

Secretary's Report

Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA-NA)

2023-2024 Year

Executive Summary

CUFSAA-NA Executive Committee was led by Dr. Reshan Fernando during this reporting period as its President who was elected at the Annual General Meeting held in person on September 02, 2023 at Toronto Grand Banquet and Convention Centre, 30 Baywood Road, Toronto ON M9V 3Y8 Canada. The current Executive Committee members of the Association are Binodh De Silva – Vice President, Saliya De Silva – Vice President, Sachith Dissanayake – Vice President, Wasundara Fernando – Secretary, L.C. Goonetilleke – Past President, Angelo Gunasekera, Chandrasiri Jayakody – President Elect, Neranjake Jayarathne – Assistant Secretary, Sumedha Jayasena, Prabath Kuruwitaarachchi, Sandya Liyanarachchi –Treasurer, Mahendra Munidasa, Lalith Perera, Unil Perera, Vicumpriya Perera – Immediate Past President, Asoka Pinnaduwege, Kirthi Premadasa, Oshadha K. Ranasingha, Kumuditha Ratnayake, Nalin Samarasinha, L.M.V. Tillekeratne – Founder President, Gajaka Weerasinghe, Isurika Weerasinghe, and Jeeva Witanachchi - Assistant Treasurer.

The following activities were completed, started, or are being continued during the reporting period of **August 01, 2023, to September 30, 2024.**

Completed projects:

1. Laboratory Equipment and Glassware Donation to Chemistry Department

Dr. Lakmal Boteju, a CUFSAA member, initiated this project to collect, package and ship a large collection of laboratory glassware, laboratory supplies, and laboratory equipment to the department of Chemistry. The shipment weighs over 1000 kg and has two large pallets containing over 9000 items. The shipment included various laboratory glassware, chromatographic columns and supplies, various syringes, UV lamps, solvent and vacuum pumps, magnetic stirrers, heating units, filter papers, culture/centrifuge tubes, balances, thermometers, desiccators, vortex apparatus, rotary evaporators, pH meters, gas regulators, spectrofluorometers and many other items. The project was completed successfully, and the items are being used by students across multiple science faculty laboratories. *[December 2023 – January 2024]*

2. Equipment Donation to the Department of Chemistry

This donation was made possible by CUFSAA member, Dr. Anagi Balachandra. She was able to arrange this equipment donation through her employer, Professor Parviz Soroushian, the owner of Metna Inc. This equipment donation included a total of 79 items. *[April 2024 – August 2024]*

3. CUFSAA Physics Equipment Project (Phase One)

Phase one of the Physics Equipment Project was completed in June 2024. All items were found to be in excellent condition and this equipment donation included 5 items that are essential to the Department of Physics. *[October 2023 – June 2024]*

4. CUFSAA Physics Equipment Project (Phase Two-Part 1 and 2)

Under the phase 2 - part 1 and 2 of the Physics Equipment Project, 3 equipment were purchased in August 2024 the shipment will be delivered to Colombo port within two months. *[August 2024]*

5. Centennial Book Project

CUFSAA donated the total cost of printing for the publication of a commemorative volume which was part of the centenary celebrations of the Faculty of Science. The executive committee decided to distribute the 100 copies among the CUFSAA members in lieu of a minimum \$100 donation, which will be directed towards the cost of printing of the books. *[December 2023]*

6. North America Inter-University Alumni Softball Cricket Tournament

The University of Colombo team won the first ever North American Inter-University Alumni Cricket Tournament at the inaugural North America Inter-University Alumni Softball Cricket Tournament, jointly organized by CUFSAA and the University of Peradeniya Alumni Association. This was held at Warminster Park, Pennsylvania, on the *22nd of September 2024*.

On-going projects:

1. Donation of two (2) Particle Size Analyzers (Coulter) and one Gas Chromatograph (Agilent 6890) equipped with TCD/FID Detectors to the Science Faculty

Another equipment donation for the benefit of students and staff members of the Faculty of Science, CUFSAA is in the process of shipping out two Particle Size Analyzers (Coulter), one each for the Departments of Chemistry and Physics. In addition to Particle Analyzers, an Agilent 6890 Gas Chromatograph equipped with TCD and FID detectors is also included in the shipment for the Chemistry Department. Thanks to our member, Dr. Anagi Balachandra, Dr. Ronda Grosse of "Chemists without Borders", these items were a donation from the Dow Chemical Company, Carrollton, Kentucky. Shipment will arrive in Colombo in November 2024. We thank Dr. Chandana Goonetilleke for arranging the shipment with Asanka Dharmakeerthi of TRICO.

2. Synthetic Chemistry and Drug Discovery Lab Proposal

Raising funds for the Synthetic Chemistry and Drug Discovery Lab is one of the newest initiatives of CUFSAA. This project is expected to be completed in two phases and CUFSAA will fund the phase 2 of the project. The full project is aimed to be completed by December 2025.

3. CUFSAA Launch Pad Student Grant Program

CUFSAA Launch Pad Grants Initiative which extends across the entire Faculty of Science is an extensive grant scheme initiated in the history of the University. This program strives to support undergraduates who are under grave financial difficulties who are selected by a cross-departmental committee. We are proud to report that we have successfully dispersed the first six-month installment of USD 180 to 36 students. *[December 2023 – February 2024]* Continuing the work, CUFSAA is now raising funds for the next phase of the scholarships.

4. CUFSAA Distinguished Speaker Series

Continuing CUFSAA Distinguished Speaker Series, the sub-committee organized and completed three seminars for the year 2023-2024. The Distinguished Speaker Series continues to be a popular project among the students in University of Colombo. *[December 2023 – February 2024]* With more informative seminars, CUFSAA will be continued next year as well.

5. Gold Medals and Scholarships

a. *Professor MLT Kannangara Gold Medal and Memorial Scholarships*

In memory of Prof. M L T. Kannangara, CUFSAA 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. 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. This year, Professor MLT Kannangara Gold Medal was awarded to Mr. Buddhika Rasanjana.

b. *Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medals/Memorial Scholarship*

In memory of renowned mathematician Professor Valentine Joseph, CUFSAA has been funding two gold medals to be awarded annually since 2020 to two students in mathematics special degree program. Faculty Board approval was received recently to award two memorial scholarships, LKR. 5,000/month each, in addition to the gold medal mentioned earlier. This year gold medal recipients are Mr. H N Bimsara and Ms. J P M Dilki.

c. *Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne Gold Medal and Scholarship facilitated by CUFSAA*

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. This year recipient of Professor L.M.V. Tillekeratne Gold Medal is Ms. D.M.T.G. Dasanayake.

d. *Gold Medal for Special Degree Program in Computational Chemistry*

CUFSAA, in consultation with the Faculty of Science, has been sponsoring a gold medal in computational chemistry since 2020. The award was named the 'CUFSAA 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. This year recipient of the Gold Medal for Special Degree Program in Computational Chemistry is Mr. S.P. Sandaruwan.

Detailed Report

In this report, we outline the activities of the Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association – North America (CUFSAA) completed or initiated during 2023-2024 as well as our ongoing projects. We articulate the future vision and aspirations of the association during the years ahead.

The 25-member "Fourth" Executive Committee of the Association was appointed at the fourth AGM held in-person on September 02, 2023, for the term 2023-2025. Dr. Reshan Fernando, 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 OR www.cufsa.com) and social media accounts on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/CUFSAA/>), YouTube Channels (<https://www.youtube.com/@CUFSAA>) and <https://www.youtube.com/@CUFSAASpeakerSeries>) and LinkedIn account (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cufsa/>) are being used for informing the membership of the association's achievements and ongoing projects, releasing regular newsletters, promoting fundraising activities, as well as to attract new members from all over North America under one umbrella.

At the end of the 2023-2024 year, we were able to initiate, complete, or continue to proceed forward with the following projects and programs.

Membership and Member Services Project

As of the end of September 2024, we have 559 members. We encourage past students, academic staff, and specifically junior alumni of the University of Colombo Science Faculty residing in the USA and Canada to join the association and support our mission by completing the online membership application available on our website: [CUFSAA Membership Form](#).

The Membership Services Project, led by CUFSAA Vice President Dr. Binodh de Silva and the sub-committee, aims to: (a) Recruit new members (b) Keep existing membership information up to date (c) Develop services and benefits for members

New member recruitment will help CUFSAA grow its volunteer and donor base, train future leaders, and assist newly arriving students. Maintaining an updated membership database enables us to find volunteers for specific CUFSAA projects/sub-committees, mentor members, and provide advice on job opportunities. If you haven't done so yet, please take a moment to update your membership profile by following this link: [Update Your Membership Profile](#).

We plan to offer services tailored to junior members (graduate students, fresh graduates, postdoctoral candidates, early-career professionals, etc.) including resume development/review, mock interviews, mentoring, internship/job opportunities, and postdoctoral opportunities.

Additionally, we offer relocation and settlement support for newly arriving students in the USA and Canada. Prospective graduate students can connect with CUFSAA members via University of Colombo faculty members. We extend our thanks to CUFSAA members who have recently assisted several students who arrived in the USA and Canada, with transportation, lodging, and settlement support

Our major projects and fundraising events for the reporting term 2023-2024 involved the following activities.

Projects and other activities:

1. Equipment Donation to the Department of Chemistry

The donation of a container full of scientific equipment to the Department of Chemistry, was completed. The 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 arrived at the department on Tuesday, Aug 8th, 2023. This donation was made possible by CUFSAA member, Dr. Anagi Balachandra. She was able to arrange this equipment donation through her employer, Professor Parviz Soroushian, the owner of Metna Inc. These equipment (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 6 Balances, a Vacuum evacuation cell, power supply units, a digital multimeter, BROOKFIELD DV-III Ultra Programmable Rheometers, viscometers, Electrochemical workstation, 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, Mr Chavin Perera/Chief Analytical Chemist, Ms. Vajira Balasubramaniam/Personal Assistant to the Chairman UGC and other faculty members who were involved to get all the 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), Deputy 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.

2. Laboratory Equipment and Glassware Donation to the Chemistry Department

The laboratory glassware and equipment donation to the Department of Chemistry, University of Colombo arranged by former CUFSAA Executive Board member Dr. Lakmal Boteju and his family. The project was

completed in January 2024. This Shipment was two pallets weighing over 1000 kg containing over 9000 items. The shipment included various laboratory glassware, chromatographic columns and supplies, various syringes, UV lamps, solvent and vacuum pumps, magnetic stirrers, heating units, filter papers, culture/centrifuge tubes, balances, thermometers, desiccators, vortex apparatus, rotary evaporators, pH meters, gas regulators, spectrofluorometers and many other items. The estimated value of these items anew is well over US \$30,000.

Many people from the US and Sri Lanka have contributed to the successful completion of this project. All glassware was carefully packaged to avoid any breakage during shipment while extra care was taken to repackage vibration sensitive equipment like analytical balances. The packaging was conducted over multiple days and everything was done perfectly by Dr. Boteju and his family members. Later, we learned that all items arrived at the Chemistry Department safely without any significant breakages, largely due to the outstanding packaging work done by Dr. Boteju and his family. Dr. Chandana Goonetilleke and Ms. Sandya Liyanarachchi worked tirelessly to arrange the shipment from New Jersey to Colombo, Sri Lanka. They worked closely with Mr. Asanka Dharmakeerthi of Ceylon Shipping Inc, NY (a member of TRICO Group) who helped with the paperwork and coordinated the shipment and its timely arrival in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The shipment was cleared from customs with prior approvals from Dean/Science, Head/Chemistry VC, Senate, Secretary, Education Ministry, in Sri Lanka. CUFSAA sincerely thanks Dr. Lakmal Boteju and his family for this generous donation and their hard work. CUFSAA would like to express our sincere gratitude to Prof. Upul Sonnadara, Dean, Faculty of Science and Prof. Nalin de Silva, HOD, Department of Chemistry for making arrangements for custom clearance and Mr. Gamini Jayawardena (Science Faculty Alumni), Deputy Director of Customs for his invaluable advice throughout the process.

This is truly a great gift to the Synthetic and Drug Discovery Lab as well as other teaching and research laboratories of the Chemistry Department at the University of Colombo. We have no doubt that Science Faculty students and researchers will benefit and continue to utilize these equipment and supplies for decades.

3. CUFSAA Physics Equipment Project (Phase One)

The Phase One of the Physics Equipment Project successfully cleared all hurdles, and the equipment was delivered to the University of Colombo's Physics Department on June 26, 2024. We want to highlight the collaborative success and extend our gratitude to everyone involved.

Special thanks to Prof. Chandana Jayaratne, whose support and presence were instrumental in getting the necessary approvals. Along with Mr. Gamini Jayawardena who was already on-site at the Trico Warehouse, we were able to ensure a smooth clearance at customs. We thank the generosity of our Phase 1 donors, the CUFSAA subcommittee members and our supporters, Sachith Dissanayake, Chandana Goonetilleke, Saliya De Silva, Sandya Liyanarachchi, Chandrasiri Jayakody for making this possible.

All items were found to be in excellent condition (as inspected by faculty members, Prof. Chandana Jayaratne, Prof. I.M.K. Fernando and Dr. Kanishka Wijayarathne) and were safely delivered to the Physics Department. We are pleased to report that the equipment is now benefiting students.

Phase One equipment included 1. Semiconductor thermogenerator – Seebeck effect 2. Millikan Oil Drop apparatus 3. Speed of Light Apparatus 4. HeNe Laser, 632.8 nm, 10 mW, Polarized (THOR Labs) and 5. Right Angle Prism Mirror, Protected Gold, L = 50.0 mm (THOR Labs).

4. CUFSAA Physics Equipment Project (Phase Two-Part 1 and 2)

Phase Two- Part 1 included the following equipment directly ordered on August 31, 2024, from Holmarc Opto-Mechatronics, Ltd, Kochi, Kerala, India, (a) Magnetic Susceptibility-Quincke's Method (b) B-H Curve/Magnetic Hysteresis Curve. The shipment is expected to be delivered to Colombo port on Oct 12, 2024. Again, we thank the generosity of our Phase 2 donor, the CUFSAA subcommittee members and our supporters, Sachith Dissanayake, Chandana Goonetilleke, Saliya De Silva, Sandya Liyanarachchi, Chandrasiri Jayakody for their support.

Many thanks to Prof. Upul Sonnadara, Dean/Science, Prof. Chandana Jayaratne, HOD/Physics, Prof. I.M.K. Fernando and Dr. Kanishka Wijayarathne for their invaluable support.

Phase Two-Part 2 items which include (a) Zeeman Effect Apparatus (b) Michelson & Fabry-Perot Interferometer and (c) Photoelectric Effect Apparatus and the order has already been placed with the United Scientific, Canada in July 2024. Items are being custom-manufactured and will be available in late October 2024 for shipment. Again, many thanks to our donor for his generosity and continuous support for CUFSAA.

5. Centennial Book Project

During 2022-2023 CUFSAA donated the total cost of printing for the publication of a commemorative volume which was part of the centenary celebrations of the Faculty of Science. This centennial volume chronicles the faculty's 100-year odyssey of academic eminence.

The book was launched on December 21st, 2023, at the University of Colombo. CUFSAA Vice President Saliya de Silva, together with committee members Asoka Pinnaduwa, Unil Perera, and Angelo Gunasekera represented our organization.

In recognition of the invaluable support extended by CUFSAA towards the project, the faculty provided CUFSAA with 100 copies. We were able to ship these to the USA in January of 2024 thanks to the generous support received from Mr. Shantha Athalage. The committee decided to distribute the 100 copies among the members in lieu of a \$100 donation, which will be directed towards the cost of printing. Currently, about 100 copies have been distributed.

6. CUFSAA Distinguished Speaker Series

CUFSAA initiated the Distinguished Speaker Series in 2022 that aims to advance/enhance vs. empower the scientific knowledge of the students. Although the seminars are primarily focused on the students and early career researchers in the Faculty of Science University of Colombo, the seminar series is available to all the CUFSAA members publicly through the CUFSAA YouTube channel and Facebook page. This project shares the findings of cutting-edge research as well as knowledge from experts in various disciplines including guidance on career development.

CUFSAA continued this Series in 2023/2024 and organized three (3) talks delivered by distinguished speakers. This series was open to the students in the University of Colombo faculty of science and other universities in an effort to collaborate to benefit all students, faculty and other members.

Talk 08: Vajira Abeysinghe – Building a career in Information Technology – *December 11, 2023.*

Talk 09: Prof. Sandun Perera – Enhancing your career options through data-driven or industry-focused research – *January 29, 2024.*

Talk 10: Prof. Gomika Udugamasooriya – Novel technologies to expedite the drug-lead discovery process – February 27, 2024.

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

7. CUFSAA Launch Pad Student Grant Program

The Launch Pad is a premium student grant program created to support undergraduates having the gravest financial difficulties in continuing their education. The awardees are selected by a committee representing all departments in the Science Faculty. We are thrilled to announce that we have successfully disbursed the first six-month installment of USD180 to all 36 students. This is a significant milestone in our CUFSAA Launch Pad Grants initiative, which initiated one of the most extensive grant schemes in the Faculty of Science's history covering all departments.

In response to this request, the faculty received 189 applications, demonstrating the dire situation, at which time the faculty was confronted with the daunting task of shortlisting these applications with in-person interviews ensuring that the most financially distressed thirty-six students were selected.

We are immensely grateful to our donors and faculty committee members for their unwavering support and dedication, without which this initiative would not have been possible.

We thank ExCo member/ Assistant Treasurer Jeeva Witanachchi for organizing live performances from Sri Lankan legends, රනිවල බලකොය on September 7, 2024, to support fundraising efforts towards this program.

Many thanks to ExCo member Dr. Kirthi Premadasa and the Launch Pad sub-committee for their unwavering commitment to this project.

8. Synthetic Chemistry and Drug Discovery Lab Proposal

Think of the days when you carried out your laboratory experiments or research projects with limited and aged equipment and facilities but still received a good education which paved the path for your success. With those limited facilities, the department impart quality education that made you the successful person you are today!

The Department of Chemistry has initiated a project to set up a Synthetic Chemistry and Drug Discovery Laboratory and CUFSAA has agreed to fund the phase 2 of the project. This phase will fund the basic lab infrastructure consisting of fume hoods, chemical resistant benches, Schlenk line, solvent purification system, rotary evaporators, balances, ovens, hotplates, stirrers, and other general lab equipment which involves upgrading the basic laboratory construction will be carried out by the University and the Department of Chemistry. CUFSAA plans to implement phase 2 of the project in three stages. Our immediate goal is to raise USD 35,000 for the first stage of phase 2. Thanks to the generosity of our alumni, we have so far raised over USD 30,000 (including a USD 5,000 pledge) towards this goal. In addition, we have already provided some of the equipment listed above through Dr. Anagi Balachandra's donation. Phase 1 of the project is expected to be completed by the University by the end of 2024, after which CUFSAA will undertake the implementation of the first stage of phase 2. The target date of completion will be December 2025.

9. Professor MLT Kannangara Gold Medal and Memorial Scholarships

Professor MLT Kannangara, Emeritus Professor of Physics and former head of the Department of Physics at the University of Colombo (UoC), began his undergraduate studies at UoC in 1943 and earned his BSc in Physics and was appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in 1948. He obtained his PhD from the University of Manchester in 1953 working on Cosmic Ray Physics. He spent several sabbaticals including one at the well-known Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge University. He spent his entire academic career (1943-1990) at University of Colombo, eventually becoming head of the department (1978-1984), retiring as a Senior Professor of Physics in 1990.

Against all odds, Professor Kannangara led a productive research program throughout his career. He published two articles in the Journal of Geophysical Research (a leading journal on geophysics) with his colleague, late Professor PCB Fernando, on geomagnetic micro-pulsations and frequency spectrum and another single-author article in the same journal on polarization characterizations of micro pulsations from observations taken close to the geomagnetic equator, which runs through Sri Lanka. Returning from 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 from University of Colombo Physics, benefitting many current and previous members of the University of Colombo Department of Physics. Professor MLT Kannangara was elected President of SLAAS Section E in 1963 and became a Fellow of the Institute of Physics, London in 1971. He served as the Chief Examiner for the GCE A/L Physics exam in 1974-75 and was a founding Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka in 1977. Known as an excellent teacher, he meticulously prepared lecture notes, emphasizing physics principles, error analysis, and the joy of learning. Taking great care to prepare his own lecture notes, updating often eagerly pointing out the underlying physics, he emphasized the importance of assessing the relative contributions from different physical parameters to a particular phenomenon. Reflecting on his contributions to science and education in Sri Lanka, University of Colombo awarded him an Honorary DSc in 1994.

In memory of Prof. MLT Kannangara, CUFSAA, with university approval, established the MLT Kannangara Memorial Gold Medal for the Most Outstanding Physics Special Student with first-class honors, awarded at convocation. The first recipient in 2022 was Ms. Limini Fonseka who is pursuing her PhD at University of Virginia in Physics. The 2023 award went to Mr. Buddhika Rasanjana who received the award at the 2024 October convocation. The Gold Medal winner selection will continue yearly from each batch from the endowment established at the University by CUFSAA. Additionally, the MLT Kannangara Memorial Scholarship was created for Special Degree Physics students. One student is selected annually and receives funding for two years. Currently, there are two active scholarship recipients at University of Colombo Physics. This will continue as long as the funding is available.

10. Professor Valentine Joseph Gold Medals/Memorial Scholarships

Since 2020, in memory of renowned mathematician Professor Valentine Joseph, CUFSAA has been funding an annual gold medal for a student with an outstanding performance in the computational mathematics special degree. CUFSAA is proud to report that starting in 2024, a second gold medal will be awarded to a student excelling in Applied Mathematics. In addition, since 2020, in line with the compassionate spirit of the late Professor V. Joseph, two scholarships have also been awarded to students in grave economic need in the

mathematics department. The scholarships pay US\$ 35/= per month. This year's gold medal recipients are Mr. H N Bimsara and Ms. J P M Dilki.

11. Professor 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, 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 honorary 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-based scholarship for a second-year student who has successfully completed the first-year coursework and is in the gravest economic need. In 2023, the gold medal was awarded to Ms. D.M.T.G. Dasanayake during the convocation held on 4th October 2024 and one student received the scholarship.

12. Gold Medal for Special Degree Program in Computational Chemistry

The award was named the ‘CUFSAA 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. In 2023 convocation held on 4th October 2024, the gold medal was awarded to Mr. S.P. Sandaruwan.

13. North America Inter-University Alumni Softball Cricket Tournament

The inaugural North America Inter-University Alumni Softball Cricket Tournament, jointly organized by CUFSAA and the University of Peradeniya Alumni Association, was held at Warminster Park, Pennsylvania, on the 22nd of September 2024. Three teams—University of Colombo, University of Peradeniya, and University of Moratuwa—participated in the inaugural tournament. The tournament was organized in two stages. A Masters League geared towards senior cricketers where each team included a minimum of six players aged 50 and over, and a Championship League to decide the Inter-University championship. A total of 148 individuals, consisting of alumni and their family members, participated in this event.

The University of Colombo team won the first ever North American Inter-University Alumni Cricket Tournament. The team members were: Neranjaka Jayaratne (captain), Ramesh Gunaratna, Sachith Dissanayake, Varuna Mallawarachchi, Choolantha Rajapaksha, Gayan Premaratne, Kalhara Manikdiwela, and Amal Kaluarachchi. The University of Colombo players also won the awards for Best Batsman (Sachith Dissanayake), Best Bowler (Neranjaka Jayarathne), and Most Valuable Player (Choolanatha Rajapaksa). We are grateful to Dr. Lakmal Boteju who arranged several practice sessions for the team.

This tournament was more than just a cricket match; it was a fantastic opportunity to reconnect with your university alumni, make new friends, and have fun in a vibrant and engaging social event while raising some funds for the association programs. Whether you’re a seasoned cricket player or just want to be a part of the excitement, we welcome teams from all Sri Lankan university alumni associations to join us in 2025.

Ear-marked Funds and Programs

1. CUFSAA 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). Financial assistance must be related to the student’s educational needs either for undergraduate education assistance or for higher education assistance. This fund was later renamed as the Benevolent Fund. This fund is a stationary fund of the association.

2. Mentoring Program

CUFSAA created this program early in its formation and is continuing to this fiscal year. 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 looking for employment opportunities. Many students were supported during the 2023-2024 year through our volunteer services.

3. Take a Book Program

Take a Book Program is another successful project launched by CUFSAA through the generosity of our members. This program has supplied numerous textbooks to the Faculty of Science. Under this program, CUFSAA 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. Program did not continue during this fiscal year.

Future Vision

Today, we are proudly celebrating eight successful years of CUFSAA since its inception. As in previous years, we have successfully completed many projects during the past year. All these activities have benefited the students, staff and faculty of the Science Faculty, University of Colombo. We express our sincere gratitude to our loyal members who have been instrumental and provided their unwavering support throughout this period.

With eight remarkable years of progress, CUFSAA is poised to continue its mission to improve the academic life of students, aspire them to achieve the highest academic excellence, and help them reach their full potential through many projects and programs. Furthermore, CUFSAA will continue its partnership with the resolute faculty and staff of the Science Faculty and provided resources to further their commitment to providing a first-class education to the students of Science Faculty and shape the minds of next generation leaders and entrepreneurs for a better tomorrow.

In order for us to continue our mission and to grow and expand our association, we encourage all alumni to join CUFSAA and get involved with its activities. We need volunteers to lead our projects, champions to chair our sub-committees and many others to play active roles in the association. We respectfully ask that you get involved with CUFSAA in whatever capacity you can and be generous with your time, talent, and treasure. Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the membership for their active participation and generous contributions that helped us achieve the goals of the association to benefit our Alma Mater.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted, Dr. Wasundara Fernando (Secretary), Dr. Neranjake Jayarathne – Assistant Secretary /CUFSAA <https://www.cufsa.com>