

University of Peradeniya Alumni Association USA (UPAA-USA) Annual Report 2025

Dear Pera Alumni,

The Annual Report of UPAA-USA for 2025 is intended to summarize the alumni fellowship events and other activities implemented during the year aimed at helping the University of Peradeniya. It also includes a financial report on funds raised and expenses incurred over the year.

Appointment of a New Executive Committee

A new Executive Committee consisting of six (6) office bearers and 17 members were appointed at the beginning of the year. The five Standing Committees (Project Evaluation, Communications, Financial, Mentoring, and Social) were also activated with the appointment of Chairs and members. Three alumni were appointed as Ex-Officio members of the Executive Committee. <https://www.upaa-usa.org/upaa-usa-committee/>

Fellowship and Other Social Events

Annual Alumni Reunion: Our 2025 Annual Gathering and Fundraiser was successfully held on October 11th in Pearland, Texas, at the Hilton Garden Inn Reception Hall. The event was sold out one week prior to the scheduled date and attended by approximately 240 Pera alumni and other local Sri Lankan friends. The event started with a Meet and Greet ("Thela") session over appetizers and drinks that enabled alumni from 1960s to 2020s to mingle with friends and cherish their memories at Pera. The formal event commenced with the President's address highlighting UPAA-USA's accomplishments since its establishment, and a fund-raising presentation by the President-elect on project opportunities to help UoP. The entertainment sessions commenced with a mesmerizing traditional Sri Lankan welcome dance by three daughters of our alumni, followed up with a comedy skit on life experiences at UoP. Our alumnus Suren Lewkebandara, a popular personality promoting Sri Lankan art and culture in Texas presented the main role of 'Sinhabahu' drama which was a truly nostalgic performance! The participants also enjoyed a well-choreographed western dance by local alumni in Texas. Subsequently, the Tune-1 live band actively entertained the participants with popular Sri Lankan songs spanning several decades including a *baila* song session that sustained a packed dance floor till midnight. The Executive Committee members who attended the event (20) actively engaged with the participants to raise funds for studentship awards and equipment donations for Pera.

Inter-University Cricket Tournament: We collaborated with the Colombo University Faculty of Science Alumni Association (CUFSAA) to organize the second Sri Lanka Inter-University Softball Cricket Tournament which was successfully held on October 18th, at the Warminster Community Park in Warminster, PA. About 40 players representing the Universities of Peradeniya, Colombo, and Moratuwa participated at this event that also attracted over 100 Sri Lankan spectators. The University of Colombo team won the Champions Trophy, while the University of Peradeniya won

the Masters Trophy. A highlight of this tournament was a women's cricket encounter between 'Unicorns' and 'Angels', which was won by 'Unicorns' in a convincing manner!

Pera Alumni Treks/Hikes/Walks/Picnics and Mini-gatherings: Several UPAA-USA alumni and their family members participated in treks/hikes/walks and Picnics organized in TX, PA, NJ and MD which were fun-filled events to promote fellowship! Several alumni also organized mini gatherings for Pera alumni in TX, PA, NJ, VA, and MD.

Annual General Meeting: The 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association was held remotely on November 21, 2024, via the Microsoft Teams App. About 40 Pera alumni residing in the US joined the AGM. During this meeting, the accomplishments and progress made during 2023—2024 were presented, including activities planned for the year 2025. We also presented the revised Constitution/Bylaws of the Association and called for nominations to the 2025 Executive Committee and Standing Committees. The revised Constitution/Bylaws and the new EC were endorsed by the membership. The 2025 AGM of UPAA-USA members is already scheduled for December 4th, 2025, at 9:00PM EST.

Financial Support for UoP Undergraduate Students

Studentships: At the beginning of the year, the funds raised in 2024 enabled us to award 30 studentships through the Alumni Association of University of Peradeniya (AAUP) and its student welfare group. At least three needy students from each of the nine faculties were awarded Rs. 5000 per month for a 12-month period. Our active fund-raising efforts this year will enable us to award studentships to at least two students per faculty, at an increased rate of Rs. 7,500 per month for a 12-month period.

Felicitation of UoP Undergraduate Students on a Fellowship to the US: A team of four (4) undergraduate students from the UoP Science Faculty won the SSCCA Climate Tank Accelerator 2024 competition organized by the U.S. Department of State and were awarded a fully funded two-week fellowship (February 14-28, 2025) to the United States. They participated in workshops related to environmental sustainability held in Nashville, TN and Washington DC. The UPAA-USA organized a felicitation dinner for the four UoP students on February 23rd in Elkridge, MD and awarded cash prizes (\$250/student) in recognition of their unique accomplishment.

Equipment Donations

Donation of a Model Underwater Robot to the Physics Department: Gamini Dharmasena, the former Secretary of our EC was able to arrange the donation of a model underwater remote-controlled robot ('Defender') to the Science Faculty Physics Department on February 13th, 2025. The market value of the actual ROV is \$300,000, and it has a wide range of underwater applications. Gamini himself was part of the team of scientists and engineers working for VideoRay (AeroVironment Group USA), a globally reputed industrial technology company that developed this remote-controlled vehicle (<https://videoray.com/industries/>). This would be a

historical milestone that would inspire future generations of Pera students to pursue the study of robotics.

Donations to Zoology Department: A member of UPAA-USA donated \$4,000 worth of used micropipettes, which were handed over to the Head of the Zoology Department in August 2025. This equipment will be used by students pursuing Zoology, Molecular Biology and Medical Biotechnology.

Donations to Physics Department: We donated approximately \$12,000 worth of laboratory instruments to the Physics Department in 2025. A video clip of the donated equipment being used at the Physics lab can be accessed from the link below:

[Your Generous Donations at Work!](#)

Donations to Chemistry Department: We donated \$1,430 to the Chemistry Department to purchase instruments needed for the repair of malfunctioning laboratory instruments. The specific instruments purchased included two Digital Oscilloscope 100MHz Dual Channel (FINRISI – 1014D and RIGOL DS1102Z-E), two DC Power Supply Variable 30V 5A (YAXUN 305DS), one DC Power Supply Variable 30V 10A (YAXUN 305DS), two ADC IC (ZN448) and one Diode Array (TCD1304AP). In August 2025, we also handed over some quartz cuvettes (used as sample holder in UV-Vis Spectrophotometry) worth of ca. \$2,250 donated by a UPAA-USA member.

Other Donations and Sponsorships

Sponsorship for PGIS RESCON 2025: We provided a 'Gold Sponsorship' (Rs, 100,000) for the 2025 Annual Research Conference of the UoP Post Graduate Institute of Science (PGIS).

PSUP Membership of APS and AIP: We facilitated the University of Peradeniya Physical Society (PSUP) to obtain membership of the American Physics Society (APS) and American Institute of Physics (AIP). We covered the annual membership fee of \$200, which enabled 200 UoP Physics students to enroll as members and reap valuable benefits.

Mentoring Programs and Seminars

Seminar on Graduate Studies in the USA: UPAA-USA, in partnership with the UoP Science Alumni Association (UPSAA), successfully organized an informative seminar titled "Graduate Studies in the USA" on March 17, 2025. The seminar was led by Dr. Delphine Dean, Chair of the Department of Bioengineering at Clemson University, and Dr. Damayanthi Ranwala, Director of Research Development. The speakers detailed the graduate admissions process, including application components, evaluation criteria, and available financial assistance. It was attended by 85 students and faculty members, who overwhelmingly rated the session as both informative and valuable.

Presentation on Underwater Robots to UoP Physics Society: Our EC member Gamini Dharmasena delivered a presentation to undergraduate students, titled "Physics and Chemistry

of Underwear Robotics" on February 13, 2025, at the University of Peradeniya's Physics Department Lecture Theater.

With around 150 students from various departments in attendance, the session combined a live demonstration with an interactive discussion, clearly showcasing how core principles from physics, chemistry, and engineering apply to innovative underwater robotic systems. The hands-on approach and real-world relevance evidently inspired many students, bridging classroom theory with cutting-edge interdisciplinary applications. A great example of academic outreach done right by UPAA-USA!

UoP Vice Chancellor's Lecture Series – Invited Speaker: Our EC member Gamini Dharmasena was invited to give a lecture titled "A Journey Through the Eyes of an Underwater Robot", delivered on February 19, 2025, at the Senate Room of the University of Peradeniya. The lecture clearly left a strong impression among an esteemed audience of Department Heads and senior faculty members involved in university administration. The title suggests a compelling blend of engineering, robotics, and underwater exploration, likely showcasing real-world applications of autonomous systems in challenging environments.

It's wonderful to see that UPAA-USA was able to use the Vice Chancellor's Lecture Series as a platform not only to bridge diverse fields and inspire the academic community but also motivate the next generation of innovators at Peradeniya.

Joint Visit Organized by UPAA-USA, CUFSA and University of Kansas:

Gamini Dharmasena, Executive Committee member of UPAA-USA, and Binodh DeSilva, Executive Committee member CUFSA-NA, accompanied Professor Susan Lunte from the University of Kansas, USA, on a visit to the University of Peradeniya to participate in a pre-conference workshop organized by the Postgraduate Institute of Science (PGIS) on Aug. 2, 2025. The workshop focused on navigating graduate studies in the United States and effective Statement of Purpose (SOP) writing. The three speakers conducted a series of workshops covering a wide range of topics to support prospective UoP graduate students planning to pursue advanced degrees in U.S. universities. The interactive sessions provided practical guidance and insights, empowering attendees with the tools and knowledge needed to strengthen their applications and succeed in competitive U.S. graduate programs.

Membership Drive

We actively campaigned to recruit new members to our Association through the website, active networking during the annual gathering and the cricket tournament, and direct canvassing by existing members. We were able to recruit about 25 new members in 2025. Please use the following link to enroll as a member of UPAA-USA:

<https://www.upaa-usa.org/become-a-member/>

UPAA-USA Inspires and Supports the Establishment of UPAA-Germany

UPAA-USA inspired and facilitated the establishment of a UoP Alumni Association in Germany. Our EC member Charles Wijayawardhana led this initiative and coordinated the inaugural meeting held on October 25th, 2025. We shared our experience in forming and operating UPAA-USA and introduced them to AAUP. Plans are underway to expand this to cover the wider European region.

Financial Statement

Our financials for the period of 1/1/2025 to 10/31/2025 are summarized below:

Total Income in 2025 (US\$)	72,775.42
Total Expenses in 2025 (US\$)	45,821.02
Bank Balance (as of 10/31/2025)	26,954.40

Projects Planned for November 1 – December 31, 2025

Based on the requests made by UoP a summary of projects that would be carried out within the remaining two months of 2025 is summarized below:

Task	UoP Faculty/Department	Donation from UPAA-USA
Donation of a PCR machine in memory of Dr. Sumana Wijekoon – former Head, Zoology Department	Science Faculty - Zoology Department	\$10,000 (by a member of the 2025 EC)
Refundable loan for Medical Faculty Students	Medical Faculty	\$5,000 (by the spouse of a 2025 EC member in memory of her late Father – a Pera alumni).
Funding for laboratory equipment repair	Science Faculty - Chemistry Department	\$1,600
Donation of laboratory instruments	Science Faculty – Physics Department	\$5,650
Prize for winners of the ‘Ideas to Innovation’ Competition	Engineering Faculty	\$1,750
Funding of two projects by engineering students	Engineering Faculty – Engineering Technology Innovation Center (ETIC)	\$2,000 (by a member of UPAA-USA)
Funding for UoP Arts Circle – a Group of students promoting dance and music	Students from multiple faculties	\$1,000

Continue Fundraising: We will continue to raise funds for helping the needy students to pursue their academic activities at UoP and support other useful projects at Pera in collaboration with the AAUP. We hope that you will continue to support UPAA-USA and contribute towards making a positive impact on our alma mater. Your donation is tax-deductible, and donating is easy via our website. Here is the link: <https://www.upaa-usa.org/donations/>

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the Executive Committee of the AAUP and Faculty Members of UoP for finding us opportunities to support the students and other useful projects at UoP. We appreciate the voluntary support and donations made by the members of our Association to help our alma mater. Our EC members Sujith Wimalasooriya and Sanka Tennakoon are acknowledged for their commitment to organize the annual alumni gathering in Pearland, TX in a successful manner. Our EC member Sujeewa Perera is acknowledged for his lead role in organizing the 2nd Sri Lanka inter-university cricket tournament in PA. We wish to also recognize and greatly appreciate the dedicated services of all our Executive Committee members.

We welcome your comments, suggestions, and feedback. Send feedback or questions to:

president@upaa-usa.org : Channa Bambaradeniya

secretary@upaa-usa.org : Dammi Rupasinghe

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