

Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN)

Establishment Plan



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Preliminary Details

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Document Control

Version	Issued to	Date	Notes
Preliminary, P1	Interim Coordinators and the Professional Advisors	29 January 2013	Changes were made according to the feedbacks.
Preliminary, P2	Interim Coordinators and the Professional Advisors	20 February 2013	Skype meeting held 21 February 2013; changes made.
DRAFT 01	PIURN Working Group	25 February 2013	To prepare for face-to-face meeting March 14 th , 2013, at USP
DRAFT 02	PIURN Working Group	15 April 2013	Revised to include points raised during the meeting March 14 th , 2013, at USP

Executive Summary

The Universities of the Pacific Islands acknowledge their key responsibility for contributing to regional needs for economic and social development through the delivering of quality research and higher education training. Accordingly, Universities in the region have resolved to join forces and establish the **Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN)**. Through this initiative the universities aim to dramatically enhance their individual capacities by stimulating joint research and training initiatives. This initiative also demonstrates the will of the universities to more pro-actively contribute to the design of the research agenda of the Pacific region.

The PIURN network welcomes the support from national, regional and international stakeholders which is critical at its first stage of development.

The vision for PIURN is being a strategic instrument, promoting the agreed perspectives of collaborating universities when it comes to the identification of research priorities for the Pacific, and also being a very pro-active operational entity offering new educational and skills-development opportunities to teachers and researchers. The vision will be realized by:

- facilitating the establishment of collaborative quality research programs ;
- developing ambitious joint- training initiatives at graduate and PhD levels ;
- promoting renewed linkages and interactions between academia, industries, governments and the society at large; and
- storing institutional Research & Research Training policy documentation

The design of appropriate incentives for researchers to collaborate through the network is therefore critical and central to the vision which is developed here for PIURN.

This document outlines a plan to formally establish PIURN.

STEERING COMMITTEE

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31 May 2013

1 Background

The realization of an entity that promotes a networking of researchers between universities in the Pacific Islands is a culmination of sustained efforts over several years of a number of international organizations, the Pacific Island Countries and the universities themselves. The core driving force behind the efforts is the belief that such an entity can aid in the solving some of the difficult regional problems that are best tackled by systematic and scientific research conducted by researchers in the region, and by building local research capacity. Toward this end, some recent efforts are documented below.

1.1 CTA Efforts

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU), with the mission to advance food and nutritional security, increase prosperity and encourage sound natural resource management in ACP countries. CTA provides access to information and knowledge, facilitate policy dialogue and strengthen the capacity of agricultural and rural development institutions and communities.

In 2009, CTA in collaboration with several regional universities, convened a regional workshop at the Papua New Guinea (PNG) University of Natural Resources and Environment (UNRE) Vudal Campus, Rabaul, for building greater awareness around the critical role that research, innovation and entrepreneurship can play in enhancing the contribution of knowledge to improving agricultural performance and to sustainable socio-economic development in the Pacific region. A cross section of stakeholders representing tertiary education institutes, research and development, non-government and private sector organizations and the wider agricultural community, participated.

One of the follow-up activities identified was the establishment of a coordinating task force to connect academics, researchers and innovative agri-entrepreneurs to develop a road map for achieving a critical mass of motivated academicians and scientists who can contribute positively to agricultural led economic growth. Such a task force was expected to oversee the preparation and piloting of a Pacific Academic, Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship platform / network for sharing information, knowledge, experiences, opportunities and best practices in teaching, research, innovation and entrepreneurship. It was foreseen that this platform could be the basis for peer review; facilitating mentorship activities for young professionals; marketing opportunities; identifying solutions and building partnerships so that Pacific academics and researchers can play a leading and more productive role in consultation with other stakeholders in achieving socio-economic development in the Pacific.

1.2 UNESCO Efforts

In 2012, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published a revised and updated version of a study commissioned on the state of science policy in the Pacific Islands. The report identified several national and regional level interventions in the Pacific focusing predominantly on sustainable management of marine resources. It was noted that a conflict of interest exists in certain policies and their expected outcomes. It was concluded that there were evident benefits for the Pacific Island States associated with the development of a regional science and technology policy framework that would serve to foster the interests of national and regional agendas.

1.3 PACE-NET Efforts

The Europe-Pacific Network for Science and Technology (PACE-Net) is a three-year coordination action, supported by the Seventh Framework Program for Research and Technological Development of the European Commission. The main goals of PACE-Net are to:

- strengthen bi-regional dialogue and planning on Science and Technology between Europe and the Pacific on global and regional priorities of mutual importance;
- identify research partnership projects that will address those priorities; and
- raise awareness of the critical importance of the Pacific region to global sustainability and the vulnerability of its island countries.

At a February 2012 workshop of the PACE-NET in Brussels, participating experts from the Pacific and partners in bi- and multilateral agencies confirmed that a future initiative at developing a science and innovation policy for Pacific Island States must be led by Pacific experts and supported by regional and international organizations. A decision was taken by partners present to combine the CTA support for establishing a Pacific universities network with a UNESCO-led initiative to support the elaboration of the Pacific science, technology and Innovation policy, while building on and linking with existing initiatives including PACE-NET.

1.4 Efforts of Universities and other Tertiary Institutions in the Pacific Region

The universities in the Pacific region have collaborated and continue to collaborate mainly bilaterally in many areas – student and staff exchanges, provision of research and teaching facilities, participation in research projects, hosting of conferences, to name but a few.

In a new development, the leaders of several Pacific tertiary institutions met in 2011 to establish the Association of Heads of Tertiary Institutions in the Pacific Islands (AHTIPI). The member institutions are the National University of Samoa (NUS); The Pacific Institute of Technology, Fiji; the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE); the Fiji National University (FNU); The University of Fiji (UoF); The

University of the South Pacific (USP); the Tonga Teachers College; 'Atenisi University, Tonga; the Tonga Institute of Science and Technology; the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT); the Oceania University of Medicine (OUM), Samoa; and the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE). The AHTIPI Constitution identified the roles and functions of the Association as:

- a) To be a forum for academic leadership of tertiary institutions to attain academic excellence in the Pacific Islands through co-operation and the exchange of ideas;
- b) To promote cooperation and collaboration between institutions in areas such as administrative and academic practices, development and maintenance of academic standards, staff recruitment and exchange and student affairs;
- c) To serve as a mechanism for collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations, including in particular, development partners and international organisations on tertiary education;
- d) To be a strong and credible voice for tertiary education and to raise its profile, including internationally; and
- e) To provide joint responses to governments, regional and development partners where appropriate.

1.5 Efforts by other Pacific Institutions

The Secretariat of the Pacific Commission (SPC) is a one of major players among regional institutions in promoting collaborations between academic institutions mainly via the provision of specialised trainings.

In PNG, the Office of Higher Education (OHE) inaugurated the Science and Technology Initiative (STI) in 2007 as part of the effort to operationalise an initiative to support Research and Development (R&D) in science, engineering and technology. To support the initiative, the OHE since then has set aside funds for research and development in the Universities.



2 Current Situation

2.1 Basic Organisation Data

Name of Organization:	The Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN)
Proposed address of hosting institution for the initial 3 years	The University of the South Pacific Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji Islands
Contact point	Dr. Jito Vanualailai, Research Office University of the South Pacific Private Mail Bag, Suva, FIJI Phone: + (679) 32 32661 Email: jito.vanualailai@usp.ac.fj

2.2 Vision

A prosperous Pacific Region where **Science, Technology and Innovation** research collaborations address in particular the needs of the people in identified priority areas.

2.3 Mission

The Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN) is established with the principal purpose of enhancing research and development collaboration in science, technology and innovation, building upon the quality educational capacity of these universities, to better serve the needs and aspirations of Pacific communities.

In addition, in recognising **Science, Technology & Innovation** (ST&I) as an engine of sustainable development and green economic growth, PIURN is established to support the development of a ST&I Framework for the Pacific.

2.4 Goals

- 1) Validate and generate knowledge through research for priority challenges in the Pacific region.
- 2) Share physical and intellectual resources, in an equitable manner, to facilitate quality research.
- 3) Develop shared research training initiatives.
- 4) Collectively work with regional and international organizations to strengthen the quantity and quality of research conducted in fields of major importance.
- 5) Strengthen scientific research content in the curriculum and in teaching, with a focus on strengthening the content of PhD training and enhancing joint degrees at the Masters and PhD levels.
- 6) Protect and apply local and indigenous knowledge systems.

- 7) Provide ST&I policy advice at the regional and national level.

2.5 Stakeholders

The stakeholders are those organizations which have a very strong interest in research in the Pacific. They may provide direct financial assistance or required goods or services. They may also be higher education or research bodies with which research collaborations could be developed. They include the following:

- South Pacific Commission (SPC)
- Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- Europe-Pacific Network for Science and Technology (PACE-NET)
- PNG Office of Higher Education
- Fiji Higher Education Commission
- PRESICA (Higher education cluster in New Caledonia)

2.6 Eligibility Criteria for Full Membership

Full membership is reserved to universities in the Pacific Islands established as higher education and research bodies delivering training at graduate level, which commit themselves to the objectives of the PIURN and pay the required annual membership contribution.

Universities from other Pacific regions can join the PIURN as Associate Members. They commit themselves to actively support the objectives of the network on the basis of a roadmap endorsed by the PIURN Board.

2.7 Members

PIURN will invite the following 12 universities as its founding members:

Universities/Institutions
Fiji: Fiji National University University of Fiji
PNG: University of PNG PNG University of Natural Resources and Environment PNG University of Technology University of Goroka Divine Word University Pacific Adventist University
Samoa: National University of Samoa
French territories: University of New Caledonia University of French Polynesia
Region: The University of the South Pacific

The membership may be enlarged depending on future requests.

2.8 PIURN Governance

The governance structure of PIURN will consist of strategic direction and policy to be set by a board, under which day-to-day operations, delivered primarily by the Secretariat staff, will be overseen by a Director, who will also have the benefit of accessing the resources of an External Advisory Board of Stakeholders and Partners, and the services of sub-committees and working parties.

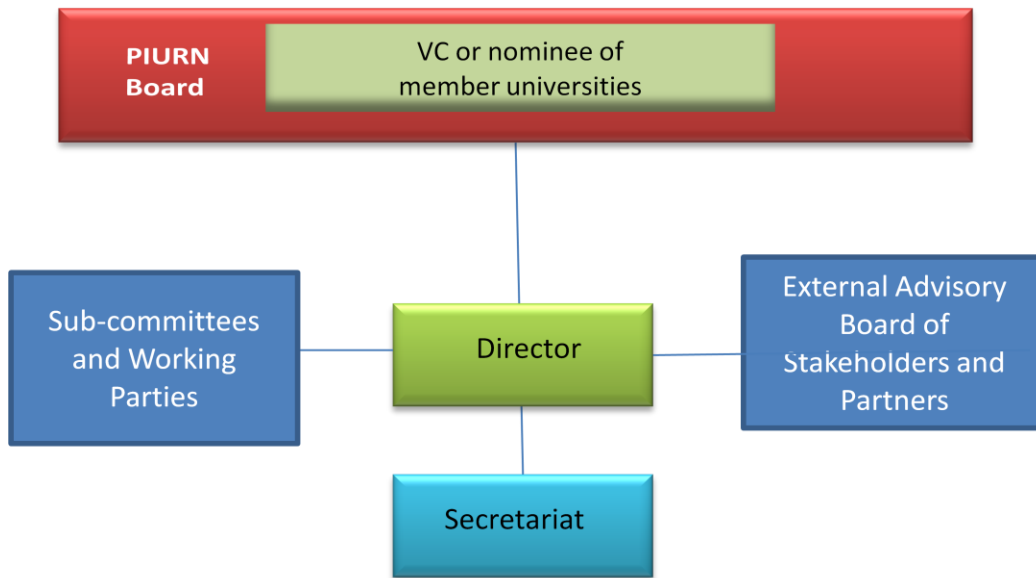


Figure 1: PIURN Organisation Structure

PIURN will be governed by a Board consisting of Vice Chancellors or their nominees of member universities.

The PIURN Board will be responsible for the following:

- Developing and approving PIURN policy for engagement ;
- Setting strategic research directions for PIURN;
- Appointing and evaluating the Director of PIURN;
- Approving the PIURN financial budget;
- Ensuring that PIURN’s financial position is reflective of the budget and in the case it is not, taking appropriate, corrective action;
- Securing funds to operate PIURN as a long-term entity, in a sustainable manner;
- Promoting cooperation with external bodies.

The members shall determine the Chair of the Board, ideally, to be rotated on an annual basis.

2.9 Meetings

The PIURN Board shall conduct at least two meetings, including one Annual General Meeting (AGM), per year. The AGM shall be a face-to-face meeting and the other meetings shall be via teleconference. However, it may be possible to tie in face-to-face meetings with other events attended by a majority of the Board members.

Special meetings may be required from time to time to make important, time critical decisions (for example, approval of funding to undertake a significant international initiative that was not previously budgeted for).

In order to vote on decisions at all board meetings, two-thirds of executive board members must be in attendance. For the AGM at least two-thirds of board members or their alternates must be present, or proxies must be submitted.

In the event of a tied vote of members, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

Subcommittees or working parties may be formed on an as needs basis to address specific research-related topics that require cooperation and coordination.

2.10 Audit

PIURN will ensure that its operations and technology withstand reasonable audit. The host institution may already have standards for audit of its own infrastructure and procedures and it would be appropriate for the PIURN to leverage these rather than invest in alternative process.



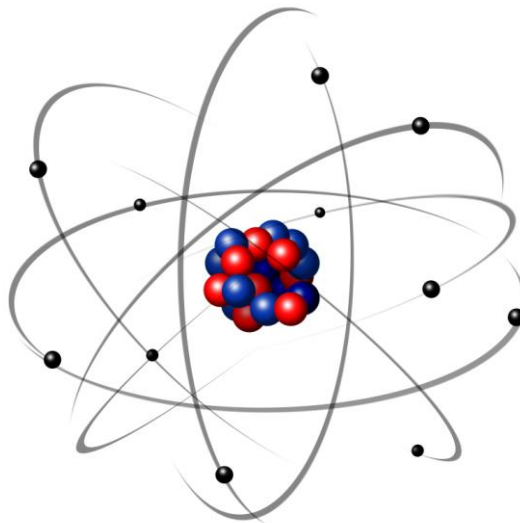
3 Strategies, Actions and Initiatives

3.1 Strategies for Sustainability

The ultimate objective of strategies having been formulated and described here is to sustain PIURN during the first 3-year plan.

Specific, identified strategies for PIURN are:

- a) Members of PIURN are required to contribute annually to PIURN a minimum of US\$ 2,500 per annum (*to be agreed upon by the PIURN Board*).
- b) To maximize revenue and to limit costs, PIURN should avail itself of all appropriate direct technical assistance from international organizations.
- c) It is not expected that PIURN will be self-sustainable by five years, but rather be less reliable to financial assistance.
- d) PIURN will build human networks and relationships as well as collaborate with, *inter alia*: governments; private sector including, but not limited to, research & development organizations and academic institutes.
- e) PIURN will make the best effort to join other research networks.
- f) The Director of PIURN could be seconded to the position by the host institution on a part-time basis.



3.3 Possible PIURN Actions and Initiatives

The PIURN goals could be achieved with the following proposed actions and initiatives.

3.3.1 Collation and Provision of Essential Data

Essential data include:

- research needs of the Pacific region;
- available research resources in the Pacific region
- member university's capacity to conduct research;
- research funding opportunities;
- postgraduate courses and programs of each member university;
- institutional data required for collaborative grant applications.

3.3.2 PIURN Annual Conference

PIURN will hold annual conferences as a means to pursue collaborative research activities between member universities.

3.3.3 Training Courses, Seminars and Workshops

PIURN will facilitate training, conferences, seminars and workshops on research-related activities such as the reinforcement of the quality of PhD training and identification of areas for enhanced collaboration between PIURN members.

3.3.4 Others

- Storing research-related policy documentation and resources (such as postgraduate policies of each member universities, ethics-related policies, research permits requirements of Pacific island countries);
- Sharing standards, policies and information about academic programs;
- Foster students and staff exchanges;
- Mapping institutional strengths;
- Protecting intellectual properties;
- Awarding excellence in research.

4 Operational Plan

4.1 Initial PIURN Initiatives

Some activities that PIURN could immediately embark on with minimal resources include:

- Collation and provision of essential data : mapping of PIURN member respective research activities, identification of areas for enhanced collaboration;
- Setting up incentives to foster collaborative research (such as a yearly research calls)
- Organize training courses, seminars and workshops;
- Reward quality research amongst PIURN members;

4.2 Host University for Secretariat

The university hosting the PIURN Secretariat will need to provide operational services on as needs basis. By negotiation, some services will be in-kind and some on a fee-for-services basis.

4.3 Accommodation

Within the first 3-years of its operation, PIURN will be located at the Research Office of the University of the South Pacific and will use the facilities within the Research Office for its daily operations.

4.4 Human Resources

4.4.1 Director

This position will have the primary responsibility of managing PIURN and determining PIURN priorities and ongoing direction/sustainability.

4.4.2 Secretariat Staff

Staff will be required to help in research, data collection, analysis and management. Any staff approval will be within the agreed budget.

4.5 Project Management

PIURN will coordinate inter-university proposals which normally involve at least three member universities. For successful projects, PIURN will normally charge a management fee of 5% of the total project costs. This fee is exclusive of any overheads charged by the participating universities.

5 Financial Plan

A financial plan will be prepared consistent with the number of universities joining the network, their financial contributions and that of other stakeholders and partners.

Universities joining PIURN will be required to pay a non-refundable joining fee in their first year and a membership fee thereafter. The joining fee will be pro-rated consistent with the audited expenditure of universities in the categories to be decided by the initial members of the network.

The joining fee will be used as an establishment fund for the network in the first year.

The annual membership fee will be decided by the initial member universities to be reviewed annually by the Board.

6 Risk Analysis

A risk management plan will be prepared on establishment of the network.

7 Constitution

A constitution will be prepared on in principle agreement of **at least six universities** to establish the network.

