

ALUMNI NEWS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

December 2015

Vol. XII 1st Issue

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

At present, the University of Colombo has become the pinnacle of Sri Lankan Universities. It is my intention to make it a world-class regional university using all our talents to maximum potential. For example, the 'Faculty of Medicine' already plays a leading role in the region, setting world-class standards. Under my leadership, the 'Faculty of Graduate Studies' started to make the university benefit from worldwide horizons. Many Vice Chancellors have made an appreciable attempt to set world-wide accepted international university standards for the University of Colombo. I will continue to engage in the good work which was initiated by them and make maximum effort to expand and develop this to all the faculties and institutes wherever possible. I will promote the strategy of 'acting in partnership', because institutions working together can draw more talent and add more value than can be achieved separately. Achieving this objective is very essential for a student-centred university like ours, if graduates are to use their talents to full potential. This would help the employers to assess the distinctive strength of our students who have been encouraged to develop during their training at the university. Therefore, by opening up all the opportunities available for our students to maintain and upgrade a high quality education, as well as expanding education opportunities for many others who are eligible, we will pioneer a tradition, which believes strongly in partnership and fair play to constantly refresh ourselves, our institutions, communities and society. This vision is well-matched with the development framework of the Government of Sri Lanka.

Every student matters, as we are a student-centred institution. Therefore, I plan to begin with students in the centre and then radiate to encompass all other communities in the university. Whether it is being student-centred or linking students to the community outside the university and across the globe, I will adopt the very best practice that can be discerned from our own heritage, as well as the best practices we can discover from benchmarking ourselves against world-class regional universities.

Professor Lakshman Dissanayake
Vice Chancellor - University of Colombo



President Rajeev Amarasuriya handing over the Felicitation Plaque to the Vice Chancellor Senior Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake while State Minister of University Education Hon. Mohan Lal Grero looks on at the Felicitation Ceremony

RAJEEV AMARASURIYA NEW PRESIDENT



President Rajeev Amarasuriya

Upon the resignation of former President Lakshman Keerthisinghe due to professional work commitments, the Executive Committee of the Association which convened on 22nd April 2015 unanimously elected Mr. Rajeev Amarasuriya, the Vice President at the time, as the 10th President of the Alumni Association.

It was a significant event with a third generation alumnus taking over the mantle of this Association formed in 1982 by Prof. Stanley Wijesundera, the then Vice Chancellor and Mr. Tissa Devendra as the founder President. The other Presidents have been the Late Mrs. Sujata Jayawardena, the Late Mr. Yogendra Duraiswamy, the Late Dr. Dudley Gunasekera, Mr. J. Charitha Ratwatte, Mr. Thilak Karunaratne, Mrs. Ramanee Amarasuriya, Mr. P.W. Senaratne and Mr. Lakshman Keerthisinghe.

Mr. Rajeev Amarasuriya is a honours Graduate of the Faculty of Law of the University of Colombo, is an Attorney-at-Law and also a Fellow Member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (UK). He has also been a one time Visiting Lecturer and Examiner in Tax Law at the Faculty of Law. At the time of his appointment, he was one of the most senior members of the Executive Committee, having served in the Executive Committee since 2004.

The 33rd Annual General Meeting of the Association was held recently at the College House premises of the University of Colombo, with the participation of a large number of Alumni and Academic Staff of the University.

The Chief Guest was Prof. Mohan De Silva, the Chairman of the University Grants Commission whilst the Guest of Honour was Prof. Lalitha Mendis, the Competent Authority of the University of Colombo. Many Deans and Senior Professors participated at this event.

President Rajeev Amarasuriya in his address said that Alumni of the University of Colombo need to be very grateful to this institution for all that they have received from it, by way of education, services, facilities and exposure, all provided to them free of charge with no bondage or prior stipulated conditions. He further stated that the Association gives Colombo Alumni the opportunity to give back to the university in whichever way they can, and enables them to play a role in its development and pursuit of academic excellence while also ensuring continued interactions with the university and fellow alumni.

He also stated that although the University of Colombo is ranked highly both in Sri Lanka and in South Asia its world ranking is less competitive. One of the most obvious issues that confront the University is that Sri Lanka is still a developing nation with a limited allocation of funding and resources directed towards higher education. This limits the extent of facilities, technology, research and other opportunities available to the university, being one of the reasons preventing it from rising in international ranking.

He also paid tribute to the staff and authorities of the university, who despite these barriers and deficits have worked tirelessly in attempting to provide students with exposure on par with other world class institutions. He also highlighted the several projects that the new Committee plans on initiating during the coming years

which are to be within three broad areas; as projects that cater to the welfare of the students, projects that serve the members of the Association and projects that serve the University at large.

He further stated, although students excel academically, an area that many struggle with is their ability to communicate in English, given that a majority of them complete their secondary school Education in either Sinhala or Tamil. This can be very overwhelming for those who are required to suddenly switch their primary medium of instruction to English, making their university experience very stressful and preventing them from reaching their full potential. Therefore, the Association will run a series of programmes focusing on developing these skills in students. While concerns are sometimes raised by the industry about the “employability” of graduates, the Association will also strive to bridge some of their identified skills deficits by implementing projects on soft skills development enabling them to be high runners in the job market.

Development of Entrepreneurial skills will be another area that will be focused in order to better position the graduates to contribute to the Economy and Society. This will be in addition to the series of student welfare activities that have been conducted over the past 32 years, many of which will be resuscitated. These include the Student Friend and Guide Scheme, Eye Camps, granting of Scholarships, Mentoring Programmes, Entrepreneurship Programmes, promotion of the Creative Arts of the students etc.

For the Alumni, the Association plans to have more fellowship events where they can meet and establish professional and social contacts and also have closer relationship with the University.

The Association will also take steps to make the vast resources of Alumni available to the University and its Administration, for the growth and

development of the University. This can be in the form of assistance in curriculum development, training and infrastructure development.

Prof. Mohan De Silva, Chairman of the University Grants Commission who delivered the Keynote Address whilst stating that an Alumni Association is a forum for discussion of both personal and professional issues, emphasised the importance of their being professionalism amongst graduates, and went on to state that professionals are not oblivious to the environment and are equipped with emotional intelligence. Prof. Mendis who was the Guest of Honour stated there was much that could be done to improve the university system which would also result in improved world rankings. Areas which need to be addressed included improved funding, more autonomy for the Universities when utilising self generated funds, enhancement of cadres to keep up with increased student intakes and the need to provide more research grants.

Several Constitutional Amendments were also effected at this Annual General Meeting.

The Committee comprises President – Rajeev Amarasuriya, Vice Presidents - Vice Chancellor Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake (Ex-Officio) and Suranjani Wickremeratne, Immediate Past President – Lakshman Keerthisinghe, Past Presidents as Advisors – Tissa Devendra, J. Charitha Ratwatte, Thilak Karunaratne, Ramanee Amarasuriya and P.W. Senaratne, Secretary - Ruwandhi Thanthrige, Asst. Secretary – Naazima Kamardeen, Treasurer – J.M.S. Bandara, Assistant Treasurer – Jithendra Gunatilake, Editor – Mahesha Amarasuriya, Assistant Editor – Ajit Jayawardena and Executive Committee Members - Prof. Gihan Wickramanayake, M.K. Gnanasekera, Channa De Silva, Dayani Panagoda, Milton Arandara, K. D. R. Siriwardena, G. Wijemanna, D. H. W. Kirinde, Isuru Thilakawardena and Nayantha Wijesundera.

FELICITATION FOR THE NEW VICE CHANCELLOR

A formal felicitation ceremony to welcome the new Vice Chancellor Senior Professor Lakshman Dissanayake was organised recently by the Alumni Association at the Senate Hall in the College House premises of the University of Colombo. This Felicitation was held under the patronage of Minister of University Education and Highways and Leader of the House Lakshman Kiriella, State Minister of University Education Mohan Lal Gero and the Chairman of the University Grants Commission Prof. Mohan De Silva, and was well attended by many Alumni and University Academics.

President Rajeev Amarasuriya delivering the inaugural address stated that the new Vice Chancellor was someone with a great vision, always striving to take the University of Colombo to greater heights. The President stated that the new VC has always shown tremendous energy, passion and enthusiasm in his endeavours while facing many a challenge with vigour and dedication to meet his targets, making sure to get the job done. The success of the Faculty of Graduate Studies as a seat of postgraduate learning today, bears testimony to some of the important developmental initiatives that he implemented during his tenure as the Dean of this Faculty.

He went on to state that Prof. Dissanayake has assumed this important office at a very important juncture, when the Universities have a big role to play in the planned multi-fold development activities.

University Grants Commission Chair Prof. Mohan De Silva congratulating the new Vice Chancellor stated that Prof. Dissanayake has vast experience in his university career, covering most of the Administrative and Academic roles having gone through the mill so to speak being the Academic Sub Warden, Academic Warden, Student Counsellor, Co-ordinator of the Demographic Training and Research Institute, Rector of the Sripalee Campus and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies before being appointed as Vice Chancellor.

State Minister of University Education Hon. Mohan Lal Gero speaking at the felicitation said that approximately 247,500 students sat for the Advance Level Examination in August 2014 and about 150,000 became eligible for University entrance. However, only 24,350 (which is 16.4% of those eligible) were accepted to the university system due to constraints in the capacity. He said that it is of paramount importance that the government focuses on increasing access to the university by enhancing the capacity. He further stated in his address that the University of Colombo was fortunate to have a Vice Chancellor such as Prof. Dissanayake being a Demographer who has the necessary skill and sound knowledge to think ahead and ensure holistic development of the University.

Sending a message which was read out by Mrs. Chamindrani Kiriella, the daughter of Minister Lakshman Kiriella, the Minister warmly welcomed the new Vice Chancellor who the Minister acknowledged as having over three decades of experience as a teacher, researcher and administrator of the highest calibre and extended the fullest support of the Ministry in the execution of his duties.

Professor Nayani Melagoda spoke of the dedication and commitment with which Prof. Dissanayake had worked right through his career, having obtained a rare doctorate in Population Studies and having introduced a Masters of Demography to the University Curricula in addition to having played a number of key roles in the University as an Academic and an Administrator.

Dr. Naazima Kamardeen, Assistant Secretary of the Alumni Association who co-ordinated the Felicitation formally introduced the new Vice Chancellor.

Addressing the gathering, Professor Dissanayake highlighted that as a



*Professor Lakshman Dissanayake
Vice Chancellor - University of Colombo*

student of the University of Colombo he took part in many extra-curricular activities without ever having to miss lectures and that he always attended to his studies diligently. The secret to his success, he emphasised, was hard work and commitment, a character trait developed during the formative undergraduate years, which he maintains to date. Professor Dissanayake also stated that as a former student who had experienced all aspects of a university student's life, he was well-equipped to understand and address issues concerning present day undergraduate students. His aspiration he said is to make the University of Colombo a World Class Regional University similar to the National University of Singapore. He further said that he will establish proper traditions and procedures and prevent politicization within the University. His immediate plans for the university include making the University accessible for the differently-abled students, establish a service centre which is equipped with a restaurant, conference room and a guest house for visiting faculty and also start a Faculty of Technology within the University.

The Vote of Thanks was delivered by the Association's Secretary Ruwandhi Thanthrige.

Senior Professor Lakshman Dissanayake entered the University of Colombo in 1973 as an undergraduate and continued his association with the University as an academic after obtaining First Class Honours for his

ALUMNI FELICITATES THE NEW VICE CHANCELLOR



33RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Secretary Ms. Ruwandhi Thantrige, Vice President Ms. Suranjani Wickremaratne, Guest of Honour, Competent Authority of the University of Colombo, Prof. Lalitha Mendis, President Mr. Rajeev Amarasuriya, Chief Guest, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Prof. Mohan De Silva, Immediate Past President Mr. Lakshman Keerthisinghe, Outgoing Treasurer Mr. M.K.Gnanasekera



Sponsored by Multiform Chemicals Ltd

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LAW AND HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOUR DAY TO DAY RIGHTS

: The Alumni Association hosts workshop for undergraduates

It is a fact that all citizens require at least a basic knowledge and understanding of the law, which would enable them to respond effectively in the various situations that they find themselves placed in, in everyday life. These could take place in their places of employment, on the road, in shops and supermarkets, with neighbours and even with the State and its agents. Very often, people do not know what the expected response is, and wait until the problem is aggravated before thinking of a remedy. Undergraduates who hope to join the ranks of the workforce very soon, are no exception. As they would become responsible citizens of this country, who are looked up to in their communities, it is vital that they possess a basic knowledge and understanding of how the law operates.

Bearing this in mind, an interactive workshop was hosted by the Alumni Association as part of LAW WEEK 2015, of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, on Tuesday, 24th November 2015, from 2 - 4.30 pm at the Ceylon Room of the Faculty of Law.

This workshop aimed at educating the undergraduates of the University of Colombo on fundamental legal issues which affect them in their day to day lives as consumers, employees, citizens, property owners / tenants, testate and/or intestate beneficiaries etc. It featured talks by experienced legal practitioners and academics on a wide array of topics such as branches of law, the court structure and how to access them, citizen rights, police powers, consumer rights, employment rights, legal aid, as well as matters pertaining to marriage, divorce, land and motor accidents.

The presenters were all Alumni and included Mr. Ikram Mohamed, P.C, Mr. Hiran De Alwis, Attorney-at-Law, Mr. Shantha Jayawardena, Attorney-at-Law, and moderated by Ms. Wasantha Seneviratne, Head of the Department of Public and International Law of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo. Close to 400 undergraduates participated at this event. Participants were given refreshments and a certificate of participation. The project was chaired by Mr. Nayantha Wijesundera.

Cont. to page. 8

.....Cont. from page. 3 FELICITATION FOR THE NEW.....

first degree. Thereafter, Professor Dissanayake received several postgraduate qualifications including a Master of Arts degree from the Vrije Universiteit Brussels, Belgium and PhD from the University of Adelaide, Australia. Professor Dissanayake is the recipient of many national and international awards and fellowships for his contribution to the field of Demography.

He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA) in the United Kingdom. He has also been a Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences of the Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom. Presently, he serves the University of Colombo as a Senior Professor in the Department of Demography. Additionally, Professor Dissanayake founded the Colombo University Community Centre (CUCEC) which is the first multidisciplinary centre in the whole University system devoted to community extension related work.

WORKSHOP WITH THE ACCOMPLISHED US ENTREPRENEUR SAMIRA COOK GAINES

The Alumni Association in collaboration with the Women's Chamber of the U.S Embassy in Sri Lanka organised an Entrepreneurship Skills Development Workshop with the American Entrepreneur and Trainer Samira Cook Gaines. The Workshop covered the following areas; Innovation and Turning Ideas into Business Ventures, How to Build a Startup and How to Craft a Strong Business Plan.

This was attended by one hundred undergraduates from the Faculty of Management and Finance of the University. The Dean of the Faculty, Dr. R. Senathirajah was also present. This project was chaired by Ms. Suranjani Wickremeratne.



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES BRAND NEW WEBSITE

The Alumni Association launched a Brand New Website for the Association designed and presented by the leading Web Design Company 3CS for the Association which is linked to Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media enabling better communication with the membership and the public as well.

The Website was formally launched at the Annual General Meeting by the Chief Guest Prof. Mohan De Silva, the Guest of Honour Prof. Lalitha Mendis, President Rajeev Amarasuriya and Chairman 3CS and former Vice Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya Prof. Madduma Bandara.

The Association extends its gratitude to Mr. Sandaruwan Madduma Bandara, Chief Executive Officer of 3CS (Pvt) Limited for coming forward to support the Association as its web developer.

Visit us at <https://alumni.cmb.ac.lk>
<https://colomboalumni.lk>

3CS
a state of mind



Official Launching of the new Website by Prof. Lalitha Mendis & UGC Chairman Prof. Mohan De Silva

WINNER AT BEST WEB 2015

The Association's Website won a Merit Award in the Non Profit Organisation Category at the Best Web Awards 2015.



Vice President Ms. Suranjani Wickremeratne receiving the Award



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO
SRI LANKA

12th Annual Sujata Jayawardena Memorial Oration
to be delivered by

Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe

Prime Minister - Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
on

"Strengthening Democratic Institutions"

on Friday, 11th December 2015

at
5:30 p.m.
At the BMICH

Main Sponsors



STUDENT MENTORING PROGRAMME

The Association plans to commence a Mentoring Programme for the undergraduates. If you are interested in supporting this endeavour by becoming a Mentor, please write to <alumni.colombo@gmail.com> with your details before 10th January 2016. Mentors will be recognised for the voluntary service that they provide. Any clarifications regarding the programme could be made via the above mentioned email address.

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Please write to us on <alumni.colombo@gmail.com> and update your contact details (Mobile Number and Email address) so that we can keep you posted on upcoming events.

CONTRIBUTE TO ALUMNI NEWS

Please share your thoughts and views with us. Send in your contributions to the Newsletter Attn: Editor, Alumni News and email to : <alumni.colombo@gmail.com>

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

The Alumni Association is currently formulating a structured scholarship scheme for the students, who excel in studies, sports and other extra curricular activities. If you are interested in sponsoring a scholarship please contact us:- <alumni.colombo@gmail.com>

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LAW AND HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOUR DAY TO DAY RIGHTS



Thank You

The Editor and the Assistant Editor of the Alumni Association of the University of Colombo together with the members in the Executive Committee wish to extend a very warm thank you to Mr. Thilak Karunaratne, Chairman and Managing Director of Multiform Chemicals Pvt. Ltd., and Past President of our Association, for sponsoring the Alumni News since its inception, including this issue.

To:
.....
.....
.....
.....

If undelivered please return to:

94, Kumaratunga Munidasa Mawatha,
Colombo 03, Sri Lanka