

Architecture students work on Goroka town plan

THIRTEEN final year Architecture students from Unitech recently travelled up to Goroka to look at and work on the urban development plans of the town as part of their Urban Design class.

The idea to have students work on the town development of Goroka was inspired by an earlier conversation between the Governor of Eastern Highlands Province Hon Malcolm Smith, who is a self-proclaimed 'frustrated architect' and architect and lecturer at the Architecture and Building Department Molly Felde. They had both discussed ideas on the town's development, and Ms Felde thought this would be an excellent opportunity to involve students in collaborative work with relevant authorities responsible for administering the township. More importantly, Ms Felde said this would enable students' exposure to real life experiences with a real client and the town would get 13 fresh minds and many great ideas for the town's future development.

As a result the students, accompanied by Ms Felde were hosted by the Governor for three days from April 2 - 4. They were greeted by Mr Smith on arrival at the Pacific Gardens Hotel. Over lunch he told the students his ideas about the town's development, and then he personally gave them a guided tour on the Unitech bus to show them the town and areas he would like to see developed.

Students listened intently to him and at the end had an opportunity to ask the Governor some insightful questions about his visions.

The rest of the weekend was devoted to studying and documenting various areas of Goroka, which was delivered in a presentation to the Governor and the Provincial Administrator Munare Uyassi on Sunday.

Both were impressed with their presentation and work considering that it was done in such a short time.

"What I brought you here was for lateral thinking, it's not Mal Smith's town, it's not the PA's town, it's the people's town therefore we want lateral thinking on how to do things."

Mr Smith encouraged them to always get the basics right when it comes to planning and development.

"Today is just thinking, today is just ideas, today is just listening to each other, but if Molly agrees that we can take this to the next step, that you would like to



Above: Genokila Pala and Nau Kapa working on a sketch of the town development plan. Below: (left) Mr Smith showing students around town, and on the right is Noran Torosa during the presentation.

help me out I'm gonna need a town architect. I'm more than happy to have you here," he said.

Mr Uyassi said he was a bit apprehensive at first about having students work on urban planning of the town "but now you have presented these ideas and now it's very refreshing to see that you can do this, we appreciate what you have come up with."

Ms Felde said she was so impressed with the students' dedication and hard work put into the project.

"They showed initiative, organization, maturity and thoughtfulness in their decision making process and presentation. They weren't afraid to take a few chances even if their ideas didn't align precisely with what the Governor had talked about."

She said one of the important things as a designer is learning to question the assumptions which are given by the client, something and this they did successfully.

Meanwhile the students said it was good to present in a different environment, away from the studio and also to present to someone other than their lecturer.

They also took pictures, videos and notes during their walks around town, so that they could bring their observations back to Lae in order to continue the development of their ideas at Unitech. They also had an opportunity to visit the University of Goroka's library, auditorium and the JK McCarthy Museum to see the architecture of these buildings.

Families of two of the students Reginald Ope and Matthew Mieh who reside in the township hosted dinners for the students as well.

Both Ms Felde and the students would like to thank everyone who made this trip possible, especially the Governor Malcolm Smith, The Pacific Garden Hotel, The Department of Architecture and Building and the Ope and Mieh families.

