

## Secretary's Report

### Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) 2020-2021 Year

#### **Executive Summary:**

CUFSAA-NA Executive committee was led by Dr. Chandana Goonetilleke during this term as its President.

The third Tamasha get together planned to be held in Toronto, Canada, was cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore it was decided to have the Annual General Meeting virtually this year on October 30, 2021.

The following activities were accomplished or are being continued:

#### **Instrument/Equipment donations**

1. Covid Relief Project in collaboration with the Faculty of Science - CUFSAA-NA, as of now, has donated nearly US \$ 150,000 dollars to purchase urgent life-saving medical equipment to hospitals around Sri Lanka. (raised: \$143,294.61, Disbursed: \$146,089.18\*)
2. Remote Learning Project, Two (2) more laptops were donated to the needy students affected by Covid-19 lockdown difficulties (raised: \$12,902.85, Disbursed in 2020: \$10,456.48\*)
3. Ten bright field light microscopes (Olympus CX23) and one dissection microscope (Olympus XZX7) to the Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences (raised: \$ \$13,317.28 including LKR. 640,000.00 in Sri Lanka, disbursed : \$11,791.81).
4. Two high performance Computers for Bioinformatics Special Degree Program of the Department of Plant Sciences. (Raised: \$2613.51, disbursed: \$4529.07)

#### **Gold Medals and Scholarships**

1. Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medal/Memorial Scholarship  
The first gold medal and a cash award of LKR. 25,000 were awarded at the 2019 convocation (\$3157.77). From next year onwards, two gold medals will be awarded with no cash award. Faculty Board approval was received recently to award two memorial scholarships, LKR. 5,000/month each, in addition to the gold medal mentioned earlier. The two scholarships will be awarded starting from 2022 annually. (raised: \$13,032.67, committed for 2021: \$9,052.36\*).
2. Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne Gold Medal and Scholarship facilitated by CUFSAA-NA  
A group of former students, friends and well-wishers have raised funds to honor Prof. L.M.V. Tillekeratne's service to the Department of Chemistry and the Faculty of Science with a Gold Medal and an Honorary Scholarship, LKR 5,000/month. This was approved at the August 2021 Faculty Board Meeting. The Gold Medal and the Scholarship will be awarded starting from 2022 academic year. (Funds raised: \$8,030.80)\*.

\*Ongoing projects

CUFSAA-NA Executive Committee acknowledges the support of many alumni and well-wishers who have contributed to these programs and making them a success. Additional details for each of these activities can be found on our website, <https://www.cufsaa.com/>

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## Detailed Report

The goal of this report is to outline the activities of the Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) completed during 2020-2021 and the future vision and aspirations of the association going forward.

The new 25-member Executive Committee was appointed at the second AGM on May 26, 2018 for the term 2018-2020. Dr. Chandana Goonetilleke, was elected as the President of the Association. Due to COVID-19 situation, the executive committee approved extension of the current committee for one more year to continue association activities without any disruptions. The executive committee continued with holding monthly Skype/Zoom meetings typically on the first Monday of each month at 9.00 pm Eastern Time to discuss ongoing and future activities as well as the current budget.

The association's online presence through its website ([www.cufsa.org](http://www.cufsa.org) OR [www.cufsa.com](http://www.cufsa.com)) and social media account (<https://www.facebook.com/CUFSAA/>) is being used for promoting fundraising activities, informing the membership of the association's achievements and ongoing projects, releasing regular newsletters, as well as to attract new members from all over North America under one umbrella.

At the end of the 2020-2021 term, we were able to accomplish the following achievements.

### **Membership**

As of end of September, 2021, we have 532 members. We are encouraging past students, academic staff members, and specifically junior alumni of the University of Colombo Science Faculty to join the association to support our mission by completing the online membership application posted on the website, <https://www.cufsa.com/membership-form/>

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising continues to be a vital component for CUFSAA-NA to ensure that we can initiate and support many projects, in line with our mission statement. CUFSAA-NA would like to thank all for your continued support in our efforts over the past years.

Our major fundraising events/projects of the 2020-2021 year involved the following.

## **PROJECTS and OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

### **Covid Relief Project**

We at CUFSAA-NA express our profound gratitude for your contributions to stifle the impact of the COVID menace in Sri Lanka. Thanks to your extraordinary generosity, CUFSAA-NA, as of now, has donated nearly US \$ 150,000 dollars to purchase urgent life-saving medical equipment to hospitals around Sri Lanka. These equipment includes Ventilators, Portable ventilators, High flow oxygen machines, Portable ultrasound scanners, Muti para monitors, Aspirators, ECG machines, Pulse oximeters, Laryngoscopes, Bronchoscopes, Cardiac defibrillators, Digital blood pressure machines and Syringe pumps. The hospitals benefited from these equipment included Colombo National Hospital, Lady Ridgeway Hospital, Marara, Dambadeniya, Kantale, Rathnapura, Laggala, Wathupitiwala, Biyagama, Chilaw, Welikanda, Badulla and Karawanella,

You were and still are responsible for saving so many lives and protecting the dreams and aspirations of families both rural and urban. We are also grateful to our alumni, Dr. Asoka Ramanayake for coordinating all these donations from Sri Lanka and to the Faculty of Science for the collaboration

Still there are many requests for urgent medical equipment. We continue to help raise funds to buy some targeted equipment in urgent need

### **Remote Learning Project**

This fund was established to support the remote learning project during COVID-19 pandemic. The project continued throughout 2021. In addition to previously donated Twelve (12) new HP ProBook 450 G7 Notebooks with i5/i7 and 8GB RAM computers and six (6) refurbished laptop computers, two additional new laptop computers were purchased from the funds raised by CUFSAA-NA and donated to two freshman students attached to the Zoology and Environmental Sciences Department. We are currently working on a request for five (5) more computers received from the Faculty of Science.

### **Microscope Project for the Department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences**

CUFSAA was able to successfully complete the microscopes project for the department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences of the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo. This was possible due to the generosity of a number of alumni, who helped to raise the \$15,000 USD (including LKR 640,000.00 in Sri Lanka) required to purchase the microscopes within a couple of weeks. Accordingly, ten (10) bright field light microscopes (Olympus CX23) and one (1) dissection microscope (Olympus SZX7) were directly purchased from Delmege Forsyth Company Limited and handed over to the department of Zoology and Environmental Science on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 during a simple and moving ceremony graced by the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Chandrika Wijeratne, in the presence of the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Upul Sonnadara, Head of the department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences, Professor Deepthi Wicremasinghe, Heads of Departments, members of the academic staff and students. CUFSAA was represented by Dr. Binodh de Silva and Professor Preethi Guneratne's sister, Ms. Aruni Fernando. You can watch the event in the facebook link of FOS Media at <https://www.facebook.com/fosmedia/videos/660874308045432/>. Photographs related to the event are available on the CUFSAA website "cufsa.com".

### **High Performance Computers for Bioinformatics Special Degree Program of the Department of Plant Sciences**

CUFSAA-NA was able to successfully complete the project proposal received from Prof. Chandrika Nanayakkara of the Department of Plant Sciences to fund two high performance computers for the bioinformatics special degree program. The handing over ceremony of the two high performance computers to the plant science department was held on the centenary celebrations' day of the University, January 21, 2021 with the presence of the Dean Faculty of Science Prof. Upul Sonnadara, former Dean Prof. Ranjith Mahanama, Head Department of Plant Sciences Prof. Chandrika Nanayakkara, other members of the Department of Plant Sciences. The Department of Plant Sciences introduced the special degree program in Bioinformatics in 2006 and with the growing demand in bioinformatics worldwide, this program allows a selected group of students in the department an opportunity to learn to integrate biology with computer science through instructions and research. The department was not equipped with more sophisticated and efficient computer infrastructure required to do the necessary training of the undergraduate students. The total project cost was **\$4529.07** and we at CUFSAA would like to express our appreciation to all donors for making this project a reality.

### **Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medals/Memorial Scholarships**

Professor Valentine Joseph (27 January 1929 – 15 March 2017) was a prominent mathematician, noted for his excellent contributions to teaching at the University of Colombo. In 1949, he entered the University of Ceylon (Colombo Campus) to study mathematics and graduated with a first class degree and continued teaching for 42 years until his retirement in 1994. CUFSAA-NA decided to honor him with the

provision of two scholarships (LKR 5,000 each per month) to two final year special degree students in mathematics/applied mathematics, taking both academic achievements and economic needs into consideration and two gold medals in his name. The first gold medal and a cash award of LKR. 25,000 were awarded at the 2019 convocation (\$3157.77) to Mr. K.H.A.Praveen Niranda, a Mathematics Special degree student of the Faculty of Science. From next year onwards, two gold medals will be awarded with no cash award. The Faculty Board approval was received in August, 2021 to award two scholarships, LKR. 5,000/month each, in addition to the gold medal mentioned earlier. The two scholarships will be awarded starting from 2022 annually. CUFSA-NA thanks everyone who have made generous contributions to raise funds to establish these gold medals and scholarships (raised: 12,432.67)

### **Facilitation of Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne Gold Medal and Honorary Scholarship**

A group of former students, friends and well-wishers of Prof. L.M.V. Tillekeratne has raised funds (\$6,730.80) to establish a gold medal and a honorary scholarship for any second year student following BSc degree in either bioscience or physical science to recognize Prof. Tillekeratne's service to the department and the Faculty for many decades.

We have been informed by Prof. Nalin de Silva (Head, Chemistry Department) and Prof. Upul Sonnadara (Dean, Science) that the Faculty Board has approved this project at their August, 2021 Meeting. We are waiting for the details of the financial commitment and the management style of both the awards through the Senior Assistant Registrar office. The gold medal and the scholarship will be awarded starting from 2022 annually.

### **CUFSAA-NA Student Assistant Account (The Benevolent Fund)**

The Emergency Fund to help UoC Science Faculty Students was initially started in 2016 to help students affected by the unexpected flooding. This effort was strengthened by establishing an official Emergency fund to support Science Faculty students who are in need of help under emergency situations.

An amount up to Rs. 25,000 per student can be disbursed from this account as the need arises (without prior consultation with CUFSA-NA). Financial assistance must be related to student's educational needs either for undergraduate education assistance or for the higher education assistance. This fund was recently renamed as the Benevolent Fund. Current balance is \$1056.55

### **Mentoring Program**

CUFSAA-NA created this program to provide guidance and advice to Sri Lankan graduates who are interested in higher education in United States and Canada as well as students who have recently graduated from United States and Canada and looking for employment opportunities. Many students were supported during 2020-2021 year through our volunteer services. Other resources provided under this program, included presentations by CUFSA members.

### **Take a Book Program**

Take a Book Program is another successful project launched by CUFSA-NA through the generosity of our members. This program has supplied numerous textbooks to the Faculty of Science. Under this program, CUFSA-NA members who are visiting Sri Lanka for vacations take a book with them and hand over to the Dean of the Faculty of Science.

### **Future Vision**

Our future vision is to expand the activities and accept new challenges for the benefit of our Alma Mater.

To continue the growth of the association and the mission, we encourage all alumni to join CUFSA-NA and get involved with its activities.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the membership for their contributions to achieve our goals to help our Alma Mater.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Chandrasiri Jayakody and Dr. Randara Pulukkody  
Joint Secretaries/CUFSAA-NA