

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: PAUL TEDDY IMATANA

Your Starting Point Doesn't Define Your Future

Q1. Please introduce yourself—your full name, current position at IBUniversity, and the scope of your work.

Paul: My name is Paul Teddy Imatana, and I am the Team Leader, SCU Admissions. I am an experienced higher education professional with expertise spanning the complete student lifecycle, including strategic admissions management, enrollment compliance, student orientation, and student support services. In my role, I oversee admissions operations and support the successful delivery of academic pathways through the partnership between Southern Cross University (SCU) and IBUniversity. I lead admissions processes, ensure compliance with institutional policies and regulatory requirements, and work to provide seamless student experience from application through enrolment. I am committed to maintaining high standards of service, operational excellence, and student success.

Q2. How would you describe yourself beyond your job title? What motivates you personally and professionally?

Paul: Beyond my job title, I am someone who is passionate about helping students achieve their educational goals and reach their full potential. Professionally, it is the students I work with who have made me who I am today. Seeing them overcome challenges, succeed in their studies, and achieve their aspirations motivates me to continuously improve and make a positive impact in their academic journey. Personally, my motivation comes from my own journey. Growing up in Misima Island in Milne Bay Province and seeing how far I have come has taught me the value of perseverance, hard work, and determination. One of my proudest achievements is being the first sibling in my immediate family to attend university, an experience that showed me the transformative power of education. My journey has inspired me to keep striving for excellence and to encourage others to pursue opportunities that can change their lives. I am motivated by the belief that education opens doors, empowers individuals, and creates positive change within families and communities.

Q3. What is one thing about your journey that you are most proud of?

Paul: One of the achievements I am most proud of in my journey is being awarded the Academic Excellence Award from Southern Cross University. This recognition reflected the hard work, dedication, and commitment I invested in my studies. Receiving this award was a significant milestone, demonstrating what can be achieved through perseverance, determination, and a strong commitment to personal and academic growth. It remains a source of inspiration for me and motivates me to continue striving for excellence, both personally and professionally.

Q4. You started your journey with IBS College of TVET as a Certificate 4 student. What programme did you study, and what motivated you to pursue it at the time? But prior to that, you can give a little background about your high school and other path you took before coming to IBS?

Paul: I attended Bwagaioa Primary School on Misima Island and was later selected to attend Misima High School (now Misima Secondary School) in 2014. I successfully completed Grades 9 and 10 at Misima High School. In 2016, I was selected to continue my secondary education at Holy Name Secondary School (Dogura). However, due to personal reasons, I transferred to Wesley Agro Secondary School in Salamo, where I completed Grades 11 and 12 and graduated in 2017. After completing secondary school, I was not selected for my preferred further education program. As a result, my father sent me to Port Moresby, where I attended a four-month short course at Mapex Training Institute, which I completed in 2018. After the course, I returned home to Misima Island and later came back to Port Moresby in 2019. At that time, I was neither employed nor studying. I accompanied my niece to IBS College of TVET, and during that visit, I decided to apply for admission. I enrolled in Certificate IV in Human Resource Management (HRM). My interest in Human Resource Management was greatly influenced by my aunt, Tusy Paulisbo, who is an HR professional. Her career inspired me to pursue studies in HR. I successfully completed my studies in 2020. During that period, the COVID-19 pandemic affected normal learning activities, and many of our classes were cancelled or disrupted.

Q5. Looking back at yourself as a Certificate 4 student, what were your dreams and ambitions then?

Paul: Looking back at myself as a Certificate IV in Human Resource Management student, my dream was to become a successful HR professional who could support and develop people in the workplace. Inspired by my aunt, Tusy Paulisbo, who works in HR, I was motivated to gain the knowledge and skills to build a meaningful career in Human Resources. My ambition was to complete my studies successfully, secure employment, support my family, and continue learning so that I could grow professionally and make a positive contribution to organisations and my community.

Q6. How did your journey progress from being a student at IBS College of TVET to becoming part of the IBSUniversity team?

Paul Teddy Imatana: My journey from being a student at IBS College of TVET to becoming part of the IBSUniversity team was both unexpected and rewarding. After completing my Certificate IV in Human Resource Management in 2020, I remained focused on building my career and gaining experience. In 2022, I was given the opportunity to join IBSUniversity as a Library Assistant, my first permanent role. Through hard work, dedication, and a willingness to learn, I progressed to Enrolments Officer in 2023, SCU Program Coordinator in 2024, and eventually became the first SCU Admissions Team Leader in 2025. I am truly

grateful to the Founder of IBSUniversity, Sir Mick Nades, for giving me the opportunity to begin my professional career.

Q7. What did your time as a staff at IBSUniversity teach you, about yourself, discipline and working with others?

Paul: My time at IBSUniversity has taught me the importance of discipline, professionalism, responsibility, and working effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Over the past four years, I have developed confidence in my abilities, improved my communication skills, and learned how to collaborate with colleagues and students to achieve common goals. These experiences has shown me that perseverance, commitment, and continuous learning can lead to meaningful career growth.

Q8. At what point did you realise that you wanted to continue your education and pursue a degree?

Paul: I realized that I wanted to continue my education and pursue a degree when I moved into the Student Services department at IBSUniversity. Working closely with students and seeing the positive impact that higher education had on their lives inspired me to further my own studies. The experience boosted my confidence and motivated me to apply for a degree program. At first, I was uncertain about balancing work and study, but I decided to trust myself and give it a try. As I progressed, I discovered that I could successfully manage both responsibilities, which strengthened my determination to continue my education and work towards achieving my long-term career goals. This year is my final year of study under the Southern Cross University - Bachelor of Business Major in Entrepreneurship and Management.

Q9. You are now Team Leader – SCU Admissions at IBSUniversity. What does your role involve, and what do you enjoy most about your work?

Paul: As Team Leader for SCU Admissions, I am responsible for overseeing the admissions process, supporting prospective students, guiding my team, and ensuring that applications are processed efficiently and accurately. I work closely with students from different backgrounds, helping them understand their study options and assisting them throughout their enrolment journey. What I enjoy most about my work is helping students take the first step toward achieving their educational goals and seeing the positive impact that higher education can have on their lives.

Q10. What have been some of the biggest challenges you have faced in your professional journey, and how did you overcome them?

Paul: One of the biggest challenges I faced in my professional journey was balancing my work responsibilities while continuing my education and professional development.

Adjusting to new roles and increased responsibilities required me to step outside my comfort zone, adapt quickly, and continuously learn new skills. I overcame these challenges through hard work, self-discipline, effective time management, and a positive attitude. I remained focused on my goals, sought guidance from experienced colleagues and leaders, and embraced every opportunity to learn and grow. I am especially thankful to my Manager, Winnie Wenzel, and the SCU Programs Manager, Rahpalea Sigamata, for their unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement during my transition into the roles of SCU Program Coordinator and later SCU Admissions Team Leader. Their mentorship played a significant role in helping me build confidence, develop professionally, and succeed in my leadership journey.

Q11. How has working in admissions and interacting with students influenced your own educational journey?

Paul: Working in admissions and interacting with students has had a significant influence on my own educational journey. Every day, I meet students who are determined to improve their lives through education, and their commitment inspires me to continue learning and developing myself. Supporting students through the admissions process has reinforced the value of higher education and motivated me to pursue further studies. It has also helped me better understand the challenges students face, as each year I hear different stories about their personal, academic, financial, and family struggles. Listening to their experiences has given me a deeper appreciation for the sacrifices many students make to pursue their education and achieve their goals. These interactions have strengthened my desire to contribute positively to their academic success and support them throughout their educational journey.

Q12. What leadership lessons have you learned through your experience at IBSUniversity?

Paul: Through my experience at IBSUniversity, I have learned that effective leadership is built on integrity, communication, teamwork, and leading by example. A good leader supports and motivates their team, listens to different perspectives, and creates an environment where everyone can succeed. I have also learned the importance of accountability, adaptability, and continuous learning. As a Team Leader, I strive to encourage collaboration, uphold high professional standards, and help others grow as we work together to achieve our shared goals.

Q13. You recently received the High Achieving GPA / Academic Excellence Award from Southern Cross University for the Bachelor of Business Major in Entrepreneurship and Management. What did receiving this recognition mean to you personally?

Paul: Receiving the High Achieving GPA / Academic Excellence Award from Southern Cross University was a very special and meaningful achievement for me. It represented the rewards of years of sacrifice, perseverance, and hard work through challenging times. Balancing full-time work and study was not always easy, and I often had to make personal sacrifices to stay focused on my academic goals. What made this award even more meaningful was that, throughout my earlier years of schooling, I considered myself an average student. I never imagined that one day I would receive an Academic Excellence Award from a university. Receiving this recognition showed me that success is not determined by where you start, but by your commitment, determination, and willingness to keep improving. This award has given me confidence in my abilities.

Q14. What was your reaction when you found out that you will receive this award?

Paul Teddy Imatana: When I found out that I would receive this award, I was surprised, speechless, and incredibly grateful. It was a moment I will never forget because, deep down, I had always told myself that one day I would achieve something like this through hard work and determination. Receiving the award was emotional for me, as it reflected the effort, sacrifices, and commitment I had invested in both my studies and career.

Q15. What do you believe contributed most to your academic success at Southern Cross University?

Paul: I believe my academic success at Southern Cross University was made possible through hard work, determination, and the strong support I received from IBSUniversity. I am grateful to IBSUniversity for allowing me to study while working and for supporting my tuition, which helped me stay focused on achieving my academic goals. Their support and encouragement played a significant role in my success. Above all, I give thanks to God for guiding me through every challenge and blessing me with the strength to persevere. As stated in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This verse inspired me throughout my academic journey and reminded me to remain faithful, focused, and resilient even during difficult times.

Q16. How did you balance your professional responsibilities at IBSUniversity with your studies?

Paul Teddy Imatana: Balancing my professional responsibilities at IBSUniversity with my studies required careful planning, discipline, and effective time management. I created study schedules, prioritised important tasks, and made the most of my time outside work hours to complete assignments and prepare for assessments. There were times when managing both responsibilities was challenging, but staying organised and focused on my goals helped me maintain a balance. The support of my managers and colleagues also enabled me to successfully manage my work commitments while pursuing my academic aspirations.

Q17. Were there moments when you felt like giving up or slowing down? What kept you going?

Paul Teddy Imatana: Yes, there were moments when I felt overwhelmed and considered slowing down due to the demands of work, study, and personal commitments. However, I reminded myself of why I started and the goals I wanted to achieve for my future and my family. The encouragement of my family, colleagues, managers, and mentors kept me motivated during difficult times. I was also inspired by the students I worked with every day, many of whom faced significant challenges yet remained committed to their education. Their determination encouraged me to keep pushing forward.

Q18. You experienced the loss of your father only about a month before receiving your academic recognition. If you are comfortable sharing, how did his passing affect you during that period?

Paul: Yes, receiving the award was a very emotional moment for me because I received the news of the High Achieving GPA / Academic Excellence Award on the same day my father passed away, 7th July. It was one of the most difficult days of my life, as I was experiencing both a significant achievement and a great personal loss at the same time. My father was someone who always believed in me, encouraged me to pursue my education, and pushed me to keep moving forward no matter what the challenges. When I received the award, my first thought was of him. I wished he could have been there to celebrate the achievement with me. Although he was no longer physically present, I felt the award reflected his support, sacrifices, and belief in my potential. It was a bittersweet moment that I will always remember.

Q19. What values or lessons from your father that continues to influence the person you are today?

Paul: My father meant everything to me. He was my biggest supporter, mentor, and source of encouragement. He taught me the importance of hard work, respect, humility, perseverance, and never giving up on my dreams regardless of the challenges I faced. His belief in me gave me confidence, and the values he instilled in me continue to guide both my personal and professional life today.

Q20. During one of the most difficult periods of your life, you still continued working and pursuing your studies. What gave you the strength to keep moving forward?

Paul : The strength to keep moving forward came from my faith in God, the support of my family, friends, and colleagues, and my desire to honor my father's sacrifices. Term 2 of my study was one of the hardest periods of my life. My father became seriously ill, and I was the emergency contact responsible for him at Pacific International Hospital, spending many days and nights at the hospital and even outside in the car park while balancing work and

study commitments. It was an emotionally challenging time, and there were moments when I felt overwhelmed. However, I knew my father wanted to see me succeed, and that motivated me to keep going despite the pain. My studies and work gave me purpose during that difficult period, and I constantly reminded myself that giving up was not an option. Above all, my faith sustained me. Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," became a source of encouragement and strength throughout my journey.

Q21. When you received the award, did you have a particular thought, memory or feeling about your father?

Paul: Yes. When I received the award, my first thought was of my father. I wished he had been there to witness that special moment because he had always supported my education and believed in my potential. Although he was no longer physically present, I felt that this achievement was also for him. I remembered his encouragement, sacrifices, and the confidence he had in me when I sometimes doubted myself.

Q22. If you could sit down with your father today and tell him about receiving this award, what would you say to him?

Paul: If I could sit down with my father today, I would tell him, "Dad, thank you for always believing in me, even when I doubted myself. Your support, sacrifices, and encouragement helped shape the person I am today. I am proud to share that I received the High-Achieving GPA/Academic Excellence Award. This achievement belongs not only to me but also to you because you were one of the people who pushed me forward and never stopped believing in my potential. I wish you were here to celebrate this moment with me, but I hope I have made you proud."

Q23. Your journey has taken you from Certificate 4 student → professional employment → Team Leader → university student → academic excellence award recipient. How would you describe this journey in your own words?

Paul: My journey has been one of faith, perseverance, and growth. From being a Certificate 4 student to becoming a Team Leader and receiving an Academic Excellence Award, I have learned that hard work, determination, and self-belief can open many doors.

Q24. What does your story say about the importance of continuing to learn and investing in yourself?

Paul: My story shows that learning never stops. Investing in yourself through education and personal development creates new opportunities and helps you achieve goals that may once have seemed impossible.

Q25. What advice would you give to an IBS College of TVET student who may think that a Certificate 4 is where their educational journey ends?

Paul: A Certificate 4 is not the end of your educational journey. It is a foundation for greater opportunities. Keep learning, aim higher, and do not be afraid to pursue further studies if you have the chance.

Q26. What would you say to students who are struggling academically or personally but still have dreams of completing their studies?

Paul: Do not give up on your dreams. Challenges and setbacks are part of the journey, but they do not define your future. Stay focused, seek support when needed, and keep moving forward one step at a time.

Q27. How important is perseverance when pursuing education and career goals?

Paul: Perseverance is very important because success does not happen overnight. There will be challenges and difficult times, but staying committed to your goals and continuing to push forward will help you achieve them.

Q28. If you could describe your entire journey in one sentence, what would you say?

Paul: My journey is a testament to faith, perseverance, and continuous learning, proving that with hard work, determination, and God's guidance, an average student can achieve extraordinary things.

Q29. And finally, what is one message you would like to leave with the students of Southern Cross University, IBSUniversity and IBS College of TVET and the general public who may be reading your story?

Paul: Never underestimate your potential or allow your current circumstances to define your future. No matter where you start, continue to invest in your education, believe in yourself, and never give up on your dreams. There will be challenges, setbacks, and moments when you feel like quitting, but perseverance, faith, and hard work will carry you through. My own journey from a Certificate 4 student to a Team Leader and recipient of an Academic Excellence Award shows that success is possible for anyone who is willing to keep learning, stay focused, and trust the process. As Philippians 4:13 reminds me, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."