

## Esther Batiri Williams, Fiji

### Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific

**On balancing her professional and private lives:** “I think, like many married women working full-time with families, you have to expect a lot of support from your family. My husband fully supported my work. In the early days when I had to travel the Pacific for my job, while my children were young, I used to take them with me. I didn’t leave them behind. It was difficult but I managed. I think women need to have a supportive husband and family, so I’ve been very fortunate in that way.”

**On having a support network:** “For women trying to get to top positions in management apart from passion, determination, high ethical standards and working hard, you also need strong support from your family, and from your management team around you. What really has made me progress in my career has largely been the support and encouragement from my family. They know I’m passionate about everything I do.”

**On the importance of passion:** “I have passion for anything I do. You will see it in all the work I’ve been doing – in education, improving the livelihoods of students, gender, politics and sport in particular rugby. I think it’s largely the passion and determination that drive me on in everything I do, to be involved and to get things to move to change for the better.”

**Lessons:** “You must recognise the environment that you are working in and how you need to navigate and manoeuvre your way forward. You must understand the political environment in which you operate. Always work hard for and with the young people coming in. Work hard and be determined to achieve the vision and the plans you have set for yourself.”

“You must always have a vision. You must always know what you want and have plans and targets to achieve the vision. You must own the change that you want to see and you must be committed. You must be determined. The value of being compassionate is also very critical.”

“You must always try and continue to learn. I did my PhD when I was 40 at the University of Queensland. There is no end to learning and that’s one thing I tell all people especially the young – continue learning, continue participating in community work and continue to share a vision of a better world that you want to see. At the boarding school I went to the motto was ‘leave the world a better place than when you found it’.”

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