

# Secretary's Report

## Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) 2021-2022 Year

### Executive Summary

*The 25-member CUFSAA-NA Executive committee was led by Vicumpriya Perera during this term as its President after the Annual General Meeting virtually held on October 30, 2021. The following are the activities that were accomplished or are being continued during this reporting year, **October 01, 2021 - September 30, 2022.***

#### **PROJECTS and OTHER ACTIVITIES**

##### **01. Medical Supplies Project**

*We initiated the medical supplies project in April 2022 in response to the critical shortage of life-saving drugs and equipment in Sri Lanka and donated critically needed medical supplies to numerous hospitals. (Raised: USD18,607.18 Disbursed: USD14,949.49)*

##### **02. CUFSAA-NA Distinguished Speaker Series**

*The Distinguished Speaker Series is organized in association with the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo. To-date, three presentations have been completed successfully, representing various academic areas and departments at the University of Colombo.*

##### **03. E-book Subscription Service to Faculty of Science Library**

*CUFSAA worked with ELSEVIER on behalf of the Science Library and was successful in establishing an e-book subscription service to benefit faculty and students. (Disbursed: USD 4,376.00 pending donor contributions to offset the cost)*

##### **04. Printed Textbook Purchase to Faculty of Science Library**

*At the request of the Dean, Faculty of Science, CUFSAA is working with the library personnel to identify and purchase critically needed reference textbooks requested by multiple departments.*

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

*CUFSAA-NA received a request from the Head Nuclear Science Department, UoC, for a donation of an oscilloscope and is working to fulfill the request.*

## **06. Covid Relief Project in Collaboration with the Faculty of Science\***

*CUFSAA-NA has donated nearly USD 160,000 to purchase urgent life-saving medical equipment for hospitals around Sri Lanka since the inception of this project. (Raised: USD 158,008.90 Disbursed: USD 160,153.88) [NOTE: \* This project has been completed.]*

## **07. Remote Learning Project**

*This project has continued since its inception a few years ago. During this reporting period, six (6) additional laptops were donated to students affected by financial difficulties. (Raised: USD 12,902.85; Disbursed: USD 11,721.66)*

## **Gold Medals and Scholarships**

### **08. Student Assistance and Scholarship Program**

*CUFSAA created the “Step up” program in 2021 to provide financial-aid to these students by matching sponsors and to-date, six (6) students have benefitted from this life-changing program. Additionally, CUFSAA provided a scholarship for a PhD student to complete the overseas component of the dissertation, which was a mandatory requirement for graduation.*

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

*CUFSAA established two scholarships and a gold medal to honor Prof. M L T Kannangara, a former head of the department of Physics at the University of Colombo (UoC). A third-year Physics Special student was already awarded the first Prof. M. L. T. Kannangara Scholarship in September 2022 and the gold medal will be awarded to the most outstanding Physics special graduate with First-Class Honors at the Convocation. (Raised: USD 3559.32 Disbursed: USD 210.00)*

### **10. Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medal/Memorial Scholarship**

*Prof. Valentine Joseph’s Gold Medal and Scholarships were continued in 2021 and 2022. In 2021, two scholarships were awarded to two students selected based on academic excellence and economic need and the gold medal was also awarded. Starting in 2022, two Gold medals and two scholarships will be awarded to students as part of this program. (Raised: USD 13,032.67; Disbursed: USD 4,582.77)*

### **11. Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne Gold Medal and Honorary Scholarship Awarded by Friends, Former Students, and well-wishers of Prof. Tillekeratne**

*A group of former students, friends, and well-wishers have come together and decided to establish a gold medal and an honorary scholarship to recognize our beloved teacher and friend, Prof. L.M.V. Tillekeratne. The gold medal and the scholarship were approved by the Faculty Board in August 2021 and the awards will be made during the academic year 2022. (Funds raised: USD 9,030.80 Disbursed: USD 1,871.05).*

## Detailed Report

In this report, we outline the activities of the Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA) initiated, continued, or completed during the reporting period of October 01, 2021 - September 30, 2022. We also articulate the future vision and the aspirations of the Association.

The new 25-member “Third” Executive Committee of the Association was appointed and confirmed at the third AGM held virtually on October 30, 2021, for the term 2021-2023. Vicumpriya Perera, was elected as the President of the Association. 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 Pinnaduwege, Kirthi Premadasa – Vice President, Oshadha K. Ranasingha, Nalin Samarasingha, L.M.V. Tillekeratne – Founder President, Gajaka Weerasinghe, Tharanga Wijetunge, and Jeeva Witanachchi. Gajaka Weerasinghe resigned from the Treasurer position in March 2022, and Pujitha Gunaratne resigned from the Joint Secretary position in August 2022 due to personal and work-related obligations not allowing them to spend adequate time working on the Association matters. The Assistant Treasurer Lalith Perera was appointed to fill the Treasurer position, and Sandya Liyanarachchi was appointed to complete the term of the Assistant Treasurer position for the remaining duration of the current executive committee. Wasundara Fernando was appointed by the Executive committee to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Joint Secretary for the duration of the current executive committee. The composition of the Third Executive Committee did not change due to these office-bearer resignations.

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 ongoing and future activities and the current state of the budget.

The association’s online presence is 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/channel/UCPkTE6AJBx-2L1O3uj\\_t8nQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPkTE6AJBx-2L1O3uj_t8nQ) and <https://studio.youtube.com/channel/UCGTaMw1XGqdNpD1F8eaM3MQ>). These facilities 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 2021-2022 term (Oct. 01, 2021 - Sep. 30, 2022), we were able to complete or continue to proceed forward with the following projects and programs.

### **Membership**

As of September 30, 2022, we have **570** members. We are encouraging past students, academic staff members, and especially junior alumni of the University of Colombo Science Faculty to join the association and 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 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 its members, friends, and well-wishers for their continued support in our efforts over the past years.

Our major fundraising events and projects for the year 2021-2022 involved the following activities.

## **PROJECTS and OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

### **01. Medical Supplies Project**

We started the medical supplies project to help hospitals in Sri Lanka, in April 2022, after receiving requests that they have a critical shortage of life-saving drugs due to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. We received lists of drugs and found that critically needed Cardiac and Oncology medicines (such as the chemo drug Paclitaxel, which we gave to the District General Hospital, Avissawella, and the mandatory anti-cancer drug Filgrastim, which we donated to the Teaching Hospital, Rathnapura) among the most depleted. Also scarce were anti-hypertensive drugs, drugs for diabetes patients, antibiotics, and anti-rabies injections. With the help of CUFSA-NA members, their friends, and family, we raised over USD 18,500. We donated over LKR 5 million worth of medical supplies, approximately (Equivalent to about USD 14,950). Hospitals at Gampaha, Karapitiya, Homagama, Avissawella, Rathnapura, Horana, Wathupitiwala, Kalubowila, and the Ministry of Health, Medical Supplies Division were our primary recipients. Dr. Asoka Ramanayake from Sri Lanka helped with coordinating this project for CUFSA-NA. Thanks to her excellent support and coordination, we were able to deliver medicine as quickly as possible to the hospitals, which may have helped save patients' lives.

CUFSA-NA was able to donate 300 triple blood bags to the Sri Lanka Blood bank at a cost of \$1950. The triple blood bags were purchased and delivered directly to Sri Lanka, at a crucial time when the country was facing a critical dollar crisis. The bags were delivered to the Sri Lankan Blood bank on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2022.

*(Raised: USD18,607.18 Disbursed: USD14,949.49)*

### **02. CUFSA-NA Distinguished Speaker Series**

CUFSA Distinguished Speaker Series is organized by the Speaker Series subcommittee of CUFSA-NA in association with the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo. The inaugural talk of the Distinguished Speaker Series was delivered by Dr. Nalin Samarasingha on April 22, 2022. Since then, the series has featured three distinguished speakers representing various academic areas and departments at the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo. The following are the details about the Talks completed and links to access the recordings of the talks.

**Talk 01: Dr. Nalin Samarasingha - [Asteroid Colombounilanka and Contributions to Astronomy by University of Colombo – April 22, 2022: Abstract, Speaker Bio, and Event Flyer](#), [Click here to watch the full video of the event from YouTube](#).**

**Talk 02: Prof. AP de Silva - From Chemistry to Medical Diagnostics and Information Processing – July 07, 2022: Abstract, Speaker Bio, and Event Flyer, [Click here to watch the full video of the event from YouTube.](#)**

**Talk 03: Dr. Jayeni Hiti-Bandaralage - A paradise on the iceberg – Entrepreneurship for innovators – August 28, 2022: Abstract, Speaker Bio, and Event Flyer, [Click here to watch the full video of the event from YouTube.](#)**

**Talk 04: Dr. David Hoskin - Iron withdrawal by selective chelators for cancer treatment – September 20, 2022: Talk Abstract, Speaker Bio, and Event Flyer, [Click here to watch the full video of the event from YouTube.](#)**

The recordings of the concluded talks are available on YouTube and Facebook. In addition to the CUFSAA-NA members, faculty and students from the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo, and members of other academic institutions in Sri Lanka also attended these talks.

The current program has two talks remaining which will be scheduled in the coming months. The next talk of the series will be delivered by Dr. Binodh De Silva on the subject area of Drug Discovery/ Pharmaceutical Industry. The talks are delivered via zoom technology and broadcast via YouTube and Facebook Live.

Please visit <http://www.cufsa.com/speaker-series/> for additional details and information about upcoming talks. CUFSAA-NA is planning to continue the series on various topics throughout the year of 2023 on a bi-monthly basis.

### **03. E-book Subscription Service to Faculty of Science Library**

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].

### **04. Printed Textbook Purchase to Faculty of Science Library**

At the inception of CUFSAA, we established a "Take a Book Program", which entails the collection of useful new and gently used textbooks from our members and delivering them to the University

of Colombo Faculty of Science library via CUFSAA members traveling to Sri Lanka for use by students and faculty. These books would cost hundreds of dollars to purchase and, in many cases, are unaffordable to the library due to their high cost. This program has been an enormous success over the years, largely due to the generosity of our members. Since its implementation, the program has successfully added hundreds of new and gently used textbooks in all disciplines of STEM, including Chemistry, Mathematics, Statistics, Plant Science, Biochemistry, Physics, Environmental Science, and Zoology.

Currently, the 2022 academic year has started, and classes have resumed. However, there is an acute shortage of much-needed reference textbooks. The Science Faculty library is unable to purchase these textbooks due to the unavailability of funds for the library and the current shortage of dollars in the country. After hearing about this tragic situation and receiving a request from the Dean of Science faculty, CUFSAA has started working with the library personnel to identify and purchase the most critically needed reference textbooks requested by multiple departments, including chemistry, mathematics, statistics, plant science, biochemistry, physics, environmental science, and zoology. The current request includes 47 hardcopy reference textbooks at a total cost of ~USD 4,000.

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

CUFSAA-NA received a fully completed CUFSAA Resource Request from Head, Nuclear Science Department through Dean/Science for an oscilloscope. During the follow up discussions with Dr. M. Lamabadusuriya, Head of the Department and Dr. Chandana Sumithrarachchi (MSU/Nuclear Science Department) the following Oscilloscope has been identified as the best option (lowest cost) that meet the department needs, namely, number of channels, identify noise to optimize instruments (100 MZ is enough), study signal shapes for building new instrumentation, single generator to simulate entire DAQ system and diagnose faulty modules, This Rigold unit proposed below has three Instruments. scope, arbitrary function generator, and a logic analyzer and is cheaper than buying them individually.

*Equipment: Rigol DS1104Z-S Plus 100 MHz Digital Oscilloscope with 4 Channels and 16 Digital Channels + 25 MHz Bandwidth with 2 Signal Source Channels*

CUFSAA-NA is reviewing the options to purchase the equipment and ship it to Sri Lanka directly from the United States.

[Cost USD 699]

### **06. Covid Relief Project**

On behalf of CUFSAA-NA, we express our profound gratitude for your contributions to stifling the impact of the COVID-19 menace in Sri Lanka. CUFSAA-NA has donated nearly USD 160,000 dollars to purchase urgent life-saving medical equipment for hospitals around Sri Lanka. These equipment include ventilators, portable ventilators, high-flow oxygen machines, portable ultrasound scanners, multipara monitors, aspirators, ECG machines, pulse oximeters, laryngoscopes, bronchoscopes, cardiac defibrillators, digital blood pressure machines, and syringe pumps. The hospitals that benefited from these equipment included Colombo National Hospital, Lady Ridgeway Hospital, Marara, Dambadeniya, Kantale, Rathnapura, Laggala, Wathupitiwala, Biyagama, Chilaw, Welikanda, Badulla and Karawanella, We are also grateful to

our alumni, Dr. Asoka Ramanayake, Sri Lanka for coordinating all these donations and to the Faculty of Science for the collaboration. We concluded this project in June 2022. However, there are still many requests for urgent medical equipment, and we plan to support those requests via the Medical Supplies Project.

### **07. Remote Learning Project**

This fund was established to support the remote learning project during the 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 Department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences. In the 2021-2022 period, we donated five (5) additional laptop computers for the use of students in the Faculty of Science.

### **Gold Medals and Scholarships**

#### **08. Student Assistance and Scholarship Program**

The Faculty of Science has identified students who are in dire economic need. In order to help these students, CUFSAA created the “Step up” program in 2021.

The following is how the program works:

**Step 1:** The Faculty of Science identifies a student in dire economic need and informs CUFSAA.

**Step 2:** A CUFSAA subcommittee reviews and approves the application.

**Step 3:** CUFSAA matches the student with a sponsor, with minimum financial assistance equivalent to USD 35 per month for at least a year. Once a match has been made, the sponsor coordinates with the student and continues the program.

CUFSAA is proud to say that during the year 2021-2022, six students have benefitted from this life-changing program.

During the Year 2021-2022, at the request of the Dean, Faculty of Science, CUFSAA reviewed and approved a scholarship for a PhD student to attend and complete the overseas component of the program to finalize the final dissertation.

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

CUFSAA established two scholarships to be given annually to two Physics special students from each year (a third-year scholarship and the continuation of the third-year scholarship during the fourth year), and a gold medal to be awarded to the most outstanding Physics special graduate

with a First-Class Honors at the Convocation. The scholarships and the gold medal will honor Prof. M L T Kannangara, a former head of the department of Physics at the University of Colombo (UoC) who was an excellent instructor and who was also instrumental in establishing the UoC-Uppsala joint research project among various other services to the Physics program at UoC.

A third year Physics Special student was awarded the first Prof. M. L. T. Kannangara Scholarship in September 2022. Funds for the first six months at a rate equivalent to 35 USD per month were transferred with another installment pending for the year. The gold medal process is moving forward with the approval of the faculty board and pending approval from the University Senate. A lump sum of SLR 300,000 (approximately USD 1000) will be deposited as the endowment for the gold medal once the approval process is completed.

One of the emails from the scholarship winner says: *"I have received the LKR 72, 848 scholarship fund on 20th of September 2022. I've been going through many struggles with the current situation in Sri Lanka and the poor economic state of my family with my elder sister ..... younger brother who will be sitting for the Advanced Level examination next year. I would like to give my sincere gratitude to you as it has been a huge support for me in this current situation and I will make sure to give my best to keep up the good academic work you expected from me."*

(Raised: USD 3559.32 Disbursed: USD 210.00)

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

Professor Valentine Joseph was a prominent mathematician, noted for his excellent contributions to teaching at the University of Colombo. CUFSA-NA honored 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. In addition, two gold medals will be awarded in his name. The first gold medal and a cash award of LKR. 25,000 were awarded at the 2019 convocation 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 associated cash awards. Prof. Valentine Joseph Memorial Gold Medal Winner for 2020 is Mr. Vindula Kumaranayake and for 2021 is Mr. Osanda Abhiru Illeperuma. 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 in 2022 annually. CUFSA-NA thanks everyone who has made generous contributions to raise funds to establish these gold medals and scholarships.

(Raised: USD 13,032.67 Disbursed: USD 4582.77)

### **11. Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne Gold Medal and Honorary Scholarship Awarded by Friends, Former Students, and well-wishers of Prof. Tillekeratne**

A group of friends, well-wishers and former students of Prof. L.M.V. Tillekeratne have come together and decided to establish a scholarship at the Science Faculty, The University of Colombo, to honor one of the most beloved professors of our time, Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne. 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 UofC, and even today, Prof. Tillekeratne continues to serve his alma mater, The University of Colombo, in numerous ways, engaged in student activities as an undergraduate, served as a lecturer teaching chemistry for decades, and



worked as a university administrator for many years advocating for students. Even after he retired from UofC, he continued to serve his alma mater through the CUFSAA, a non-profit organization he founded in 2016 with the mission to unite all UofC Faculty of Science alumni scattered throughout the US and Canada under a common purpose to support our alma mater, Faculty of Science, UofC. He has served and shaped the organization as its founding president for the first two years and continues to play an important role as an active member of the current executive committee.

The gold medal and the scholarship were approved by the Faculty Board in August 2021. Funds have been disbursed to the Bursar of the University of Colombo for the gold medal, which will be awarded at the 2022 graduation ceremony. The selection of scholarship recipients will be from the rising 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, and the award will be made during the academic year 2022.

## **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 unexpected flooding. This effort was strengthened by establishing an official emergency fund to support Science Faculty students who are in need of help during emergency situations.

An amount of up to LKR 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 a 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 will be used continuously during the year 2021-2022 as well. The current balance of the fund is USD 1056.55.

### **02. Mentoring Program**

CUFSAA-NA created this program early in its formation, and it is continuing to this day. It was established to provide guidance and advice to Sri Lankan graduates who are interested in higher education in the United States and Canada, as well as students who have recently graduated from the United States and Canada and are 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 it 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.

## **Other activities of Importance**

### **Asteroid Colombounilanka is Named after University of Colombo**

Earlier this year, the International Astronomical Union officially named the asteroid 607372 as Colombounilanka. CUFSAA partnered with the discoverers of the asteroid in the name selection process, and was also instrumental in initiating and facilitating discussions with the Faculty of Science and the University. CUFSAA is proud to have played a role in enabling the University of Colombo to join a select group of universities in the whole world to have an asteroid named after.

## **Future Vision**

Our future vision is to expand the activities we are already performing and take up new projects, challenges, and initiatives to benefit our Alma Mater.

CUFSAA is planning to hold the Third TAMASHA of the Association in Toronto, Canada, during the fourth quarter of 2023. It will be an exciting get-together for our members, friends, and well-wishers. Please mark your calendars to attend, enjoy, and meet old and new friends and participate in the Association activities and fund-raisers.

To continue the growth of the association and its 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 to the association. If you are willing to share your talents, resources, and expertise to help the Association and its mission, please reach out to us. We would love to hear from you.

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

## **Thank you**

CUFSAA-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 successful. Additional details for each of these activities can be found on our website, <https://www.cufsa.com/>

Respectfully Submitted,

**Dr. Harshica Fernando and Dr. Wasundara Fernando**

Joint Secretaries/CUFSAA-NA