



Shaping the Future Knowledge Technology and Nation Building

Vice Chancellor's Graduation Address

Solomon Islands National University | Thursday 1 October 2026

Theme: Shaping the Future: Knowledge, Technology and Nation Building

Bright Minds, Bold Ideas, for a Greater Nation

Chancellor Sir Dr. Nathan Kere,

Guest of Honour, Eric Walekwate, Managing Director of Australian Direct Suppliers

Members of SINU Council;

Ministers of the Crown;

Members Of Parliament;

Your Excellencies and Representative of Regional and International Organisations;

Permanent Secretaries;

Senior Government Officials;

Representatives from the Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organisations and Education Authorities;

Members of SINU Senate and Senior Management Committee,

Staff of SINU

Graduands;

Family Members and Friends;

Ladies And Gentlemen.,

Good morning.

To our graduands, congratulations. Today belongs to you. It also belongs to the people who helped you reach this moment: those who paid a fee when money was short, shared a room or a meal, looked after children while you studied, sent encouragement from another island, or simply believed you could finish when you were not so sure yourself. As you receive your award, I hope you will turn and find them in the audience. Let them see what their love and sacrifice have helped make possible.

Some of you have come through years of study while working or caring for family. Some have travelled far from home. Some have faced interruptions, disappointments and the ordinary exhaustion of trying to do too much in too little time. Yet here you are. Today is evidence of your ability, but also of your persistence. We are proud of you.

Today, 742 graduands will receive awards. Across this graduating class, 471 are women and 271 are men—approximately 63 per cent and 37 per cent respectively. Behind each of those numbers is a person whose effort, perseverance and determination have brought them to this day, supported by families, friends, lecturers and communities who share in this achievement.

Our Faculty of Education and Humanities has the largest graduating group, with 329 graduands: 219 women and 110 men. The Faculty of Business and Tourism Studies has 160: 113 women and 47 men. The Faculty of Nursing, Medicine and Health Studies has 105: 83 women and 22 men. The Faculty of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has 57: 35 women and 22 men. And the Faculty of Science and Technology has 48: eight women and 40 men. Together, these graduates will strengthen the teaching, enterprise, health services, food production and technical capabilities on which our nation's future depends.

We also celebrate 24 graduands in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training category, all men, and 19 through Distance and Flexible Learning: 13 women and six men. These pathways remind us how important it is to make education accessible through different modes of learning and to recognise the skilled work needed to build and sustain our communities.

The figures give us much to celebrate and also help us see where we must widen opportunities. Women make up almost two-thirds of this graduating class and are the majority in four of our five faculties. Their achievements deserve recognition and continued support. At the same time, women account for only eight of the 48 graduands in Science and Technology, and none of the 24 in the TVET category. We must encourage more women to pursue science, technology and trades, while also supporting more men to enter teaching, nursing and other fields where their contribution is equally needed. To every one of our 742 graduands, we are proud of you. Your achievements strengthen SINU, your communities and the future we are shaping together.

Our theme is “Shaping the Future: Knowledge, Technology and Nation Building.” We have also been given a phrase that captures its spirit: “Bright Minds, Bold Ideas, for a Greater Nation.” I want to speak to you about what those words demand of us, especially here in Solomon Islands.

The future is often described as though it were a ship arriving from somewhere else. We wait to see what technology it carries, what jobs it offers, what risks it brings. But our country has never been built by waiting. Our ancestors navigated an ocean with knowledge gathered over generations. They read stars, currents, winds, reefs and seasons. They designed tools for their environment, cultivated gardens, sustained families and governed communities. They made choices whose consequences reach us today.

We are now the people making choices for those who will come after us. The future is shaped in a classroom in Choiseul, a clinic in Malaita, a farm in Guadalcanal, a workshop in Honiara, a fishing community in the Western Province, and in every place where someone asks, “How can we do this better?” It is shaped by whether we listen to that question and have the courage to act on the answer.

Knowledge begins with curiosity. A qualification records what you have learned; it cannot record everything you will need to learn. The world you enter will change. Some familiar tasks will be automated. New professions will emerge. Climate pressures will alter where and how we live. The demands on health, education, food systems and public institutions will grow. You will need the discipline to keep learning long after today’s ceremony is over.

But knowledge is more than information. A phone can bring you a thousand answers in a moment. It cannot decide which answer is true, whose experience is missing, or whether a

proposed solution is fair. Your education should give you the confidence to test evidence, admit uncertainty, ask a better question and change your mind when the facts require it. Those habits matter as much to a nurse or teacher as to a scientist, accountant, engineer or public servant.

And our knowledge does not begin at the edge of a screen. It lives in language, customary practice, oral history and careful observation of place. A community that has watched a coastline change over generations may see what a short survey misses. A farmer's account of soil, rain and crop failure can guide useful research. We should bring that knowledge into conversation with laboratory science, law, data and new technology, respecting the people who hold it. This is one way a national university can be both excellent and truly rooted in its country.

Graduands, I invite you to carry two kinds of humility. Be humble enough to know that your certificate does not make you the only expert in a room. Be confident enough to use what you have learned when a difficult problem calls for it. Listen carefully, then contribute fully.

Technology is the second part of our theme, and it may be the most visible force changing your working lives. Artificial intelligence can help a teacher adapt learning materials, a clinician organise information, a farmer examine weather patterns and a small business reach customers. Digital systems can connect islands, make public services easier to access and allow young people to build enterprises without leaving home. Those possibilities are real.

So are the questions that come with them. If a system gives a wrong answer, who checks it? If data are collected about a community, who controls them and who benefits? If an online service works well in Honiara but cannot be used where connectivity is poor, have we really widened access? If a student uses an intelligent tool to produce an answer without understanding it, has learning taken place?

We should neither fear technology nor surrender our judgement to it. Learn to use these tools. Understand their limits. Protect privacy and trust. Ask whether the people most likely to be left behind can use what we create. A useful innovation in Solomon Islands may be a sophisticated model. It may also be a simple, reliable system that works on a modest phone, in more than one language, with intermittent power. The measure is whether it improves people's lives.

To the graduates who may one day design these systems, remember the human being at the other end. To those who will use them, remain the person who asks the question the machine cannot: “Is this right for this patient, this student, this family, this community?” That is where your professional judgement and your values become indispensable.

The third part of our theme is nation building. It is an ambitious phrase, and rightly so. Yet nation building seldom announces itself. It happens when a teacher notices a child falling behind and refuses to give up on her. It happens when a health worker reaches a village despite a difficult journey. It happens when a business pays workers fairly, when an engineer maintains a water system, when a public officer explains a decision honestly, and when a researcher returns findings to the people who made the research possible.

None of these acts is small to the person who depends on it. A greater nation is built through competence joined to character. It needs skilled people who can be trusted. It needs leaders who can disagree without dividing us, who can use public resources carefully, and who remember that service is a responsibility rather than a title.

Our geography makes this work demanding. The distance between islands can become a distance between opportunity and exclusion. We must ask who has access to quality education, safe health care, energy, connectivity and livelihoods, and who still waits. The future we shape must reach beyond the capital. It must be possible for a young person in a province to imagine a life of learning and contribution without having to leave their community behind.

The Government’s GREAT Coalition Policy Statement describes its national ambition through the words “Peace, Progress and Prosperity.” It proposes a long-term pathway towards universal free education from early childhood through tertiary and TVET, stronger higher education and research institutions, expanded opportunity across the provinces, and a more productive economy. It calls specifically for SINU to become the nation’s premier institution of higher education through academic excellence, equitable access, research, innovation and workforce development. These are policy commitments to be worked through and delivered over time. They speak directly to why this University exists.

SINU can help make that vision practical. We can prepare teachers who strengthen foundational learning, nurses and health professionals who serve communities, and technicians and entrepreneurs who add value to fish, cocoa, coconut, seaweed and other

resources here at home. We can train people for renewable energy and resilient infrastructure. We can support postgraduate study in fields our country needs and conduct applied research with provinces, government, industry and communities. Through flexible learning and TVET pathways, we can help bring opportunity closer to people who cannot simply move to Honiara. And by teaching ethical leadership and showing it in our own governance, we can contribute to the public trust on which peace and progress depend.

Government must set policy and make difficult choices about investment. SINU's task is to bring evidence, skills, independent thought and capable graduates to the national effort. Our success will be measured in the opportunities that reach people and the problems we help them solve.

That is why Solomon Islands National University has work to do. Our Strategic Plan 2026–2030 places student success and employability alongside research and innovation, national impact and partnerships, organisational resilience, and sustainable infrastructure. Our Academic Plan commits us to stronger teaching, relevant programmes, postgraduate study and research grounded in Pacific realities. Our Corporate Plan recognises that those ambitions depend on good governance, capable staff, sound finances, safe campuses and reliable facilities. These plans are promises we must translate into the experience of our students and the communities we serve.

We want our graduates to be ready for work, but also ready to create work, to keep learning and to help solve problems. We want research that matters to farmers, fishers, teachers, patients, businesses and policymakers. We want partnerships that deliver opportunities for staff and students. And we want a university whose systems and culture match the standards we ask of its graduates. This is our part in shaping the future, and we will be judged by what we do, not by what we print in a plan.

Graduands, as you leave us, I offer you three invitations.

First, stay curious. Your discipline will give you a starting point, not a boundary. Talk to people outside it. An agricultural challenge may need an engineer, a business owner and a community elder working together. A health challenge may need a teacher, a data specialist and a trusted local leader. Important ideas often begin when we listen across those boundaries.

Second, be brave enough to begin. A bold idea does not have to arrive as a grand invention. It might be a better way to keep records in a clinic, reduce waste on a campus, teach a difficult lesson, process a local crop or help a village prepare for a storm. Try it. Measure whether it works. Learn from those it affects. Improve it. If it fails, be honest about why and begin again. Courage is often quiet and persistent.

Third, remember whom your work is for. It is possible to become successful and still lose sight of the people who made that success possible. Call home. Mentor someone younger. Share your knowledge. Make room for a colleague. When you gain authority, use it to widen opportunity. Let your community recognise you not only by the letters after your name, but by the difference you make.

I also want to speak to the families and friends gathered here. Today you are entitled to immense pride. You have helped a graduate reach this stage, and I hope you will celebrate wholeheartedly. Please continue to encourage them as they find their place in a changing world. The first job may not be the dream job. The path may turn. Your faith in them will still matter.

To my colleagues at SINU, thank you. A Graduation is the visible end of a great deal of patient work: lectures prepared, assessments marked, practical skills taught, books found, records checked, fees processed, classrooms maintained, students advised and difficulties solved. Our graduands are our shared achievement. They are also a reminder to keep improving, so that those who follow them have an even stronger experience of this University.

In a few moments, our graduates will cross this stage. I want you to imagine, just briefly, the Solomon Islands they could help build over the next twenty years: children learning confidently in every province; more of our food grown and processed here; healthier communities; energy and digital connections that serve remote islands; oceans cared for by people who know them; institutions worthy of public trust; and young Solomon Islanders who believe their ideas belong in the future of their own country.

That future will require investment and wise public choices. It will also require the everyday decisions of people like you. Some of you will lead from the front. Others will make profound contributions without ever holding a prominent title. Both matter. We need bright

minds willing to keep learning, bold ideas tested in the realities of our islands, and hearts committed to the common good.

Graduands, you did not come this far simply to inherit the future. You have earned the chance to help shape it. Take your knowledge with confidence. Use technology with wisdom. Build the nation with integrity and compassion. And wherever your journey takes you, remember that the people and places that formed you are part of the strength you carry.

On behalf of the Chancellor, Council, Senate and the whole SINU community, I congratulate every one of you. May this be a joyful day for you and your families. May you go forward with courage, and may your work help make Solomon Islands a greater nation for those who come after us.

Thank you, and God bless you all.