

Secretary's Report CUFSAA-NA 2018-2019 Term

Executive Summary:

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

The second Tamasha held in Cleveland OH, was a tremendous success with over 250 participants.

The following Projects were completed in 2018-2019:

Instrument donations to the Colombo University:

1. Two "MultispeQ" Instruments to the Department of Plant Sciences.
2. A Celestron CPC 1100 GPS 11-inch telescope, a 2-inch Hydrogen alpha solar telescope (Lunt LS50THa 50mm w/B600) plus a CMOS monochrome camera (ZWO ASI 174mm mono) and all necessary accessories to the Department of Physics
3. A Cannon EOS Rebel T6i DSLR camera with 18-55 mm and 85-250 mm lenses kit, together with Canon EOS shoulder bag and a Sandisk 16GB Extreme UHS-1 SDHC memory card to the FOS Media.

Scholarships and Gold Medals

1. Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medal/Memorial Scholarship. The first gold medal was awarded to Mr. K.H.A.Praveen Niranda, a Mathematics Special degree student.
2. A Student Assistant Account was established to support emergency funding.

Miscellaneous Projects

1. Over 140 text books were sent to the faculty in 2019.
2. The mentoring program has expanded to over 60 mentors across North America and have supported many students.

CUFSAA-NA executive committee acknowledges the support of many alumni 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.cufsa.com/>

The goal of this report is to outline the activities of the Colombo University Science Faculty Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) completed during 2018-2019 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 26th, 2018 for the term 2018-2020. Dr. Chandana Goonetilleke, was elected as the President of the Association. The executive committee continued with the tradition of holding monthly Skype 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 OR 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 2018-2019 year, we are happy to report that we were able to accomplish the following achievements with the support of our membership.

Membership

At the end of September, 2019, we have 471 members. We are encouraging past students, academic staff members and specifically junior alumni of the University of Colombo Science Faculty to join the association by completing the online membership posted on the website, <https://www.cufsaa.com/membership-form/>

Fundraising

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

Our major fundraising events/projects of the 2018-2019 year involved the following.

Tamasha 2018 – The Dinner Dance and the AGM

The second Tamasha dinner dance held on May 26, 2018 at the LaCentre Conference & Banquet Facility, Westlake, OH was attended by over 250 alumni members and well-wishers. Our sincere thanks to the Chief Guest, Prof. Veranja Karunaratne, Vice Chancellor, Sri Lanka Institute of Nanotechnology (SLINTEC) Academy, all sponsors and advertisers of the Souvenir, all those who provided special and congratulatory messages/articles to the Souvenir, Prof. Thusitha Abeyunga for helping with the media presentation, Dr. Sumedha Jayasena for providing the movie “The Letter” for screening at the brunch, Mr. Lakshman Caldera for photography, Nethrie Iddipily for the cake, Staff and Management of LaCentre Banquet Facility, Araliya Band and singers, Visharada Shalika Aroshini and Desmond Rodrigo, Full Color Printing, FOS Media Unit, members of the local organizing committee and many unnamed well-wishers and donors for making this event a great success.

Raffle Draw at Tamasha 2018

As an additional fundraising activity for the association, we conducted a raffle draw during the Tamasha, 2018 to raise 502.00 dollars. Many thanks to all those who purchased raffle tickets and to the sponsors who provided raffle draw prizes.

PROJECTS and OTHER ACTIVITIES:

Donation of “MultispeQ” Instruments to the Department of Plant Sciences

CUFSA-NA donated two MultispeQ instruments to the Department of Plant Sciences of the University of Colombo. Thanks to CUFSA-NA membership, we were able to purchase one MultispeQ instrument. The CEO and Co-founder of the PhotosynQ, the company that manufactures MultispeQ instrument, Mr. Prabode Weebadde and Professor Cholani Weebadde of the Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences of the Michigan State University (CUFSA-NA members) also donated another unit at the handover ceremony held at the Deans Office of the University of Colombo on December 21st, 2018. <https://www.cufsaa.com/multispeq/>

Telescope Project to the Department of Physics

At the request from Professor Chandana Jayaratne of the Physics Department CUFSA-NA purchased and donated a Celestron CPC 1100 GPS 11-inch telescope and all necessary accessories based on the technical recommendations provided by the Telescope Project Committee. The telescope and accessories were to carry out necessary astronomical observations by the students of the Faculty of Science for their research projects, and for public outreach events. The Telescope Project Committee was headed by Dr. Nalin Samarasinha. The telescope was officially handed over to the University on August 18, 2018.

The telescope will provide many years of astronomical aspiration for university students and Sri Lankans at large and will be used for many undergraduate research opportunities for final year Physics Special

students. The CUFSA-NA telescope already played a major roll for the training of Sri Lankan national teams to International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA) and the International Astronomy Olympiad (IAO). Sri Lanka won its first-ever Silver Medal in 2018 after 12 years since started participation in Olympiads in 2007. Among the activities planned in the near future, the CUFSA-NA telescope is expected to play an integral role during the December 26, 2019 annular solar eclipse visible from northern Sri Lanka. The telescope will be transported to Jaffna to carry out observations as part of a joint research effort involving Sri Lankan and foreign universities and research institutes. Please visit our website (<http://www.cufsa.com/telescope-project/>) for one-year anniversary report on the Telescope project.

In addition, CUFSA-NA identified that there is a need to monitor solar activity that can be put into effective use in undergraduate research and public outreach.

After much discussion with Prof. Chandana Jayaratne, CUFSA-NA purchased a 2-inch Hydrogen-alpha solar telescope (Lunt LS50THa 50mm w/B600) plus a CMOS monochrome camera (ZWO ASI 174mm mono) for imaging the sun for \$1,348 from the leftover money in the telescope account and shipped out to the University in September, 2019. This combination is capable of imaging the entire sun and the immediate region around it.

UoC plans to use this for undergraduate student research involving Hydrogen-alpha observations of the sun and during the December 26, 2019 annular solar eclipse.

Camera for FOS Media

This project was spearheaded by Executive Committee member, Dr. Oshadha Ranasingha. A Cannon EOS Rebel T6i DSLR camera with 18-55 mm and 85-250 mm lenses kit, together with Canon EOS shoulder bag and a Sandisk 16GB Extreme UHS-1 SDHC memory card was purchased for \$749.00. The entire unit was shipped to the University of Colombo to be donated for the FOS Media.

Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medal/Memorial Scholarship and Memorial Lecture Series

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. In memory of his great service, under the leadership of Prof. Kirithi Premadasa, 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, taking both academic achievements and economic needs into consideration and a gold medal in his name. The gold medal along with a cash award was established with the donation of \$3,122 to the UoC by CUFSA-NA. Mr. K.H.A.Praveen Niranda, a Mathematics Special degree student of the Faculty of Science became the first student to receive this gold medal together with a cash prize of Rs.25,000 (sponsored by CUFSA-NA) at the 2019 convocation. Establishment of the two scholarships is in progress and we hope to award these scholarships in 2020. CUFSA-NA thanks everyone who have made generous contributions to date to raise \$10,766.62 out of the \$13,000 target for the endowment fund to establish this scholarship.

CUFSA-NA Student Assistant Account

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 is in need for 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.

The Faculty has accepted CUFSAA-NA's proposal and we are in the process of establishing a ledger account to initiate this program.

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 2018-2019 year through our volunteers, nearly 60 mentors across most of the 50 States in the United States and Canada. Other resources provided under this program included a presentation full of useful tips for transitioning from a graduate of University of Colombo to a graduate student in the US, providing tips for Teaching Assistants arriving from Sri Lanka and tips for Sri Lankan Graduate students entering the corporate world.

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. We also have shipped out a large consignment of text books regularly donated by CUFSAA-NA members and the latest shipment included over 140 text books covering many scientific fields donated by CUFSAA-NA members in April 2019.

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

CUFSAA-NA Executive Committee has approved the proposal received from Prof. Chandrika Nanayakkara of the Department of Plant Sciences to fund of one High performance computers for the bioinformatics special degree program. A CUFSAA-NA sub-committee under the leadership Prof. Harshica Fernando is in the process of initiating the fund raising efforts for this project to raise \$3000.

Future Vision

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

As our association continues to grow, it is important that we expand our membership with new generation of alumni so that they can continue our mission for years to come. So, we kindly ask our younger generation to join CUFSAA-NA and get involved with its activities.

Our sincere thanks to the members of the CUFSAA-NA Executive Committee who worked so hard to set these goals and to our membership for their generous donations to achieve these goals for the benefit of our Alma Mater.

In Memoriam

Our sincere sympathy for the following member who passed away during the 2018-2019 term.
Dr. Asoka Biyagama – CUFSAA-NA Executive Committee Member 2016-2018 (Department of Chemistry, 1986)

Respectfully Submitted,

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