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Special edition:

SINU Vice Chancellor opening address 2026



SINU Vice-Chancellor Professor Transform Aqorau delivering his opening address.

It is a real pleasure to see so many familiar faces and new beginnings gathered here today. This morning feels like the launching of a new voyage – as if we are pushing our canoe out onto open waters at first light, guided by purpose, hope, and the promise of what lies ahead. Each new academic year is such a journey: we set our course together, drawing on the strength of our community, the wisdom of those who guide us, and the aspirations of our young people who carry our future.

As we gather at the start of this journey, let us pause to acknowledge God's presence among us and to seek His guidance and blessing. As it is written in the Book of Numbers: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace." May these words be our compass and our anchor as we begin this journey together in 2026.

It is my great honour to welcome you to the start of the 2026 academic year at Solomon Islands National University. This occasion is especially poignant for me, as it marks the beginning of my final term as your Vice-Chancellor. Standing here today, I am filled with gratitude and reflection. When I assumed this role three years ago, it was an unexpected journey – I came from outside academia, never imagining I would one day lead our national university. Yet these years have been among the most rewarding of my life. I have been continually inspired by the energy and passion of our university community.

I have watched our staff grow in confidence and expertise, forging new collaborations at home and abroad. I have seen our students begin to spread their wings beyond our shores – for example, later this year, a cohort of seven SINU students will visit the University of Melbourne, a testament to the growing impact and reach of SINU.

These experiences fill me with optimism about the future of our university and our nation. As we commence this new academic year, we also stand at a crossroads – a defining moment both personal and national. It is a time to take stock of how far we have come and to chart the course ahead.

The world around us is changing rapidly, and Solomon Islands faces critical choices. In my address today, I wish to speak not only as an academic leader but as a fellow citizen of our beloved Solomon Islands about the future we seek. I will speak about the global currents shaping our islands' destiny, the question "What kind of country and what kind of society do we want to be in five to ten years?" and the vital role of education, leadership, and our youth in answering that question.

I will also outline how SINU – our national university – will contribute to realizing that vision, guided by our new 2026–2030 Strategic Plan. This is a moment to reaffirm our values and our purpose. It is a moment to inspire each other to live with truth and serve with purpose, so that together we can build a brighter future for the next generation.

Global Winds of Change: Challenges and Opportunities

Fellow citizens and friends, we gather today in a world that is turbulently evolving. The past few years have reminded us that history is not static – it is alive, and at times, unforgiving. We are living in an era of geopolitical instability and great power rivalry, where the familiar post-Cold War rules-based international order is fading. Conflicts and crises far from our shores – from wars that shock the conscience to economic upheavals and pandemics – send ripples that reach even our peaceful Pacific isles.

The rise of a multipolar world means that no single country dominates; instead, we see increasing competition among major powers, and our own Pacific region has become a stage for this strategic contest. We hear it said that "the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.

" As a small nation, this could be a cause for fear and pessimism, but I urge that we do not see ourselves as powerless. On the contrary, we have strength in our collective values and in our unity with our Pacific neighbours.

The power of the less powerful starts with honesty – with speaking the truth about our challenges and acting with integrity. We must refuse to simply "go along to get along" when our future is at stake. In this unpredictable geopolitical climate, Solomon Islands must stand firm on its principles – sovereignty, peace, respect for international law – and work with all partners who respect our values and our right to chart our own course.

In this regard, we must also be clear about how we see ourselves as Pacific peoples. We are not small and isolated states scattered across a vast ocean; as the late Epeli Hau'ofa reminded us, we are part of a great "sea of islands" – connected, expansive, and bound together by history, culture, and shared stewardship of the ocean.

This is the spirit that underpins the Blue Pacific concept embraced by our Forum Leaders: a recognition that our strength lies not in the size of our land, but in the vastness of our ocean, the richness of our cultures, and the solidarity of our region. It is also reflected in the Leaders' vision of an "Ocean of Peace," where our region is not a theatre for contest, but a zone of cooperation, stability, and collective security shaped by Pacific priorities. In asserting this identity, we reject narratives of vulnerability that diminish our agency.

Instead, we affirm that the Pacific can and must chart its own pathway – one grounded in unity, guided by our values, and committed to safeguarding our ocean and our future for generations to come.

One global challenge looms especially large for the Pacific, and that is climate change. We are on the front lines of the climate crisis. Stronger cyclones, rising sea levels, and disrupted weather patterns are not abstract predictions for us – they are our lived reality. The tragic irony is that small island states like ours contribute the least to global emissions, yet we face the harshest consequences. Climate change threatens villages and livelihoods, and it will test our resilience as a nation.

We must raise our voice in the world's forums to demand climate action and justice. At the same time, we must prepare here at home – strengthening disaster preparedness, building climate-resilient infrastructure, and educating our people in adaptation strategies. Our region's traditional wisdom about living in harmony with nature is a precious asset; combining it with modern science will help us navigate this peril.

In addition to climate threats, technological disruption is transforming economies and societies everywhere. Automation, artificial intelligence, and digital connectivity are changing how we work, how we learn, and how we understand the world around us. For Solomon Islands, this presents both opportunity and risk. We have the chance to leapfrog old barriers – improving telemedicine in our remote islands, using e-learning to reach students far from our campuses, and fostering digital entrepreneurship among our youth. But if we fall behind, we risk widening the development gap. We must therefore invest in ICT infrastructure and digital skills so that our people can thrive in the global knowledge economy.

Yet there is one dimension of this transformation that we must confront directly – the rise of artificial intelligence. Tools such as ChatGPT and others are not simply new technologies; they are reshaping how knowledge itself is created, accessed, and used. In universities around the world, this shift is already unfolding at a pace not seen since the arrival of the internet. It is no longer something we can stand aside from. Like the tides that shape our islands, this change is already upon us – and our task is to learn how to navigate it wisely.

For SINU, this is both a challenge and a responsibility. We must not try to stop what cannot be stopped. Instead, we must teach our students to use these tools with discipline, integrity, and critical thinking. A university is not simply a place where answers are produced – it is a place where minds are formed. Our students must learn not to accept everything technology gives them, but to question it, test it, and apply their own judgment. That is how knowledge becomes wisdom.

This means embedding AI literacy across all disciplines, supporting our staff to adapt their teaching, and ensuring that technology strengthens – rather than weakens – the quality of learning. If we get this right, we will not fall behind – we will lead. We will produce graduates who are not only technologically capable, but grounded in values, able to think for themselves, and ready to serve their communities in a rapidly changing world.

The next five years will therefore be critical. As our strategic plan recognises, we operate in a rapidly changing environment shaped by demographic shifts, climate vulnerability, technological disruption, workforce demands, and an increasingly interconnected region. In short, we face a world full of uncertainty – but also full of opportunity for those who are prepared to adapt and to lead.

In confronting these global winds of change, what should be our guiding star? I believe it must be our values – the values that define us as Solomon Islanders and as members of the human family. One of those is truth. I am reminded of the words of Václav Havel, the great Czech statesman and writer. Havel spoke of the importance of "living in truth" – of refusing to live within the lie of a broken system.

He famously described a shopkeeper who places a slogan in his window not because he believes it, but to avoid trouble, to signal conformity. When ordinary people go along with what they know is false or unjust, the status quo persists. But when even one person has the courage to remove the



SINU staff, invited guests, students, and members of the public stand in respect of the national anthem.

sign and speak truth, the illusion sustaining bad systems begins to crack. Today, in a world where propaganda, misinformation, and the temptation to compromise principles for short-term gains are ever-present, Havel's message rings clear. We must live in truth – as individuals, as a university, and as a nation. This means we do not shy away from calling out corruption or wrongdoing, even when it is difficult. It means we practice honesty and transparency in our institutions. It means we uphold facts and science, and teach our students to do the same. Living in truth also means being true to who we are as a people: cherishing our culture, our diverse languages, and traditions, and never pretending to be someone else's notion of "success." If we are grounded in truth and integrity, no matter the shifting geopolitical sands, we will remain masters of our own destiny.

Another core value is service. In times of global uncertainty, the nations that will thrive are those with leaders and citizens who serve a purpose greater than themselves. Here we are guided by our own national motto: "To Lead is to Serve." This founding principle, conceived by our forebears at Independence, reminds us that leadership is not about power or prestige, but responsibility and sacrifice. A leader's greatness lies in their willingness to serve others. As a country, if we hold onto servant leadership – in government, in communities, and yes, in the university – we will foster trust and unity.

The motto "To Lead is to Serve" should challenge each of us who are in positions of authority: are we here to lift our people up, or to lift up ourselves? I pose this question to every leader in Solomon Islands today, whether political, civic, or educational: How true are we to the ideal that leading means serving our people's highest good? Let us recommit that ideal, especially in this era when cynical power struggles in the wider world threaten to erode the standards of public life. If we lead by serving, we cannot go wrong.

So, in this global context of rivalry and change, Solomon Islands will do what we have always done at our best – stand tall on our principles. We must work with all nations, East and West, North and South, that respect our dignity and aspirations. We must be a friend to all and enemy to none, but we will not hesitate to assert our rights and speak our truth. We, the small nations, have our agency. We may not be mighty in military or economic terms, but we have the moral power of truth and unity.

As Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada noted in his address at Davos in January this year, intermediate and smaller powers are not helpless – they can and must help build a new order rooted in values like human rights, sustainable development, and solidarity. We in the Pacific share these values deeply. We know that peace, cooperation, and respect must prevail over division. We will continue to champion a cooperative, rules-based regional order – through the Pacific Islands Forum and other bodies – because it protects the rights of all states, large and small. And we will invest in our own resilience – strengthening food security, energy security, and disaster resilience – so that we can withstand global shocks. The bottom line is this: the turbulence of our times does not doom us; rather, it challenges us to define our character. It is in how we respond – with fear or with courage, with passivity or with proactivity – that our future will be written.

We are also reminded, in a very immediate way, that the shocks of distant conflicts are never truly distant for small island states such as ours. The ongoing war involving Iran, and the disruption of one of the world's most critical energy corridors, has sent tremors through the global economy—driving up oil prices and unsettling supply chains on which we depend. For Solomon Islands, where fuel underpins almost every aspect of daily life—from electricity generation to transport and the cost of food—these global disruptions quickly become local realities. We are already seeing the early signs: rising prices, pressure on household incomes, and increased costs for businesses.

Projections suggest that inflation could climb sharply and economic growth could slow as these pressures work their way through our economy. More fundamentally, this crisis exposes a deeper structural truth: our heavy reliance on imported fuel, and on supply chains that pass through distant hubs like Singapore, leaves us vulnerable not only to price shocks but to potential disruptions in supply itself.

Yet, as with all the global currents I have spoken of today, this moment is not only a warning—it is a call to leadership. It challenges us to confront honestly the risks we face and to act with foresight and resolve. If we are to remain masters of our own destiny, then we must accelerate our journey toward energy security, invest in resilience, and reduce our dependence on forces beyond our control.

In doing so, we transform vulnerability into purpose, and uncertainty into an opportunity to shape a stronger, more self-reliant Solomon Islands.



Ms Pamela Naesol Alamu CEO, Institute of Solomon Islands Accountants (ISIA) responding to questions during the panel discussion.

A Vision for Solomon Islands: The Next 5–10 Years

Fellow Solomon Islanders, with that global backdrop in mind, let us turn our gaze homeward. It is time to ask ourselves the fundamental question: What kind of country, and what kind of society, do we want Solomon Islands to be in five to ten years? In a decade’s time, when the young child entering primary school today is finishing high school or starting university, what do we hope they see around them? What is our vision for 2030 and beyond?

I believe we all share certain dreams for our country – dreams that transcend politics or province, rooted in the desires of our people. Let me paint a picture of the Solomon Islands we strive to build in the next 5–10 years:

● A Nation of Educated, Empowered Citizens:

First and foremost, we want a country where every child – boy or girl, in town or in the remotest village – has access to quality education and the opportunity to reach their full potential. In 5–10 years, we envision significantly higher literacy rates and more of our youth gaining advanced skills and qualifications.

An educated society is a confident and innovative society. We want our classrooms to produce not just job-seekers, but job creators and problem-solvers. We want our people to be informed citizens, able to engage in national discourse and exercise their rights and responsibilities wisely.

● A Resilient, Sustainable Economy and Environment:

We want a Solomon Islands that is more self-reliant economically, tapping into the creativity of our entrepreneurs and the richness of our natural resources in a sustainable way. In a decade, let us see a more diversified economy – where agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and creative industries thrive alongside responsible mining and forestry. We aim for communities that have embraced sustainable practices, ensuring that development does not come at the cost of our environment.

We envision investing in renewable energy – solar, hydro, perhaps even geothermal – to reduce our dependence on imported fuels and to reach rural areas with electricity. In this future Solomon Islands, we have stronger infrastructure: reliable transport linking our islands, and reliable internet linking us to the world. Crucially, we see a country leading in climate resilience – with seawalls protecting vulnerable villages, climate-smart agriculture ensuring food security, and emergency response systems that safeguard our people from disasters. We want our children to inherit an environment that is not depleted, but nurtured.

● A Society of Unity, Equity, and Good Governance:

Our vision must include a Solomon Islands that is more unified and inclusive. We are proud of our cultural and linguistic diversity – from the tribes of Makira to the clans of Malaita, from our Polynesian outliers to our Melanesian and Micronesian heritage – and in a decade we hope to see even greater national cohesion and mutual understanding among our people. What kind of society do we want?

One where every group feels heard and valued, and where the rule of law and justice prevail so that all can live in peace. We want to decisively overcome the ethnic tensions and unrest that have divided us in the past; never again should violence steal the future of our youth. We also seek a society that offers equal opportunity – where women participate fully in leadership and the economy, where all citizens have fair access to jobs and services, and where corruption has no place. In 5–10 years, let us aspire to be ranked among the most transparent and well-governed nations in the Pacific.

This means strengthening our institutions, demanding accountability from our leaders (and ourselves), and living up to the ideal of “to lead is to serve.” If we achieve this, the Solomon Islands of 2030 will shine as a model of ethical leadership and social harmony.

● A People Who Live by Our Values:

Finally, and most importantly, the Solomon Islands we want is one that remains grounded in our timeless values. We are a deeply spiritual nation; our faith in God has carried us through hardships, and it will continue to guide us. We must remain a caring society – where we look after our wantoks, respect our elders, and nurture our youth. We must hold on to humility and hard work, traits our village life has long taught us. In the Solomon Islands of the future, may we see leadership with humility and citizenship with responsibility.

A society where success is not measured only in wealth, but in wellbeing and contribution to community. A society where we speak the truth, honour our commitments, and treat each other with respect and kindness. If we can be true to these values, I am confident we will also find material success and national progress.

This vision may sound lofty, but it is attainable – provided we make the right choices now. The next five to ten years are a critical window. Achieving such a Solomon Islands will require collective effort from all of us: government, churches, chiefs, communities, and indeed educational institutions like SINU. Each of us has a role in answering that big question about our country’s future. And education – let me emphasize – is the golden thread that runs through every part of this vision.

As John F. Kennedy wisely observed, “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource.” Education is the springboard for economic growth, the foundation for an informed democracy, and the catalyst for social progress. If we want enlightened leaders and citizens 10 years from now, we must be educating them today. Every extra year of quality schooling for a child adds not just to that child’s future but to the nation’s future. Our hopes for a more prosperous, resilient Solomon Islands hinge on investing in our people’s knowledge and skills right now.



Mr. James Kana, Managing Director, Ueniusu’unu Agribusiness Group sharing during panel discussion.



SINU Chancellor Sir Dr Nathan Kumamusa Kere shares his views during the panel discussion.

Education, Youth, and Leadership: Keys to Our Future

Fellow colleagues and students, let us delve deeper into the role of education, our youth, and leadership in achieving the Solomon Islands we want. Education is not a magic wand, but it comes very close – it is the single most powerful tool we have to shape the future. It is often said that education is the great equalizer, opening doors for those born without privilege. I would add that education is also the great energizer: it energizes economies, strengthens communities, and fortifies values. Through education, we transmit knowledge, but also instill values and character. We at SINU often remind ourselves that we are not only teaching for exams, but for life – producing graduates who are critical thinkers, effective communicators, and ethical leaders.

Consider this: every teacher trained, every nurse graduated, every accountant or engineer or agriculture specialist we produce becomes an agent of positive change in our society. They fill critical workforce needs, yes – but they also become role models in their villages and contributors to their communities. In my time as Vice-Chancellor, I have met many of our graduates serving as nurses in our hospitals and clinics, and as teachers in classrooms across the country, often in the most remote parts of our islands.

They are on the frontlines of service to our people, carrying with them the knowledge and values gained here at SINU and using it to uplift others. Over the next five years, we aim to multiply these success stories by expanding access to higher education. That means bringing SINU closer to the people – through establishing a fourth campus in Malaita and strengthening our provincial centers, through our Distance & Flexible Learning programmes, and through outreach that encourages more women and disadvantaged groups to enrol. No talent should be left untapped due to geography, gender, or income. If you have the ability and the will, this university should be there for you.

Yet, expanding access is not enough; we must also raise the quality of education to meet global standards. We live in a connected world – our graduates will compete not only with each other but with graduates from Fiji, from Australia, from Asia. They deserve education that is globally relevant and excellent. That is why one of my top priorities has been academic reform and accreditation. I am proud to say that SINU is on the verge of becoming an officially accredited, regulated university under our national framework. With support from partners, we reviewed and modernized all our academic policies to align with international best practices.

We have begun a comprehensive review of all programs to ensure a SINU qualification truly prepares students for success. Our ultimate goal is to become a self-accrediting university in the future – empowered to accredit our own programs because we have proven our quality. Achieving that status will be a landmark for Solomon Islands, signaling that our national university meets rigorous standards comparable to universities anywhere in the world. But accreditation is not about paperwork or prestige; it is about accountability to our students – ensuring that when we hand someone a degree, it actually means they have the skills and knowledge to excel.

It is about making Solomon Islanders competitive on the regional and global stage, so that a degree from SINU is held in high esteem throughout the Pacific and beyond. This is how we keep our talented youth at home and also attract international opportunities. Quality education also means relevant education. We must ask: Are we teaching the subjects and skills that our country truly needs? In the past three years, we have taken steps to re-align our programs with national needs. For example, we are strengthening technical and vocational training by creating a dedicated TAFE (Technical and Further Education) division. Not every young person will pursue an academic degree, nor should they have to. Trades, craftsmanship, and vocational skills are critical for our economy.

A plumber, an electrician, a carpenter – these are honorable and needed professions to build our infrastructure and homes. Our new TAFE programs will empower youths with practical skills for immediate employment or entrepreneurship. Likewise, we recognize the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in the modern economy. That is why, with support from UNDP, we are establishing an Innovation Hub on campus to nurture creativity, digital skills, and startup ideas among students. We want to see the next successful Solomon Islands business ideas and social enterprises born from our students' ingenuity. By updating our curriculum and expanding offerings, SINU's teaching will remain relevant to national development priorities and global trends. Our graduates should not only find jobs – they should be capable of creating jobs, leading enterprises, and driving solutions for our communities.

Now, let me turn to the youth more broadly. The youth of Solomon Islands are our greatest treasure. We are a young nation – a majority of our people are under the age of 30. What does this mean? It means that the decisions we make today, the investments we choose to prioritise, and the values we impart will echo for decades through the lives of this youthful majority. Our young people brim with potential – I see it every day in the eagerness of students on our campuses, in the ambition of young professionals starting their careers, in the creativity of our youth groups in villages.

But I also see the challenges they face: a shortage of jobs, the lures of harmful behaviors, sometimes a disillusionment with the pace of change. We owe our youth not only hope, but concrete pathways to achieve their dreams. Education is one such pathway; mentorship and leadership opportunities are others. This is why SINU and other institutions must engage youth as partners, not just recipients. At SINU we have made it a point to include student representation in decision-making – student representatives now sit on faculty boards and, pending an Act amendment, soon in the University Senate. Their voice matters in shaping academic life. Nationally, I encourage our government and private sector to also include young people in advisory roles and dialogues – whether it is about climate policy or digital strategy. Fresh ideas often come from the young.

We also need to cultivate the leadership potential in our youth. Leadership is not reserved for those with titles; it can be practiced by anyone with vision and integrity. We must provide platforms for youth leadership – be it through youth parliaments, student associations, or community projects where they take charge. And we must model the leadership we wish them to emulate. On this note, I speak now to all the elders, the established leaders listening: our young people learn more from what we do than what we say. If they see leaders behaving selfishly or without principle, they will believe that is acceptable. But if they see leaders living out servant leadership, acting with integrity, and working hard for the people, they will be inspired to do the same. As one writer noted, "Leading by example is perhaps the greatest lesson we can leave for future leaders."

Let us embody the national motto in our actions so convincingly that the next generation cannot help but follow suit. To lead is to serve; to serve is to love our country. I recall President John F. Kennedy's enduring words: "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource." Education, therefore, must also instill the mindset and heartset needed for progress.

This includes critical thinking – the courage to question and innovate. It includes empathy and ethics – the moral compass to use knowledge for good. We will do well to remember that leadership and learning are indispensable to each other, as Kennedy also believed. As we learn, we grow into leadership; as we lead, we must keep learning. In Solomon Islands' journey to the future, every educated young person we nurture is a potential leader who can steer a family, a community, perhaps the nation someday. Our task as the older generation is to equip them and then trust them with responsibilities. They will surprise us with their brilliance if we give them the chance.



Dr Billy Fito'o shares his insights during the panel discussion

SINU's Role in Nation-Building and Our Strategic Path

At this point, you might ask: what is the role of Solomon Islands National University in all of this? How will SINU help make these aspirations a reality? The answer is simple: SINU is the nation's premier platform for knowledge and capacity-building, and thus it is central to our national development. If we want skilled workers, we train them here. If we want innovative research to solve local problems, we conduct it here. If we want to preserve our culture and at the same time engage with the world, we do so through education here. SINU's mission is intertwined with the nation's mission.

Over the past few years, we have strived to transform SINU into a stronger pillar of development. When I assumed office in late 2022, the university faced many challenges – administrative and financial instability, questions about quality, strained stakeholder trust. We tackled these head-on with a vision grounded in three pillars: good governance, academic excellence, and financial sustainability. First, we focused on governance reforms to make SINU an “oasis of good governance” – a model of integrity and accountability in the Pacific. We revitalized the University Council and its committees, bringing in respected independent voices to ensure transparency and oversight. We implemented new policies to strengthen institutional systems – notably a Private–Public Partnership (PPP) policy that sets the stage for collaboration with industry and investors.

We cleared backlogs in financial reporting and audits; as of now, our accounts and annual reports are up to date and submitted to government on schedule. These may sound like routine administrative tasks, but in truth they required considerable effort and signaled a new culture of responsibility at SINU. Bringing our reports and audits up to date was a collective achievement by council members, management and staff – one that demonstrates our commitment to accountability. Strong governance is not glamorous, but it is the foundation for everything else. As I have said before, a university governed with integrity and vision is better positioned to attract donor support, form effective partnerships, and diversify its revenue base.

We are already seeing this: because of improved governance, partners like Australia, China, New Zealand, Japan, and others have shown greater willingness to invest in our initiatives, whether through funding infrastructure, offering scholarships, or embedding advisors. Good governance builds trust – and trust brings resources and opportunities.

On the academic front, we have already discussed our push for accreditation and curriculum reform aimed at academic excellence and global relevance. This was the second pillar of our transformation agenda. In three years, we have modernized policies, introduced new programs, enhanced research capacity, and nearly completed our institutional accreditation process.

These reforms are foundational to our future, creating an environment where innovation can thrive and where a Solomon Islands education carries respect on the world stage. The establishment of postgraduate programs (including our first Master's and PhD offerings) and the overhaul of research systems mean SINU is now poised to become not just a consumer of knowledge, but a generator of new knowledge for our country.

We have seen faculty and students begin research on local challenges – from sustainable fisheries management to malaria prevention to Pacific history and languages – contributing both to local solutions and to the global academic community. My dream is to see SINU in the next decade evolve into a true centre of excellence in the Pacific, raising the standards of education and applied research not only for Solomon Islands but for our region. That dream is becoming tangible as we lay these academic foundations.

The third pillar was improving our financial health and operational efficiency – in essence, making SINU sustainable and growth-oriented. We have taken significant steps here as well. We secured and planned the development of all SINU lands across the country, from Honiara to the provinces. For instance, plans are underway to establish a new fourth campus in Malaika on land to be transferred at Aligegeo, and we are in discussions to expand SINU's presence in other provinces as well. By expanding beyond Honiara, we will embed the University more deeply in the national fabric and offer more Solomon Islanders access to higher education in their own communities.

We also look to leverage our prime land assets through the PPP policy – imagine, in a few years, a modern student accommodation complex or a small commercial center on campus that generates income for the university while serving students and the public. Such projects were not possible before due to weak governance, but now we can be bold in optimizing these assets for the University's benefit. We have engaged with the Solomon Islands National Provident Fund, local banks, and businesses to explore co-funding initiatives like a SINU housing estate and other facilities. The initial responses have been promising, reflecting growing confidence that SINU is becoming a reliable, forward-thinking institution. Diversifying our revenue streams via such partnerships will ultimately allow us to invest more in academic programs, better facilities, and expanded student services.

Speaking of investment in people: we recognized that an institution is only as effective as its faculty and staff. So, we made changes to improve staff development and morale, such as extending staff contracts from 3 years to 5 years for greater job security, and creating a Learning and Teaching Excellence Center to help our lecturers continually refine their teaching skills. These measures, along with numerous training workshops and support for staff further studies, are nurturing a professional culture at SINU that values accountability and excellence.

I have been fortunate to work with managers and staff who embrace change rather than resist it. Together, we have sown the seeds of a new culture at the University – one that puts students (our “customers”) first, that takes pride in our mission of service to the nation, and that holds each other to high standards. This cultural transformation may be my proudest achievement as Vice-Chancellor because policies and plans alone do not achieve change – people do. And our people at SINU have risen to the occasion.

All these strides were not made for their own sake, but to position SINU to better serve Solomon Islands. Now, as we enter 2026, we are ready to launch our 2026–2030 Strategic Plan – a roadmap that builds on these gains and projects us into the future. This Strategic Plan was developed collaboratively by our staff (with advisory support from friends like the Australian Government) and is set to be approved by the University Council in the coming weeks. It will guide SINU's growth over the next five years and indeed set a vision for the next decade. I want to highlight a few legacy goals in this plan that I am particularly passionate to pursue in my final term:

Rence Sore raised a question during panel discussion.



1. Consolidating Good Governance and Institutional Integrity:

We will not relax our drive for excellence in governance. The plan envisions embedding a culture of accountability at all levels of the University. This includes strengthening our audit and risk management even further, and ensuring the Council continues to be a robust guardian of transparency. By 2030, I hope SINU will be renowned as one of the most well-governed public institutions in the country – truly an “oasis of integrity and inclusion” as we set out to be. This legacy will give SINU the credibility to continuously attract support and fulfill its mission.

2. Achieving Academic Excellence and Global Recognition:

A core goal is to attain full institutional accreditation under our national regulator and move toward becoming a self-accrediting university. We also aim to gain recognition of key programs against international benchmarks (for example, aligning certain degrees with Australian/NZ standards). By the end of this Strategic Plan, I want SINU to be firmly established as a centre of excellence in the Pacific – with at least a few programs considered among the best in the region, and active academic partnerships linking us to universities abroad. This will include pursuing exchange programs (like the one sending students to Melbourne), inviting visiting lecturers, and encouraging our staff to publish research that puts Solomon Islands on the academic map. Excellence will also be measured by student outcomes – we want to see higher graduation rates, higher employment rates for graduates, and employer satisfaction with the quality of our alumni.

3. Expanding Access and Infrastructure for National Reach:

We will prioritize the development of our fourth campus in Malaita and strengthen our presence in other provinces. The goal is that by 2030, SINU is not just Honiara-centric but truly national. We envision modern facilities in Auki (Malaita) and perhaps initial centers in the Western or Eastern Solomons, offering programs that cater to local needs. Hand in hand, we plan major upgrades to existing infrastructure: more classrooms and labs to ease overcrowding, improved libraries and ICT facilities, and expanded student accommodation and recreation spaces. Reliable high-speed internet across all our campuses is a target – as digital access has become critical for quality education. We know that many of our current facilities need upgrades; over the next 5 years we will seek funding and partnerships (including government support and donor aid) to modernize SINU’s learning environment. A student in 2030 should find at SINU an environment conducive to learning and innovation – a campus that inspires pride.

4. Catalyzing Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship:

The new Strategic Plan places emphasis on making SINU a hub for research and innovation that directly supports national development. We will establish specialized research centers focused on areas of national priority – for instance, a Center for Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development, a Pacific Indigenous Knowledge Center, or an Innovation & Technology Lab – building on our new Innovation Hub. By 2030, I would like to see SINU regularly contributing to policy debates and solutions: providing research on issues like food security, public health, education quality, or renewable energy that policymakers and communities can use. We also aim to secure external research grants (from regional or international sources) by building up our research track record. And importantly, we will support entrepreneurship programs so that more students graduate not only with a CV, but with a business plan or a prototype or a social enterprise idea ready to launch. Our youth are brimming with ideas to solve local problems – SINU should be the launch pad for those ideas.

5. Financial Sustainability and Smart Partnerships:

Another legacy goal is to put SINU on a path to financial resilience. Government subvention will likely always be a part of our budget (as is true for national universities worldwide), but we must reduce over-reliance on it. By 2030, we aim for SINU to generate significantly more of its own revenue. This will come from sources like income-generating projects through PPP ventures (e.g., rental income from commercial properties on campus), consulting and professional training services that we offer to the public and industry, perhaps an increase in international students in niche programs, and fundraising through alumni and philanthropists. To do this, we will leverage partnerships – with local businesses, with development partners, and with international institutions.

I appeal to our business community to invest in our graduates, to offer internships, to collaborate on research, to sponsor innovation – your support will come back to you in the form of a more skilled workforce and a more vibrant economy. I appeal to our community and traditional leaders: continue to value education in your villages; encourage your children to learn and chase knowledge; hold us, the providers of education, accountable to deliver quality.

And to our development partners and friends abroad: we thank you for walking with us on our journey of growth – your continued partnership, based on mutual respect and shared goals, is deeply appreciated and will remain crucial.

Now, on a personal note: as I embark on this new term – one I intend to be the final chapter of my leadership at SINU – I do so with a full heart. It has been the privilege of a lifetime to serve as Vice-Chancellor of SINU. Whatever we have achieved has been a team effort.



SINU Vice Chancellor Professor Transform Aqorau addresses questions from participants during the panel discussion.

If you see any success in SINU today, know that it is the success of our staff and students; any shortcomings, I humbly accept as my own. I have been blessed to work with colleagues who turned vision into reality and with students who gave us purpose for every effort. Together we have laid foundations that I am confident will endure. There is of course unfinished business – much more to do, many challenges ahead. But that is the nature of any vibrant institution and nation: we are always a work in progress. We will keep pushing forward, keep striving for that next milestone. I pledge to you that in this final term I will work with the same passion and resolve as I did on day one, to ensure that when the time comes to pass the baton, I pass on a university (and in whatever small way, a country) that is stronger, wiser, and more hopeful than when I began.

The future of Solomon Islands begins now – in what we do here today, tomorrow, and each day after. Let us seize this moment. Let this new academic year be not just a routine cycle but the start of a new era of transformation and national renewal. We have before us the opportunity to build the Solomon Islands of our dreams, and we have within us – in our minds and hearts – the power to do so. The great tasks of our time, whether it is uplifting our education, defending our environment, or uniting our people, all require one thing: that we work together with conviction and compassion.

In the spirit of unity and purpose, I recall the words of one more leader who, though from a different land, spoke a truth that resonates with us. He said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” Let us be believers and doers. Let us dream of a better Solomon Islands and then make it happen through our toil and our will.

As I conclude, I return to our national motto and the wisdom it carries: “To Lead is to Serve.” May we each embrace this calling in our own spheres of life – for in serving others, we serve our nation. As we lead and serve in truth and humility, we strengthen the bonds that hold our society together and honour the legacy of those who came before us. Let this ethos guide us – in every classroom, every office, every village council, and every cabinet meeting. If we live it faithfully, then I have no doubt that Solomon Islands will flourish.

I invite you now to join me in this shared commitment. Let us go forward from here inspired by our vision, grounded in our values, and confident in our collective ability to overcome any challenge. Together, let us answer the call of our time.

Together, let us build a Solomon Islands that is educated, resilient, united, and just – a Solomon Islands that our children will be proud to inherit. And so, I return to the spirit in which we began – with gratitude and with faith. At the opening of this address, we recalled the words from the Book of Numbers: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.” As we go forward from this place, may that blessing walk with each one of you – in your studies, in your work, and in your service to your families, your communities, and our nation. May it guide this university, and may it guide our beloved Solomon Islands, as we continue this journey together – seeking truth, serving with humility, and building a future worthy of the next generation. Tagio tumas and thank you all. Now, let us make this future a reality – together.

We will continue to cultivate the trust of partners by upholding high standards of accountability. As noted earlier, with stronger governance, donors are more eager to fund scholarships, infrastructure, and capacity-building at SINU – we have to capitalize on that. The more financially secure SINU is, the more it can invest back into educating our youth and expanding its impact.

6. Enhancing Student Experience and Success:

Last but not least, our strategic focus will be on students – the heart of our university. We will implement measures to improve the overall student experience, from academic support to campus life. This includes strengthening academic advising and mentorship programs, so students get guidance on both studies and career paths. We also plan to introduce more student welfare services – for example, counseling and mental health support, because we recognize that students perform best when they are healthy in mind and body. Extracurricular programs in sports, arts, and volunteering will be expanded to develop well-rounded graduates who have teamwork and leadership skills.

By 5–10 years, we want the phrase “SINU student” to be synonymous not just with classroom learning, but with community involvement and national pride. Our students should graduate not only with degrees, but with a sense of responsibility to build the nation. In practical terms, I envision a future where alumni networks are active across the country, where SINU graduates in each province are organizing community service or development projects – being the change agents our country needs.

These goals, ambitious as they are, form the blueprint of the SINU Strategic Plan 2026–2030. This Plan is our institutional compass, articulating who we are, what we stand for, and what we commit to achieve. It ensures that in a time of change we are not merely responding to change but leading the conversations that shape change[1] . With this plan, our strategies will be bold and innovative yet grounded in reality – not abstract dreams, but actionable, measurable initiatives that will have real impact. I wholeheartedly echo the sentiment expressed when this plan was being formulated: A strategic plan is only as strong as the honesty of the conversations behind it.

We have been honest and critical in identifying our challenges and priorities. Now, we must be courageous and persistent in executing the solutions. I have every confidence that we will. And I ask all of you – our staff, our students, our partners in government and community – to join us in this journey. What we agree to in this plan will shape decisions not just in the next five years but for the decade beyond. Indeed, the decisions we make today will influence not only the next five years, but the next decade and beyond. I trust that when we look back in 2036, we will proudly say this plan guided SINU to new heights – it shaped a stronger and more resilient University, and enabled achievements that could be measured, not only described. That is the legacy I aim for as I complete my term.

The Vice Chancellor’s address was followed by a panel discussion and a question-and-answer session with the audience. The panelists were: Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, Dr. Derek Gwali Futaiasi; Mr. James Kana, Managing Director of Ueniusu’unu Agribusiness Group; Ms. Pamela Naesol Alamu, CEO of the Institute of Solomon Islands Accountants (ISIA); and the SINU Vice Chancellor.

Conclusion: A Call to Action and National Renewal

My friends, as I draw towards the conclusion of this address, I want to step back and remind us why moments like this – a new academic year, a leadership transition, a strategic plan launch – truly matter. They matter because they give us a chance to renew our commitment to the future. This gathering is a reaffirmation of our shared purpose, not just a ceremonial start to classes. We stand here as stakeholders in the future of Solomon Islands. Each of us – whether you are a professor or a first-year student, a parent or an official – has a stake in what our country will look like in 5, 10, 20 years. And each of us has a role to play in shaping it.

So, I end with a call to action for all of us. To the students listening: I urge you to make the very most of the opportunity you have. Your country needs your talent and energy. Study hard, yes, but also think hard about the kind of society you want to live in and how you can contribute to it. Be curious, ask questions, and do not be afraid to challenge old ways if you have ideas for improvement. Embrace the values of truth and service now, even in small ways – whether it is helping a classmate or standing up for what’s right in your peer group. Those habits will shape you into the leaders our nation will rely on tomorrow.

To the faculty and staff: you are the guides and guardians of our youth’s development. Never underestimate the influence you have. A kind word of encouragement, a spark lit in a student’s mind through your teaching, a mentorship you provide – these can change the trajectory of a young person’s life. Continue to exemplify professionalism and passion. Continue to “ask the right questions, challenge assumptions, and remain focused on the bigger picture,” just as we did when crafting our strategic plan. Your dedication makes this institution and our nation stronger. In this final term of mine, I promise to support you in every way I can to excel in your roles.

To the leaders in government, industry, and community who are here or listening: let us strengthen our partnership. The university alone cannot achieve the national vision – it requires alignment of many efforts. I appeal to our government to keep education at the forefront of the development agenda, for “our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education.” Every investment in a classroom, a teacher, or a scholarship yields dividends for our country’s future.



Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, Dr. Derek Gwali Futaiasi, shares key perspectives during a panel discussion.