

Secretary's Report

Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) 2019-2020 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 in Sep, 2020, was postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic. An alternate venue is under discussion for 2021.

The following activities were accomplished or are being continued:

Instrument donations to the Science Faculty, University of Colombo

1. A Celestron CPC 1100 GPS 11-inch telescope, a 2-inch Hydrogen alpha solar telescope (Lunt LS50THa 50mm w/B600), CMOS cameras and other necessary accessories to the Department of Physics (\$8,362.80)
2. 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 (\$749.00)
3. Remote Learning Project, eighteen (18) laptops were donated to the needy students affected by COVID-19 lockdown difficulties (raised: \$12,902.85, Disbursed in 2020: \$10,456.48*)
4. Ten bright field light microscopes (Olympus CX23) and one dissection microscope (Olympus XZX7) to the Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences (raised: \$ 12,717.28 in the US and LKR. 640,000.00 in Sri Lanka, disbursed in 2020: 10,068.61, committed for 2021: \$1,780.00).
5. Two high performance Computers for Bioinformatics Special Degree Program of the Department of Plant Sciences. (Fund raising completed, Quotations in progress, Raised: \$2516.71, Committed for 2021: \$4,711.00 (Estimated to be in the range of LKR 796,000.00 – 848,000.00)*)

Gold Medals and Scholarships

1. Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medal/Memorial Scholarship
The first gold medal and a cash prize of LKR. 25,000 were awarded at the 2019 convocation (\$3157.77). Additional funds were raised to establish two scholarships, LKR. 5,000/month each, in addition to the gold medal mentioned earlier. (raised: 12,432.67 committed for 2021: \$11,111.00*)
2. CUFSAA-NA Gold Medal for Computational Chemistry
CUFSAA-NA sponsored a gold medal to be awarded to the student with the best performance in the Honors degree in computational chemistry (\$1,675.00)
3. Mrs. Mallika Devi Mahendran Gold Medal & Scholarship
CUFSAA-NA also facilitated a Gold Medal and a scholarship offered by former Chemistry Professor, Prof. Mahendran in memory of his late wife, Mrs. Mallika Devi Mahendran (LKR. 800,000.00)
4. 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 in 2021 (Funds raised: \$6,730.80)*.

Other Projects

Proposal for a Digital Forum for Sri Lankan Computational Chemists*

*Ongoing projects

Miscellaneous Projects

1. Over 140 textbooks were sent to the Faculty in 2019.
2. The mentoring program has expanded across North America and has supported many students.

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.cufsa.com/>

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 2019-2020 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 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 2019-2020 term, we were able to accomplish the following achievements.

Membership

As of end of December, 2020, we have 526 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 four years.

Our major fundraising events/projects of the 2019-2020 year involved the following.

PROJECTS and OTHER ACTIVITIES:

Telescope Project to the Department of Physics

At the request from Professor Chandana Jayaratne of the Physics Department, CUFSAA-NA purchased and donated a Celestron CPC 1100 GPS 11-inch telescope, a 2-inch Hydrogen alpha solar telescope (Lunt LS50THa 50mm w/B600), CMOS cameras and additional 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 two telescopes already played a major role for training 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. The telescopes also played an integral role during the

December 26, 2019 annular solar eclipse visible from northern Sri Lanka. The telescopes capable of imaging the entire Sun and the immediate region around it were transported to Jaffna to carry out observations as part of a joint research effort involving Sri Lankan and foreign universities and research institutes. (<http://www.cufsa.com/telescope-project/>)

Camera for FOS Media

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 donated to the University of Colombo to be used for the FOS Media activities.

Remote Learning Project

This fund was established to support the remote learning project during COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve (12) new HP ProBook 450 G7 Notebooks with i5/i7 and 8GB RAM computers and six (6) refurbished laptop computers were purchased from the funds raised by CUFSAA-NA (raised: \$12,902.85, disbursed in 2020: \$10,456.48) and donated to eighteen students. Computers were donated through Dean/Science, Prof. Ranjith Mahanama and Prof. Upul Sonnadara during the COVID-19 lockdown period. This project helped several students tremendously for their remote learning activities, including assignments and exams during this difficult time.

Microscope Project for the Department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences

As per Prof. Deepthi Wickramasinghe's (Head of the Department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences) appeal for 10 x light microscopes (LKR 175,000 per unit) and one dissecting microscope (LKR 990,000.00) for the benefit of students, CUFSAA-NA reached out to the membership for help. Thanks to the generous donations from the membership and matching funds, CUFSAA-NA was able to raise \$ 12,717.28 in the US and LKR 640,000.00 in Sri Lanka. A direct payment was made to the Delmege Forsyth Company Limited to purchase *ten bright field light microscopes (Olympus CX23)*. *Balance committed for 2021 for the dissection microscope (Olympus XZX7) will be \$1,780.00*

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 two high performance computers for the bioinformatics special degree program. The fund raising was completed and we are in contact with the Department of Plant Sciences to finalize the quotation process for two (2) high performance computers so that we can move forward with transferring money to the department. Quotation estimates are in the range of LKR 796,000.00 – 848,000.00. (Committed for 2021: \$4,711.00)

Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medals/Memorial Scholarships 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. 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, taking both academic achievements and economic needs into consideration and two gold medals in his name. The first gold medal along with a cash award was already established with the donation of \$3157.77 to the UoC by CUFSAA-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 LKR 25,000 at the 2019 convocation. Going forward, it was decided to use the cash component of the first gold medal towards creating the second gold medal. Establishment of the two

scholarships (LKR 5000 each/month) is in progress and we hope to award these scholarships in 2021. CUFSAA-NA thanks everyone who have made generous contributions to raise funds to establish these gold medals and scholarships. Funds committed for 2021: \$11,111.00)

CUFSAA-NA Gold Medal for Computational Chemistry

CUFSAA-NA sponsored a gold medal to be awarded to the student with the best performance in the honors degree in computational chemistry. This shall be awarded annually from the academic year 2020/2021 to a student with either a First or Second Class (Upper Division) in the honors degree examination in Computational Chemistry (Amount raised: 1,675.00). During his visit to Sri Lanka, CUFSAA-NA founding President Prof. L.M.V. Tillekeratne handed over cash in LKR to the Head of the Chemistry Department, Prof. Ramanee Wijesekera to establish this gold medal. The annual interest of this capital investment would be used for this purpose.

The award shall be named as the 'CUFSAA-NA Gold Medal for Computational Chemistry'.

Mrs. Mallika Devi Mahendran Gold Medal & Scholarship

CUFSAA-NA also facilitated a Gold Medal and a scholarship offered by former Chemistry Professor, Prof. Mahendran in memory of his late wife, Mrs. Mallika Devi Mahendran. During his visit to Sri Lanka, Prof. Mahendran handed over the money (LKR 800,000.00) to the Head of the Chemistry Department to establish this gold medal and scholarship.

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 for a final year chemistry special student who excels in research and a honorary scholarship for any second year student following BSc degree (based on academic, need base, leadership qualities, and other activities) to recognize Prof. Tillekeratne's service to the department and the Faculty for many decades.

We have sent the proposal to Prof. Upul Sonnadara, Dean/Science and Prof. Nalin de Silva, HoD/ Department of Chemistry and waiting for their feedback and Faculty Board/ Senate approval to follow up in 2021.

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 CUFSAA-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 2019-2020 year through our volunteer services. Other resources provided under this program, included presentations by CUFSAA members.

These include:

1. Epigenetics in Drug Discovery – Prof. Viranga Tillekeratne, Dec. 20, 2019, UoC

2. From UOC to Wall Street – A glimpse into the Quant Finance industry” – Chryshanie Fernandopulle , Dec 30, 2019, UoC

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.

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 CUFSAA-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