

# Secretary's Report

## Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) 2022-2023 Year

### Executive Summary

CUFSAA-NA Executive Committee was led by Dr. Vicumpriya Perera during this reporting period as its President who was elected at the Annual General Meeting held virtually on October 30, 2021. The current Executive Committee members of the Association are Ashan Ariyawansa, Binodh De Silva, Saliya De Silva, Sachith Dissanayake, Harshica Fernando – Joint Secretary, Reshan Fernando – President-Elect, Wasundara Fernando – Joint Secretary, L.C. Goonetilleke – Immediate Past President, Pujitha Gunaratne, Angelo Gunasekera, Chandrasiri Jayakody – Vice President, Neranjake Jayarathne, Sumedha Jayasena – Vice President, Sandya Liyanarachchi – Assistant Treasurer, Lalith Perera – Treasurer, Vicumpriya Perera – President, Unil Perera, Asoka Pinnaduwage, Kirthi Premadasa – Vice President, Oshadha K. Ranasingha, Nalin Samarasinha, L.M.V. Tillekeratne – Founder President, Gajaka Weerasinghe, Tharanga Wijetunge, and Jeeva Witanachchi.

*The following activities were accomplished, started, or are being continued during the reporting period of October 01, 2022, to July 31, 2023.*

### **Instrument/Equipment donations**

#### **01. Medical Supplies Project<sup>#</sup>**

This project was started in April 2022 to support medical supplies donations to Sri Lanka in obtaining critically needed medication and medical equipment. *[April 2022 – May 31, 2023]*

#### **02. Oscilloscopes project to the Department of Nuclear Science<sup>#</sup>**

At the request of the Head of the Nuclear Science Department - UOC, CUFSAA purchased and donated two oscilloscopes. *[September 2022 – November 2022]*

#### **03. Remote Learning Project<sup>#</sup>**

CUFSAA purchased and delivered 15 new Laptops and 06 refurbished laptops for student use at the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo. *[May 2020 – October 2022]*

#### **04. Donation of E-books to the Faculty of Science Library via Science Direct<sup>#</sup>**

With unanimous support from the executive committee, CUFSAA paid for the invoice (USD 4,376.00) directly to ELSEVIER to implement an e-book subscription service through ELSEVIER to bring the library and information services to the current standards and expand student access to textbooks. *[September 2022 – October 2022]*

#### **05. CUFSAA-NA Distinguished Speaker Series<sup>\*</sup>**

CUFSAA Distinguished Speaker Series is organized by the Speaker Series subcommittee of CUFSAA-NA in association with the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo. The inaugural Talk of the Distinguished Speaker Series was delivered by Dr. Nalin Samarasinha on April 22, 2022. Since then, the series has organized 7 seminars including a panel discussion on the graduate studies application process. Please visit <http://www.cufsaa.com/speaker-series/> for additional information. *[April 2022 – Current]*

#### **06. Equipment Donation to the Department of Chemistry#**

CUFSAA-NA's latest project, the donation of a container full of scientific equipment to the Department of Chemistry, is now completed. The ship, containing a 20-ft container of donated items shipped out on June 15, 2023, docked at the Colombo Port on Aug 3rd, 2023. If purchased directly, it would have cost over Rs. 20 million. The shipment was cleared with a full tax waiver with the approvals from the Department, Faculty, Vice Chancellor, UGC, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Customs and will arrive at the department on Tuesday, Aug 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This donation was made possible by CUFSAA-NA member, Dr. Anagi Balachandra.

*[November 2022 – August 2023]*

#### **07. STEP UP Student Financial Assistance\***

The STEP UP Program is instituted to support students of the Faculty of Science in need of financial assistance due to personal or financial hardship. The program matches students with donors who are willing to support the student financially. *Each financial assistance commitment is currently set at a minimum of USD35 per month for 12 months. [Started in November 2021]*

#### **08. Physics Equipment Donation Project\***

In the Department of Physics, classic experimental laboratory apparatus have provided essential learning experiences to undergraduates over the years. However, some of the cherished experiments (e.g., Zeeman effect experiment, Determination of e/m ratio, Fabry-Perot interferometer, etc.) are no longer in usable/repairable condition. After receiving a request from the Head of the Department of Physics through the Dean, Science Faculty, CUFSAA decided to accept the request to donate physics equipment. The physics equipment donation subcommittee identified several pieces of equipment to be donated based on the UOC prioritization, considering the usage and the current status of the specific items. *[February 2023 – Current]*

#### **09. Equipment Donation to Technology Faculty#**

We purchased and donated an LCD Digital 7" Square Hotplate Magnetic Stirrer, CY-C SERIES PROFESSIONAL ANALYTICAL Balances, pH 50 VioLab DHS complete kit, and a Water Distiller to the Technology Faculty, University of Colombo. *[April 2023]*

#### **10. Faculty of Science – Centennial Book Project#**

CUFSAA-NA embarked on supporting the printing of the Faculty of Science Century Volume History Book in support of the faculty. CUFSAA-NA will receive a few copies of the Centennial Book to sell to the membership and recover the cost of the project. *[December 2022 – Current]*

#### **11. Synthetic Chemistry Lab Proposal\***

(Cost Basic infrastructure budget – USD75,000 + Equipment Budget – USD100,000) – The project proposal is linked [here](#) and is in the process of evaluation and implementation. As of now, CUFSAA-NA plans are to support this project partially at the Equipment Cost level ONLY. *[December 2022 – Current]*

### **Gold Medals and Scholarships**

#### **12. Professor MLT Kannangara Gold Medal and Memorial Scholarships\***

In memory of Prof. M L T. Kannangara, CUFSAA-NA with approval from the University, established a gold medal named "MLT Kannangara Memorial Gold Medal" to be awarded at the university convocation to the Most Outstanding Physics Special Student with first-class honors. The first award recipient will be selected from the results released from the 2023 graduates. In addition, a scholarship named "Professor MLT Kannangara Memorial Scholarship" for students enrolled in the Special Degree Physics program was also established. Each year, the department will select one student and that student will continue to receive the funding (currently equivalent to USD 35 per month in SLR) for two years, i.e., until graduation. The first of these scholarships were awarded in 2022 and the second scholarship winner is being selected from nine qualified applicants from the new batch started in the Physics Special program in June of 2023.

### **13. 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. 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 annually starting from 2022.

### **14. Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne Gold Medal and Scholarship facilitated by CUFSA-NA\***

A group of friends, well-wishers, and former students have come together and decided to establish a Gold Medal and a scholarship at the Science Faculty, UOC to honor Prof. Tillekeratne, one of the most beloved professors of our time. He is an outstanding teacher, a profound leader, a visionary, and an extraordinary mentor. He has dedicated his whole life to teaching, mentoring and student welfare. Prof. Tillekeratne made a profound impact on our lives when we were students at UOC and even today, after more than three decades, he continues to have a tremendous influence and inspiration for us. As students, we have seen his passion, and it has inspired us to fully engage in our studies and continue to do well even after we left UOC and pursue our postgraduate studies. Furthermore, he continued to provide guidance to many of us throughout our journey, encouraging us to focus on the directions of our careers. Prof. Tillekeratne is an amazing human being and an amazing professor.

### **15. Gold Medal for Special Degree Program in Computational Chemistry#**

The Department of Chemistry (U of C) is of the view that the award of a gold medal for a Special Degree in Computational Chemistry would not only motivate these students but would also assist them in securing positions for postgraduate studies. The Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association of North America (CUFSA-NA), in consultation with the Faculty of Science, has decided to fill this void by sponsoring a gold medal in computational chemistry. The award was named the 'CUFSA Gold Medal for Computational Chemistry' and shall be awarded annually from the academic year 2019/2020 for the best performance with either a First or Second Class (Upper Division) in the honours degree examination in Computational Chemistry. *[January 2020]*

*\*Ongoing projects*

*#Completed projects*

*CUFSA-NA Executive Committee acknowledges the support of many alumni and well-wishers who have contributed to these programs in various ways including monetary contributions to make them a success. Additional details for each of these activities can be found on our website, <https://www.cufsa.com/>*

## Detailed Report

In this report, we outline the activities of the Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) completed or initiated during 2022-2023 as well as our ongoing projects. We articulate the future vision and aspirations of the association during the years ahead.

The 25-member “Third” Executive Committee of the Association was appointed at the third AGM held virtually on October 30, 2021, for the term 2021-2023. Dr. Vicumpriya Perera, was elected as the President of the Association. The executive committee continues to hold its regular monthly meetings via Zoom technology typically on the first Monday of each month at 9.00 pm Eastern Time to discuss the ongoing and future activities and 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 accounts on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/CUFSAA/>) and YouTube Channels (<https://www.youtube.com/@CUFSAA> and <https://www.youtube.com/@CUFSAASpeakerSeries>) are 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 2022-2023 term, we were able to initiate, complete, or continue to proceed forward with the following projects and programs.

### **Membership**

As of the end of July 2023, we have **611** members. We are encouraging past students, academic staff members, and specifically junior alumni of the University of Colombo Science Faculty residing in the USA and Canada 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 of our worthy projects, in line with the Association's mission statement. CUFSAA-NA would like to thank all our members, donors, and well-wishers for your continued support in our efforts over the past seven (07) years.

Our major fundraising events and projects for the reporting term 2022-2023 involved the following activities.

## **PROJECTS and OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

### **1. Medical Supplies Project**

As the Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association in North America (CUFSAA-NA), we are honored to make a significant impact on people's lives in Sri Lanka. Your generosity allowed CUFSAA-NA to donate life-saving medicines and supplies to hospitals in Sri Lanka. Due to the country’s foreign reserves being depleted, the nation’s healthcare system could not afford to import medicine and medical supplies in sufficient quantities. Once again, CUFSAA-NA stepped up to help Sri Lankans when the health care system is nearing collapse.

The Medical Supplies project was started in April 2022, after receiving requests that Sri Lankan hospitals have a critical shortage of life-saving drugs. We received lists of drugs and found that critically needed Cardiac and Oncology medicines were among the most depleted. Also scarce are anti-hypertension drugs, drugs for diabetes patients, antibiotics, and anti-rabies injections.

CUFSAA-NA donated around Rs. 6.4 million worth of medicine and medical supplies to Sri Lanka, approximately equivalent to USD 20,000. Hospitals at Karapitiya, Homagama, Horana, Avissawella, Kurunegala, Rathnapura, Kanthale, Nikaweratiya, Welisara, Gampaha, Kalubowila, Wathupitiwala, Karapitiya, Monaragala, Eachchilampaththu, and the Ministry of Health, Medical Supplies Division were our primary recipients.

Dr. Asoka Ramanayake from Sri Lanka helped coordinate this project for CUFSAA-NA. Her extraordinary effort and dedication helped CUFSAA-NA to deliver medicine quickly to hospitals which may have helped save patients' lives.

CUFSAA-NA also collaborated on a project in a joint venture with "Medical Help Sri Lanka" to donate a total of 5000 triple blood bags to the Sri Lanka Blood Bank. The medical help in Sri Lanka coordinated the effort to get a month's supply of blood bags to be delivered to Sri Lanka with the help of donors from the USA, Canada, and Australia during a dire shortage of blood bags. CUFSAA-NA is extremely grateful to its members and well-wishers for helping save lives.

## **2. Donation of an oscilloscope to the Department of Nuclear Science**

At the request of Head, Nuclear Science Department CUFSAA purchased a Rigol DS1104Z-S Plus 100 MHz Digital Oscilloscope with 4 Channels and 16 Digital Channels + 25 MHz Bandwidth with 2 Signal Source Channels and donated to the Nuclear Science Department. We thank the three CUFSAA members who generously contributed the total cost of this donation plus the shipping cost to send the equipment to Sri Lanka. Along with this oscilloscope, we sent a used oscilloscope donated by Dr. Ranjith Weerasiri to the Nuclear Science Department and a logic analyzer donated by Dr. Upali Jayamaha to the Physics Department. The above expense includes the shipping cost to Sri Lanka for all these equipment.

## **3. Remote Learning Project**

This fund was established to support the remote learning project during COVID-19 pandemic. The project continued throughout 2022. 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. In the 2021-2022 period, we donated five (5) additional laptop computers for the use of students in the Faculty of Science.

## **4. Donation of E-books to the Faculty of Science Library via Science Direct**

The Science Faculty Library of UOC has developed a plan to implement an e-book subscription service through ELSEVIER to bring the library and information services to the current standards and expand the student access to textbooks through their computer. The library has already started working with ELSEVIER to implement the e-book service through ELSEVIER's eBook on the ScienceDirect Platform and selected a list of the most critical books across all scientific disciplines to support the current degree programs. However, due to the current economic situation, the funding to the library has been cut significantly.

After hearing about this tragic situation and receiving a request from the Dean, Faculty of Science, CUFSAA worked with the ELSEVIER on behalf of the Science Library and was able to work out a more favorable cost structure for the e-book subscription service. With unanimous support from the executive committee, CUFSAA has agreed to pay for this service (USD 4,376) directly to ELSEVIER so that the UOC students and staff can access this critical e-book collection as soon as possible. At present, ELSEVIER is working with the Science Library to implement the e-book subscription program. The list of e-books and their prices will be provided for our members to sponsor one or more e-books of their choice. The list includes a total of 29 e-books [consisting of 11 Chemistry books, 5 Mathematics books, 4 Plant science books, 3 Biochemistry books, 2 Physics books, 2 Environmental science books, and 2 Zoology books].

## 5. CUFSAA-NA Distinguished Speaker Series

CUFSAA has initiated several new projects in 2022 and the Distinguished Speaker Series is among the projects that aim to empower the scientific knowledge of the students. Although the seminars are primarily focused on the students and budding researchers in the Faculty of Science University of Colombo, the seminar series is available to the public through the CUFSAA YouTube channel and Facebook page. This project shares the findings of cutting-edge research as well as know-how from experts in various disciplines including guidance on career development.

We have organized six (6) talks delivered by distinguished speakers with the participation of students in the University of Colombo faculty of science and other universities. In addition to the subject-related talks, CUFSAA organized a graduate application guidance Panel discussion to guide undergraduate students with their graduate applications to USA and Canada. More than 280 participants were present for this event.

### Links to Videos

- **Talk 01: Dr. Nalin Samarasinha** – Asteroid Colombounilanka and Contributions to Astronomy by University of Colombo – April 22, 2022:
- **Talk 02: Prof. AP de Silva** – From Chemistry to Medical Diagnostics and Information Processing – July 07, 2022:
- **Talk 03: Dr. Jayeni Hiti-Bandaralage** – A paradise on the iceberg – Entrepreneurship for innovators – August 28, 2022:
- **Talk 04: Dr. David Hoskin** – Iron withdrawal by selective chelators for cancer treatment – September 20, 2022:
- **Talk 05: Dr. Binodh De Silva** – Developing a Career as a Scientist in the Pharmaceutical Industry – November 09, 2022:
- **Talk 06: Athula Alwis** – The Role of InsureTech Startups in the US Commercial Insurance Industry – April 25, 2023:
- **Talk 07: Panelists: Dr. Harshica Fernando, Dr. Arunika Gunawardena, Dr. Amita Manatunga, Dr. Unil Perera, and Dr. Kirthi Premadasa** – Panel Discussion on Graduate Admissions to USA and Canada – July 12, 2023:



The organizing sub-committee would like to thank everyone for attending the seminars and is looking forward for your continuous support. We welcome suggestions and comments on specific topics or speakers. Please reach out to us at [speaker-series@cufsaa.org](mailto:speaker-series@cufsaa.org). For more information visit <http://www.cufsaa.com/speaker-series/>.



## 6. Equipment Donation to the Department of Chemistry

CUFSAA-NA's latest project, the donation of a container full of scientific equipment to the Department of Chemistry, is now completed. The ship, containing a 20-ft container of donated items shipped out on June 15, 2023, docked to the Colombo Port on Aug 3rd, 2023. If purchased directly, it would have cost over Rs. 20 million. The shipment was cleared with a full tax waiver with the approvals from the Department, Faculty, Vice Chancellor, UGC, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Customs and will arrive at the department on Tuesday, Aug 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

This donation was made possible by CUFSAA-NA member, Dr. Anagi Balachandra. She was able to arrange this equipment donation through her employer, Professor Parviz Soroushian, the owner of Metna Inc. These instruments (a total of 79 items), included an ultrasonic digital cell disrupter, a Fisher Scientific Sonic Dismembrator, Orbital Shakers, a Conductivity Meter/w stand & electrodes, Digital Lab Scale



Balances, a Vacuum evacuation cell, power supply units, a digital multimeter, BROOKFIELD DV-III Ultra Programmable Rheometers, viscometers, Electrochemical work station, Beckman Microcentrifuge machine, Adhesion Tester, Contact Angle/Goniometer, OLYMPUS BX41M Light Microscopes, surface area analyzer, ElvaX X-ray Fluorescence Spectrometer, UV Ozone Surface Processor, UV/Ozone generator, Rotary Evaporator, VWR Model Laboratory Vacuum Ovens, furnace, Benchtop Glove box, benchtop fume hood, hardness tester, chromatographic columns and many more.

We take this opportunity to thank Prof. Nalin de Silva, Head of the Department of Chemistry, Prof. Upul Sonnadara, Dean of the Faculty of Science and other faculty members who were involved for their time and effort to get all these approvals in time. Also, many thanks to Dr. Anagi Balachandra, Prof. Parviz Soroushian, Mr. Dhammika Welipitiya, Prof. L.M.V. Tillekeratne, Dr. Damith Thilakarathna, Dr. Chandrasiri Jayakody for getting the items ready for shipping, Mr. Gamini Jayawardena (Science Faculty Alumni), Assistant Director of Customs for his invaluable advice throughout the process, and Mr. Dharshana Perera of DP Distributing Enterprises, LLC for making the shipping arrangements for CUFSAA-NA.

## **7. STEP UP Student Financial Assistance**

As another step towards CUFSAA's deep commitment to the welfare of science students, in 2021 CUFSAA implemented the "Step-Up" program for science students. This is a unique program where CUFSAA matches students in the faculty (recommended by the Dean's office) with sponsors who help the students. CUFSAA expects the sponsor to pay a minimum of USD35 equivalence in Rupees per month for twelve months. However, there is no maximum amount the sponsor can pay to help the students.

Typically sponsors pay once every six months, which makes the transfer process more accessible as well as provides the students with an opportunity to receive a bulk payment which they can use to buy something significant.

Since its inception in 2021, CUFSAA has proudly helped nine students facing severe economic challenges through this program. We keep both the sponsor's and the student's name confidential. CUFSAA is proud to say that every sponsor who has supported the program so far has stepped up within three days of the announcement of the need. This says a lot about the compassionate spirit of our sponsors. Nine families of UoC science students are relieved because of this timely project. By pegging the minimum support at 35 dollars, we are making a significant thrust to help economically struggling students through this program.

Would you like to be a sponsor for the "Step-up" program? Please send an email to [stepup@cufsa.org](mailto:stepup@cufsa.org) (You don't need to be a Science Faculty alumnus to be a sponsor).

## **8. Physics department equipment donation**

Sri Lanka will experience further fiscal policy tightening for the next few years, and as a consequence, the capital expenditures of state institutions (such as universities) are heavily compromised. The Department of Physics at the University of Colombo (UOC) like many other departments, through its earned funds and competitive grants, has so far managed to maintain infrastructure and support recurring expenses. In the Department of Physics, classic experimental laboratory apparatus have provided essential learning experiences to undergraduates over the years. However, some of the cherished experiments (e.g., Zeeman effect experiment, Determination of e/m ratio, Fabry-Perot interferometer, etc.) are no longer in usable/repairable condition. As the replacement cost of the equipment is very high, current economic conditions and fiscal policies do not allow opportunities for the department to purchase this equipment.

After receiving a request from the Head of the Department of Physics through the Dean, Science Faculty, CUFSAA decided to accept the request to donate physics equipment. The physics equipment donation subcommittee identified several pieces of equipment to be donated based on the UOC prioritizations, considering the usage and the current status of the specific items.

## **9. Equipment Donation to Technology Faculty**

CUFSAA purchased and donated an LCD Digital 7" Square Hotplate Magnetic Stirrer, CY-C SERIES PROFESSIONAL ANALYTICAL Balances, pH 50 VioLab DHS complete kit, and a Water Distiller to the Technology Faculty, University of Colombo. The total cost of this equipment purchase was donated in full by an anonymous CUFSAA member. We sincerely thank the donor for their generosity and support!

## **10. Faculty of Science – Centennial Book Project**

CUFSAA-NA embarked on supporting the printing of the Faculty of Science Century Volume History Book in support of the faculty. The cost of printing is estimated at USD6500. CUFSAA-NA will receive a few copies of the Centennial Book to distribute to the membership in lieu of a donation to recover the cost of the project.

## **11. Synthetic Chemistry Lab Proposal**

Designing and synthesizing new molecules is a fundamental aspect of chemical sciences. Synthesis of new chemical compounds has immense commercial importance since it's at the core of many industrial products such as pharmaceuticals, polymers, semiconductor materials and many others. The current facilities at the Department of Chemistry are not adequate to meet current synthetic challenges, particularly the handling of air- and moisture-sensitive material. To remedy this, the development of a fully equipped synthetic laboratory at the Department of Chemistry has been proposed.

(Cost Basic infrastructure budget – USD75,000 + Equipment Budget – USD100,000) – The project proposal is linked and available at <http://www.cufsa.com/news/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Proposed-Synthetic-Laboratory-at-the-Department-of-Chemistry.pdf> and is in the process of evaluation and implementation. As of now, CUFSAA-NA plans are to support this project partially at the Equipment Cost level ONLY.

## **12. Professor MLT Kannangara Gold Medal and Memorial Scholarships**

Professor MLT Kannangara, Emeritus Professor of Physics and a former head of the Department of Physics at the University of Colombo (UOC), started his undergraduate degree at the University of Ceylon, at its Colombo premises in 1943 and received a BSc in Physics in 1948. His academic career started when he was appointed to the staff as an Assistant Lecturer in the same year. He obtained his PhD from the University of Manchester concentrating on Cosmic Ray Physics and returned to his alma mater in mid-1953 and spent his entire academic career retiring in 1990 as a professor of physics and the head of the department (1978-1984). He spent several sabbatical leave including one at the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge University. He was promoted to Associate Professor in Physics in 1970, to Full Professor in 1979 and to Senior Professor in 1989. Against all odds, Professor Kannangara led a healthy research program throughout his career. From 1966-1972 together with his colleague late Professor PCB Fernando, he published two articles in the Journal of Geophysical Research (a leading journal of Geophysical Research) on geomagnetic micro-pulsations and frequency spectrum and another single-author article on polarization characterizations of micro pulsations from observations taken close to the geomagnetic equator, which runs through Sri Lanka. Coming back to SL after a sabbatical at the Uppsala University in Sweden, he was instrumental in initiating an extremely successful international research collaboration with the Uppsala University colleagues in Sweden through the International Science Program (ISP), which was the first ISP program in Sri Lanka making the pathway and infrastructure to award local PhDs in physics in Sri Lanka at the Department of Physics, the University of Colombo benefitting many current and previous members of the Department of Physics.

He served as the President, SLAAS Section E in 1963 and was elevated to be a Fellow of the Institute of Physics, London in 1971. He was the controlling Chief Examiner of the GCE A/L Examination Physics paper in 1974 and 1975. He actively participated in the advancement of science at all levels in Sri Lanka and was also a Founder Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka in 1977. In 1994, University of Colombo conferred Professor Kannangara an Honorary DSc.



Professor Kannangara was also one of the finest teachers. He took great care to prepare his own lecture notes from multiple sources and updated them as necessary with new scientific advances eagerly pointing out the underlying physics behind what he was teaching. He emphasized the importance of assessing the relative contributions from different physical parameters to a particular phenomenon and to evaluate what is relevant and what is not. He paid great attention to errors and error propagation, a critical aspect of experimental physics. Overall, he imparted both the methodology and the joy of doing physics to his students. Professor Kannangara always had the interests of his students in mind.

In memory of Prof. MLT Kannangara, CUFSA-NA with approval from the University, established a gold medal named "MLT Kannangara Memorial Gold Medal" to be awarded at the university convocation to the Most Outstanding Physics Special Student with first-class honors. The first award recipient will be selected from the results released from the 2023 graduates. In addition, a scholarship named "Professor MLT Kannangara Memorial Scholarship" for students enrolled in the Special Degree Physics program was also established. Each year, the department will select one student and that student will continue to receive the funding (currently equivalent to USD 35 per month in SLR) for two years, i.e., until graduation. The first of these scholarships were awarded in 2022 and the second scholarship winner is being selected from nine qualified applicants from the new batch started in the Physics Special program in June of 2023.

### **13. 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. CUFSA-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 (USD3157.77) to Mr. K.H.A. Praveen Niranda, a Mathematics Special degree student of the Faculty of Science. From next year onwards, gold medals will be awarded with no cash award. Prof. Valentine Joseph Memorial Gold Medal Winners are Vindula Kumaranayake, Osanda Abhiru Illeperuma and VGPK Epa for 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively. 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 has made generous contributions to raise funds to establish these gold medals and scholarships

In 2021, CUFSSA successfully implemented a second gold medal in honor of the late professor, this time for Applied Mathematics. This second gold medal will be awarded in 2023.

Those who know Professor Joseph will remember him for his compassion and the need to help the less privileged. To honor this attribute, CUFSA joined hands with the mathematics department to provide two need base scholarships for math students who are in the gravest economic need. Every year we give two scholarships, and currently, we peg the bursary to the US Dollar at US USD35 per month. As of August 2023, we have provided this monetary support for six students who were in grave economic need and were chosen by a committee consisting of Department of Mathematics Faculty Members.

Once again, thanks to the generosity of our members, we have successfully immortalized the Late Professor Joseph's name in a manner that the late Professor would have been genuinely proud of.

### **14. LMV Tillekeratne Gold Medal and Honorary Scholarship**

Prof. LM Viranga Tillekeratne was born in a small village, Singharamulla, in Kelaniya. He completed his primary education in Dharmaloka Vidyalaya, and secondary education in Ananda College, Colombo 10. In 1965, he started his undergraduate career at the University of Ceylon. In 1966, the University of Ceylon-Colombo Campus started offering a special degree program in Chemistry, and he was one of the nine

students in the first batch of that special degree program. He graduated from the University of Colombo in 1969 and received the Science Scholarship for best results in the final examination in the Faculty of Science.

In 1971, he received the Commonwealth Scholarship to Oxford University. After completing his doctorate degree, he returned to Sri Lanka in 1975 and joined the Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science at the University of Colombo as a Probationary Lecturer and later promoted to a full professor and assumed the Chair of Organic Chemistry position in 1984. He served the University in numerous capacities including the Head of the Chemistry Department, the Dean of the Faculty of Science, Acting Vice Chancellor, and the Chairman of the Sports Advisory Board of the University.

Currently, Prof. Tillekeratne is serving as a faculty member of the Department of Medicinal and Biological Chemistry, at the University of Toledo, USA. He is focusing on the research areas related to anticancer agents as well as neuroprotective agents (collaborative research) and his research group has obtained several patents from their research, and he has received numerous awards and recognition for his research.

Even after his departure from UOC Prof. Tillekeratne continued to serve his *alma mater* through the CUFSA-NA, a non-profit organization he founded in 2016 with the mission to unite all UOC Faculty of Science alumni scattered throughout the US and Canada under a common purpose to support our *alma mater*, Faculty of Science, UOC. He has served and shaped the organization as its founder president for the first two years and continues to play a vital role as an active member of the current executive committee.

A group of friends, well-wishers, and former students have come together and decided to establish a Gold Medal and a scholarship at the Science Faculty, UOC to honor Prof. Tillekeratne, one of the most beloved professors of our time. He is an outstanding teacher, a profound leader, a visionary, and an extraordinary mentor. He has dedicated his whole life to teaching, mentoring and student welfare. Prof. Tillekeratne made a profound impact on our lives when we were students at UOC and even today, after more than three decades, he continues to have a tremendous influence and inspiration for us. As students, we have seen his passion, and it has inspired us to fully engage in our studies and continue to do well even after we left UOC and pursue our postgraduate studies. Furthermore, he continued to provide guidance to many of us throughout our journey, encouraging us to focus on the directions of our careers. Prof. Tillekeratne is an amazing human being and an amazing professor.

He has always been very generous with his time and instrumental in opening doors for his students. His students embraced his continuous encouragement, guidance, and support throughout their student life and well passed into their adult lives.

In 2022, we launched the Prof. LMV Tillekeratne Gold Medal for Chemistry and the Honorary Scholarship. This is one of the few scholarships available to students who are in the second year of their undergraduate program. We partnered with the Dean's Office and the Department of Chemistry to provide a need base scholarship for a second-year student who has successfully completed the first-year coursework and is in the gravest economic need. In 2022, the gold medal was awarded to Ms. HMJC Dhanasinghe during the convocation and one student received the scholarship.

#### **15. Gold Medal for Special Degree Program in Computational Chemistry**

The award was named the 'CUFSA Gold Medal for Computational Chemistry' and shall be awarded annually from the academic year 2019/2020 for the best performance with either a First or Second Class (Upper Division) in the Honours degree examination in Computational Chemistry. *[January 2020]*

## **Ear-marked Funds and Programs**

### **01. 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 in 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 CUFSAA-NA). Financial assistance must be related to the student's educational needs either for undergraduate education assistance or for higher education assistance. This fund was recently renamed as the Benevolent Fund. This fund is a stationary fund of the association and is used continuously during the year 2021-2022 as well. The current balance of the fund is USD 1,056.55.

### **02. Mentoring Program**

CUFSAA-NA created this program early in its formation and is continued to this fiscal year. It was established 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 the United States and Canada and looking for employment opportunities. Many students were supported during the 2021-2022 year through our volunteer services. Other resources provided under this program, included presentations by CUFSAA members to the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo.

### **03. Take a Book Program**

Take a Book Program is another successful project launched by CUFSAA-NA through the generosity of our members. This program has supplied numerous textbooks to the Faculty of Science. Under this program, CUFSAA-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. This program was also established early in its formation of the Association and is continued during this fiscal year too.

### **Future Vision**

Our main objective has always been to initiate, continue, or expand upon projects and programs to benefit our alma mater. We will continue many successful programs and projects that we are already performing and accept new projects, challenges, and initiatives for the benefit of our Alma Mater.

To continue the growth of the association and the mission, we encourage all alumni to join CUFSAA-NA and get involved with its activities. We need volunteers for leadership roles and to be active contributors of the association. If you can donate your talents, resources, and expertise to help the Association and its mission, please reach out to us.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

**Dr. Harshica Fernando and Dr. Wasundara Fernando**  
Joint Secretaries/CUFSAA-NA