

# UNITEC PACIFIC QUARTERLY

»»» NEWSLETTER «««



## A NOTE FROM THE PACIFIC CENTRE



Talofa lava, Kia Oranā, Malo e lelei, Fakalofa lahi atu, Fakatalofa atu, Ni Sa Bula Vinaka, Malo Ni, Noa'ia, Mauri, Halo olaketa, Warm Pacific Greetings.

Welcome to this latest edition of our **Unitec Pacific Quarterly Newsletter!**

Semester 1, 2024 was a busy semester from the beginning! In May, Hapai-O meetings were held with the Schools/ Programmes that showed lower rates of Success and Retention for Pacific and Māori learners. Hence, competing demands and other factors inclusive of the high cost of living continue to impact some of our Pacific learners. Despite the relentless efforts and times that various teams have taken to provide support, the results highlight the need for more to be done. We are reminded of the importance of partnerships to ensure success. In addition, the first and second of eleven Pacific Language Weeks started with the Rotuman Language Week (12-18 May) and the Samoan Language Week (26 May- 1 June).

In June, the Pacific Centre and our Marae Team hosted, the Māori & Pacific Learning & Teaching Development from the University of Auckland, which included a visit to the Unitec Fale and a talanoa about Pacific leadership. Also in June, collaborative efforts from Dr Linda Aumua, the Pacific Centre and the Trades & Services Head of School (HoS), Lee Baglow, and Academic Programme Manager (APM), Jake Curran ensured a successful networking opportunity with a delegation from the Fiji Rental Board who were impressed with the facilities at Mataaho and Te Puna, including the Pacific Centre.

In addition to the events in June, **Luka Fa'amanu Crosbie**, Director International and Special Projects at MIT, was appointed Interim lead for Pacific Success at Unitec and MIT. *"Luka Crosbie to assume Pacific team responsibilities at Unitec and MIT... will be taking over the responsibilities of our Pasifika Centres at both MIT and Unitec, bringing a Tāmaki-wide focus to how we support and serve our Pasifika communities."* (Peseta Sam Lotu-liga, 2024)



An exciting annual Early Career Research (ECR) event, *2024 Early Career Researcher and Emerging Researcher 3 Minute Spiel Competition*, took place in mid-June in which Daisy was privileged to engage in as a panel judge. Well done to all the participants and the winners! It is hoped that our Pacific ECR community will increase and participate in next year's ECR events.

We have had an eventful July despite it being mid-year break. We celebrated Kiribati Language Week (7-13 July) during Semester 2 Pacific Orientation on Tuesday, 9 July. What a great staff turnout, for which we and our new cohort of Pacific students are grateful. On the 10-12 July, a strong Unitec Pacific delegation travelled to Dunedin to attend and participate in the Association of Pacific Staff in Tertiary Education (APSTE) Fono. As Pacific Staff, we need to ensure we are united in our efforts to share best practices as advocates of Pacific Success in tertiary education. Also in July, we celebrated a milestone birthday of an amazing tama'ita'i toa who turned 50, **Annette Pitovao**. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Annette!!! And CONGRATULATIONS to **Nya**, you, **Joe**, and the family on your birthday blessing three days later!

Well done to our dedicated Student Events, Marae, and Unitec Student Council Teams for the amazing start of semester powhiri and orientation to kick off Semester Two, 2024!

As we continue to embrace the cold month/s, we urge you to take care and remember to prioritise your wellbeing. **Also, please remember that our Pacific Centre team is here to support you if/ when needed!**

We hope you enjoy reading this third issue of our **Unitec Pacific Quarterly Newsletter!**

Fa'afetai ma ia manuia,  
Pacific Centre



# STAFF PROFILE



**ANNETTE PITOVAO**

*Director Student Success*

**Years at Unitec:** 27 years

**Position held:** Director Student Success

**Ethnicity:** Tongan, German Samoan

**Family:** Married to Joey and we have 4 adults kids, and recently welcomed our first grandchild, JJ Pitovao.

**Milestone/ role at Unitec:** Current role as Director Student Success across 12 Teams.

**Personal milestone:** On the evening of Sunday 21st July 2024 as a massive surprise for everyone, I delivered my grandson into the world at home before the ambulance arrived. It was a miracle and I'm truly blessed.

**Pearls of wisdom/ recommendation/ advise/ quote that influences or describes you:** Never give up! Keep going, keep striving, keep thriving. Our elders came to NZ for greater opportunities, education, choices and life so we must remember the privilege's we have and help others along the way.

# STAFF PROFILE



## JONE TAWAKETINI

*Senior Lecturer & Programme Coordinator, Bachelor of Applied Technology*

Ni sa bula vinaka.

My name is Jone Valevou Tawaketini, I hail from the village of Keteira. Moala Island in Fiji with Tongan Heritage from my paternal great great grandmother, Wai Pohiva from Haapai.

I joined Unitec in February 2008 as a lecturer in the Bachelor Applied Technology (BAT) Automotive and Transport Management. Today, I am a senior lecturer and programme coordinator for BAT Automotive and Transport Management.

My hobbies include watching sports, walking, driving to new places within NZ and camping, reading novels and participate in our Fijian cultural activities.

I am passionate about our Pasifika students to reach their highest academic potential and enhancing student success and retention.

### **Milestone at Unitec**

Winning the end of year staff award for Supporting Pacific learners in 2023. This award is the result of initiating the Bite size Talanoa (lunch hour) for Pacific akonga in Electrical and Applied Technology which has grown with collaborations with more staff involved.

**My advice to all our Pasifika students:** With God all things are possible. Do not give up. When things get tough, the tough get's tougher.





# STUDENT PROFILE

## >>> ANNA MATAFI



**Programme of study (year of study):** Bachelor's in Business Management & leadership (Operation)

**Ethnicity:** Samoan – Niusuatia Safata & Gautavai Savaii

**Family:** I am fortunate to come from a family with a tradition of courage and hope. As a strong Samoan mother, I boldly moved to New Zealand 21 years ago to pursue a brighter future for myself and for my children. My four children, who have grown under my unwavering guidance and love, now delight in my role as Nana to two precious grandchildren. We are a close-knit family who cherish our journey together, celebrating the challenges and triumphs that have woven us into an enduring bond. New Zealand is not just a place; it is where we continue to pursue our dreams rooted in the values of family, resilience, and the pursuit of a better future.

**Role/s at Unitec:** Pass Leader (School of Applied Business) & Pacific Student Representative (USC)

### **Achievement/ Milestone:**

New Zealand Certificate in Study and Career Preparation Level 3  
Diploma in Business Management & Leadership Level 5  
Bachelor's in Business Management and Leadership

### **Awards and Roles**

United Pacific Progression Scholarship student 2023  
Senior Pass Leader for School of Applied Business 2022  
Unitec Student Council – Pacific Student Representative 2024

**Pearls of wisdom/ recommendation/ advise/ quote that influences or describes you:** "Tautua I le alofa, manuia le lumana'i - Serve in love for a blessed future" is the theme of Samoan Language Week in 2024 and perfectly captures my commitment as a student to my community and all fellow Pacific Students. Through my dedication to serving others with love, I enrich my present and lay the foundation for a prosperous future for my Pacific students. During my roles as a Pacific Student Representative on the Unitec Student Council, Pass Leader in the School of Applied Business and a very proud Samoan Tamaitai, my role demonstrates that genuine service and concern for others pave the way for personal and professional blessings and fulfilment. I strive to set a positive example for others through my love-driven service, embodying the wisdom that selfless acts of kindness and service lead to a brighter tomorrow.

# ALUMNI PROFILE

## >>> HELEN POLAMALU



Talofa lava, my name is Helen Polamalu, my villages are Vailoa Aleipata and Ulutogia, and I am honoured to be a part of this quarters newsletter!

I am a Unitec graduate, having graduated from a Bachelor of Nursing in 2017. My journey with Unitec started in 2013, when I enrolled into the Certificate of University Preparation. Though it was a difficult decision, as I was only 16, it was a very worthwhile decision! Through the times of my studies, I was extremely privileged to have met and formed great friendships with other peers and relationships with my lecturers, in particular Daisy Bentley-Gray and the late Anna Smith. One day, when I was nursing Anna in hospital, she told me that I would be a great educator and support, especially for our Pasefika nursing students, and today, I am in roles where I am able to do just that.

At current, I am working with Te Whatu Ora – Waitemata. I have been with them since I graduated, having been in both permanent and causal roles. I am holding two different roles, one in which I am a Clinical Coach for our New Graduate nurses. Here I support our New Graduate nurses in their clinical setting. I enjoy this as I get to know our graduates individually and build that all important rapport with them, while demonstrating and teaching best practice. My other role is that I am the Nurse Educator for the Assessment and Diagnostic Unit (ADU) at Waitakere Hospital. This role allows me to not only support the educational needs of our Registered Nurses, HCA's and students, but also work with the community that I am a part of. It is a rewarding role in many ways, and I am beyond blessed to be in it. In these roles, I am able to reach out to the Pasefika nursing students, and am currently in the works of developing a learning plan for Pasefika nursing students that come through our district!

Being a first generation New Zealand born Samoan has allowed me to develop a broad outlook on life; as I live in "Samoan world" at home, yet living in a "New Zealand world". It is a rare privilege that I see us, New Zealand born Pasefika, hold. This has been beneficial in my life, not only in my professional career but also within my personal life. It is not often you get to see and understand a story from two different perspectives at the same time! As with many of us Pasefika children, we have seen the sacrifices that our parents made for us, and I am no different. I am forever indebted to my parents for their unwavering love, support, guidance and most importantly, their prayers, which has supported me in being where I am today.

I am beyond grateful for my strong support system; my parents, grandparents, siblings and friends who have uplifted me in times of struggle and trouble. The troubles and trials that I have faced and go through are only going to allow me to comfort and support others through the journey that they too face. So as an encouragement, I will leave you with this verse: I am certain that God who began the good work within you will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Jesus Christ returns – Philippians 1:6.

God bless you all!

Fa'afetai tele lava, Helen Polamalu

# PACIFIC CENTRE HOSTS ENGAGING ORIENTATION FOR SEMESTER TWO

In July, the Pacific Centre held its second-semester orientation, uniting staff and students for a fun and engaging day. The event aimed to build a sense of community and prepare students for the year,

A surprise Kiribati Dance workshop led by Janet Tawaketini was the highlight. Her enthusiasm and expertise in traditional dance captivated everyone, encouraging both staff and students to participate actively.

The orientation included quizzes, a basketball game, and an introduction to all the support services. These activities kept everyone entertained and informed, promoting the awareness of the Pacific Community on campus.

The event concluded with a shared lunch, fostering relaxed interactions among participants. Students praised the event as “interactive and productive” and “really appreciated it,” reflecting its success.

The Pacific Centre would like to thank all staff who contributed to this successful day, ensuring it was both informative and enjoyable. The Centre looks forward to continuing this tradition in future orientations.





## STUDENT SUCCESS, MAIA AND PACIFIC CENTRE CELEBRATES ANNETTE PITOVAO'S MILESTONE WITH A HEARTWARMING SURPRISE

In a heartwarming display of appreciation and camaraderie, the staff of Unitec's Student Success team, Pacific Centre and Maia came together to throw a surprise 50th birthday party for their beloved Director of Student Success, Annette Pitovao. The event was a testament to the impact Annette has had on her team and the wider Unitec community.

As Annette walked into what she thought was a routine meeting with Simon Nash, she was greeted by the cheers and smiles of her current and former colleagues, and husband Joe, who had all gathered to celebrate her special day. The room was filled with laughter, aroha and shared kai.

There was also the unveiling of a unique piece of artwork, collaboratively created by Annette's team. This masterpiece wasn't just a gift; it was a tribute to Annette's journey, her nurturing leadership, and the indelible mark she has left on those around her, as words gathered to describe her included strong themes such as *caring, gracious, compassionate, approachable, kind, strong and inspiring*.



Joining the festivities were alumni staff members who had moved on from Unitec but returned to honour the woman who had been a guiding light during their tenure. Annette's husband, Joey, also a lecturer at Unitec joined in on the surprise and then later thanked everyone for *'the incredible thought and effort towards my wife's special day. No doubt she will never forget this day!'*

The surprise party for Annette was more than just a birthday celebration; it was a reflection of the unity and respect that she has fostered within her team. As Annette continues to lead with empathy and dedication, it's clear that her influence extends far beyond the walls of Unitec, touching the lives of many.

Happy 50th Birthday, Annette Pitovao - here's to many more years of success and inspiration!





# CELEBRATING PACIFIC LANGUAGES

## Rotuman Language Week

The 2024 theme for Rotuman Language Week is 'Vetākia 'os Fäega ma Ag fak hanua - Sustaining our Language and Culture.' The Pacific Centre held a workshop



## Samoa Language Week

The 2024 theme for Samoa Language Week is 'Tautua i le alofa, manuia le lumana'i – Serve in love for a blessed future'.



## Kiribati Language Week

The 2024 theme for Kiribati Language Week is 'Eutakirakean ma kabwaেকেকান ara taetae ni Kiribati ma kateira ao rabakaura, bon maurin ao tokabetin te I-Kiribati - Thriving and flourishing our Kiribati language, culture, and knowledge build I-Kiribati resilience and prosperity'





# APSTE TAKES PLACE IN DUNEDIN

The recent conference of the Association of Pasifika Staff in Tertiary Education (APSTE), held in Dunedin from July 10-12, was themed “Te boubou a e boou: Anticipating a positive new beginning. Focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI)”.

As the conference progressed, the interpretation of AI evolved from Artificial Intelligence to Ancestral Intelligence, a form of intelligence that we inherently possess and exhibit.

The event saw participation from over 70 individuals nationwide, representing a diverse array of tertiary institutions including Universities, Polytechs, PTEs, and ITOs.

The conference was sponsored by Ako Aotearoa, co-hosted by the University of Otago and Otago Polytechnic, and supported by OPAC (Otepati Pasifika Arts Collective). The keynote address was delivered by Hon. Grant Robinson, the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Otago.

A significant outcome of the conference was the decision to revisit the mission of APSTE. This discussion was in anticipation of the upcoming AGM in December, where an updated constitution will be introduced, reflecting the 30+ year legacy of APSTE. The revised constitution aims to harness the potential of a national professional membership that amplifies the collective voices of Pacific staff in tertiary education.



Annette Pitovao, Ruth Marsters, Lupeti Fihaki, Jone Tawaketini, Janet Tawaketini, Linda Aumua



Linda Aumua, Ruth Marsters, Annette Pitovao



Unitec and MIT staff together at the conference



# WAIPAPA TAUMATA RAU (UOA) MAORI & PACIFIC LEARNING TEACHING DEVELOPMENT TEAM VISIT

Our Marae and Pacific Centre Teams co-hosted and networked with Darlene Cameron's University of Auckland team of Maori and Pacific Learning Advisors on June 5th.

The team from UoA were welcomed on through a powhiri by our amazing Marae Team. One of the sessions included spending time at the Unitec Fale and the Pacific Centre for talanoa about the Fale and Pacific leadership.

The Team reflected on the great opportunity to network, which we also enjoyed. Daisy was pleased to have met her nephew, Vensel Margraff, who is a Learning Assistant in Engineering.

It is hoped that our team will have an opportunity to visit UoA for PD soon.



Unitec and UoA staff in the Fale



# A CELEBRATION OF UNITY: THE MANAAKI SCHOLARS CONFERENCE 2024



Relmah Alopitu (Solomon Islands), Martha Gunia (Papua New Guinea), Miliakere Dinawa (Fiji), Emmanuel Simon (Papua New Guinea), Phil Badira (Papua New Guinea) and Robert Magele (Samoa)

More than 520 scholars from 54 countries, all part of the Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship Programme, gathered for the first time in a conference that was more than just an academic meet. It was a celebration of unity, a testament to the power of shared experiences, and a beacon of hope for the future.

The conference was held over two days at the University of Auckland and included an evening dinner with cultural performances from the different nations. One of our Unitec scholars, Emmanuel Simon from Papua New Guinea, who is currently studying towards his Bachelor of Engineering Technology (Electrical), shared his heartfelt experience at the conference. He described it as an extraordinary gathering of vibrant young leaders united by their passion and commitment to making a difference in their respective fields.

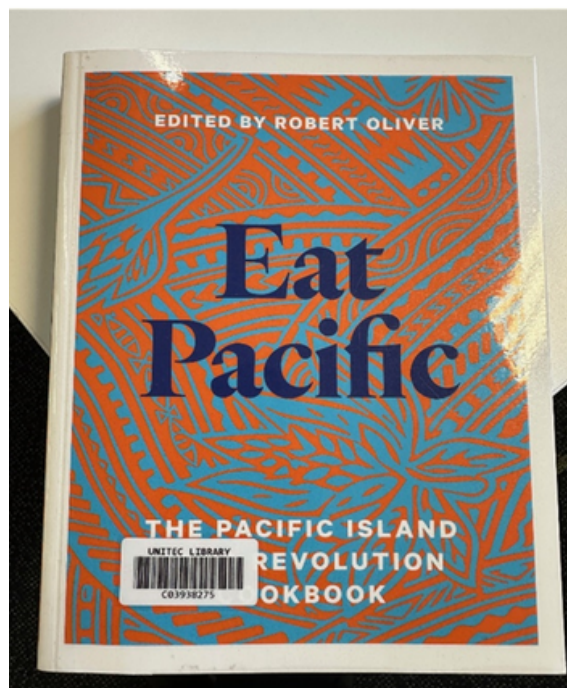
“The conference provided unparalleled opportunities for networking and building long-lasting connections. Scholars engaged with one another, forming bonds that are expected to endure far beyond the conference,” Emmanuel said. He spoke of the energy and enthusiasm that filled the air as like-minded individuals came together to exchange ideas and forge meaningful relationships.

As the event drew to a close, the sense of unity and camaraderie was palpable. The final moments, marked by the singing of the farewell song, were particularly emotional. Many, including Emmanuel, were moved to tears, a testament to the deep connections and shared passion that characterized the conference.

Manaaki New Zealand Scholars have been coming to Unitec for over 25 years studying a number of difference programmes with the aim of returning home and sharing their learned knowledge for the betterment of their counties.

## BOOK REVIEW

# EAT PACIFIC: THE PACIFIC ISLAND FOOD REVOLUTION COOKBOOK BY ROBERT OLIVER



Robert Oliver is a New Zealand chef who was raised in Fiji and Samoa. In 2017, he was named UNDP Advocate for Pacific Health, Food and Sustainability.

If you have watched the TV series, Pacific Island Food Revolution, then this new book is a must read to discover the authentic Pacific cuisines and recipes. I remember one of my favourite Fijian dishes, ota miti that my bubu (grandmother) used to make whenever I visited her in Suva during the school holidays. I still recall the smell of the freshly grated coconut, tavioka (cassava), kumala (sweet potato), ivi (Polynesian chestnut) and vudi (cooking banana) that were some of the readily available ingredients from the backyard.

You can watch the full episodes here <https://www.pacificislandfoodrevolution.com/>.

To encompass the vastness of the South Pacific in one book, Robert reminds us of the traditional recipes that use coconut cream, tropical fruits, vegetables and seafood in our everyday cooking. The Pacific Island Food Revolution revealed new concepts and approaches to traditional ways, innovating and promoting localised food systems in the Pacific. The contents of the book provide a powerful message of hope and resilience in the way we make our food choices to support our Pacific communities in climate change action. It is about food sovereignty and resilience to increase the uptake of local Pacific foods and flavours that supports the indigenous farming methods used for sustainable agriculture.

Check out the [book available at Te Puna Library](#) in the new books display area.

Vinaka vakalevu,  
Sana Saleem (Pacific Librarian) Unitec





# FIJI PUBLIC RENTAL BOARD(PRB) DELEGATION VISIT UNITEC



Collaborations between Dr Linda Aumua and Dr Bernadette Pinnel, Global Business Director, Home in Place enabled a small group from Fiji's Public Rental Board (PRB) to visit our Unitec campus, specifically the Pacific Centre in Te Puna and Mataaho.

Lee Baglow (HoS) and Jake Curran (APM) Trades & Services hosted the group through a tour of Mataaho, which they were impressed about.

Our Unitec Fijian staff, Jone, Hector, Sefanaia, also took part in hosting the group through the tour and a talanoa at the Pacific Centre over afternoon tea.

The PRB presented the Pacific Centre with a meaalofa to show their appreciation. We look forward to future visits.



# NOTICES

## UNITEC STUDENT COUNCIL

## ITP RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION REFORM CONSULTATION

## UNITEC FALE SIGNAGE



Our Pacific Rep is Anna Matafi (as profiled above). Please get in touch with Anna via the usual USC channels.



Monday, 2nd- 6th December

Please note that the Pacific Stream will be on Monday, 2 December and Tuesday, 3 December at the Unitec Mt Albert Campus. Don't forget to submit an abstract and/ or register! [CLICK HERE](#)



[CLICK HERE](#)

Please ensure to take time to read and contribute to this work as it is an opportunity to influence change that best reflects how we serve our Pacific communities. There will be public events that TEC will lead which we encourage you to participate in for your voice to be added.

**Please review the following documents for your information and contribution:**

[Redesign of the vocational education and training system – Proposals for public consultations](#)

[Vocational Education Reforms Consultation – Submission Template](#)



We are pleased to inform you that signage was recently put-up at the front facing part of the Fale to inform people about some protocols/ processes to ensure we respect it. For bookings and further information, please contact the Pacific Centre.



# UNITEC PACIFIC CENTRE

**DAISY  
BENTLEY-  
GRAY**

Interim Manager  
Pacific Success

- Community Studies
- Healthcare and Social Practice

**ROKOSIGA  
MORRISON**

Pacific Success  
Navigator

- Applied Business
- Building & Construction
- Environment & Animal Sciences
- Community Studies

**LUPETI  
FIHAKI**

Pacific Success  
Navigator

- Architecture
- Creative Industries
- Healthcare & Social Practice

**PAVA  
SAIFOLOI**

Pacific Success  
Navigator

- Trades & Services
- Computing, Electrical & Applied Technology
- Bridgepoint

**IOANE  
ALEKE  
FA'AVAE**

Pacific Learning  
Advisor

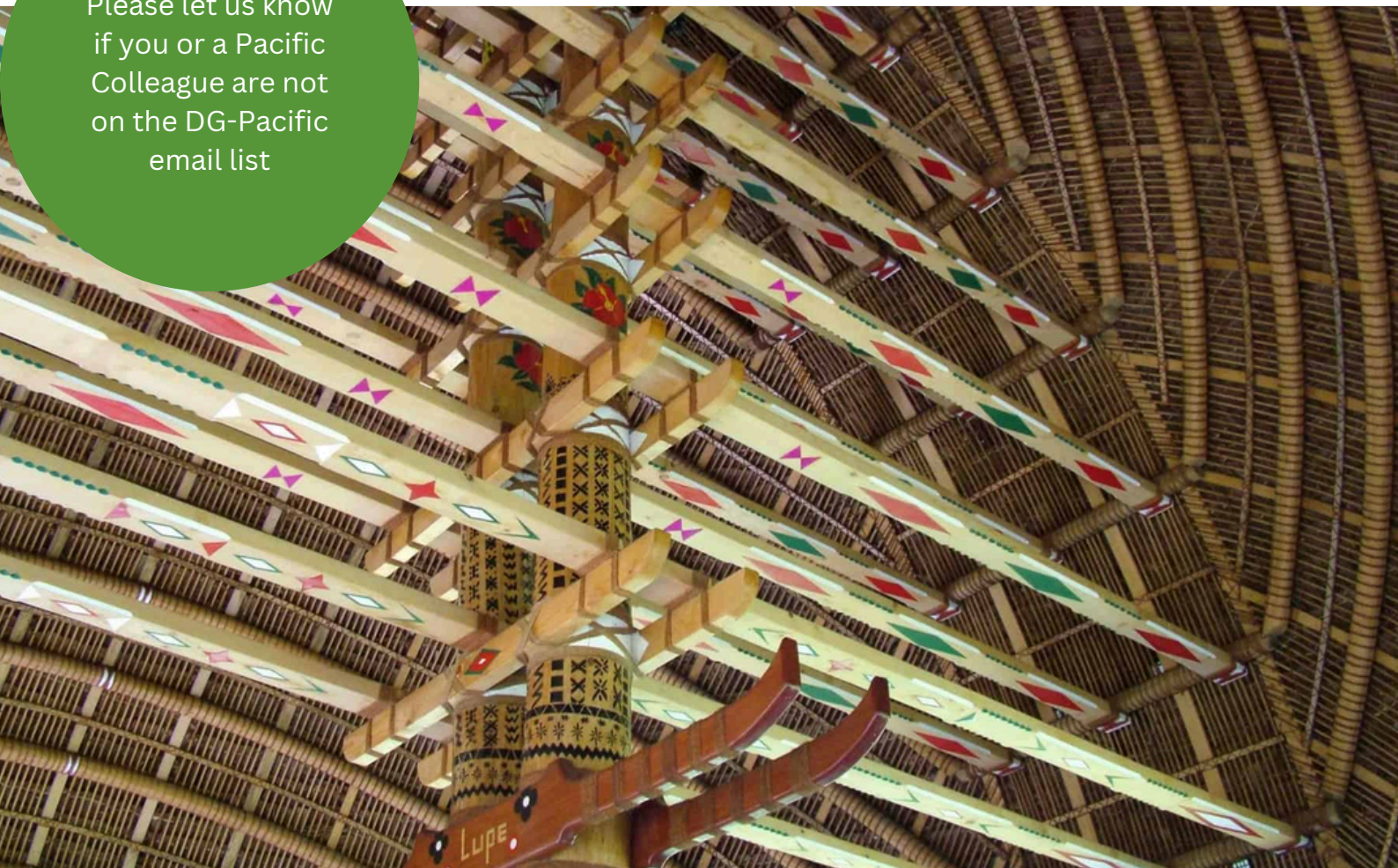
- Building & Construction
- Bridgepoint
- Computing, Electrical & Applied Technology
- Environment & Animal Sciences
- Trades & Services

**VENUSI  
TAUMOEPEAU**

Pacific Learning  
Advisor

- Applied Business
- Architecture
- Bridgepoint
- Computing, Electrical & Applied Technology
- Creative Industries

Please let us know if you or a Pacific Colleague are not on the DG-Pacific email list





# THANK YOU!

Thank you all for your dedication to our students and the work you do!

We pray for blessings as we continue to support our students and colleagues!

Please reach out to us if/ when you need our support. Also, feel free to pop into the Pacific Centre anytime you are at Te Puna (B180).



**ASKPACIFIC@UNITEC.AC.NZ**