implement for the benefit of our mutual members and citizens.”

Further we recognize the excellent work that the Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of the South Pacific has and is doing to lift USP and we want to ensure we are able to benefit from some of the opportunities that will no doubt emanate from the exciting and remarkable developments at USP. “This MOU gives us the mechanism to achieve that.”

**For further queries please contact our Media & Public Relations Coordinator Ana Tudrau-Tamani at the Development, Marketing & Communications office on (679) 3232 039 or (679) 9719 588.**

