



PROGRESS REPORT – AGM 2022/23

Our Patron, the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Prof. Punchihewa, my fellow Executive committee members and distinguished members.

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the progress report of the Association for the period commencing from the institution of the current Executive Committee at the last AGM held on 21 May 2022.

We are pleased to inform you that the Committee has been able to set in motion many interventions for the betterment of our undergraduates during this approximately 10 month period ending 31 March 2023. We have had regular structured monthly meetings and in addition to other ad hoc meetings as required and have had at least 14 meetings during the period. At our first meeting in June 2022, we agreed to a work plan until this AGM, and we are pleased to report that we have been successful in implementing this work plan barring few programmes we could not pursue due to reasons beyond our control, which I will go on to explain.

- (1) We were successful in implementing a Mentoring programme for students with approximately 85 students requesting the appointment of a mentor. The programme itself commenced in October 2022 and it concluded after 6 months in March. We are incredibly grateful to our alumni for volunteering to mentor these students despite their very busy schedules and we hope that the mentorship relationship will go beyond the 6 months and enable lasting relationships which would be beneficial to the students.
- (2) We ensured that the virtual career guidance programmes that were conducted during the year 2021 were made accessible to all the students via the learning e-portal of the Faculty.
- (3) We facilitated an Immersion programme with a large corporate for students who have completed the 4th year and were recipients of honours degrees based on their performance. However, regrettably, though 14 positions were available, only 7 students availed of the opportunity.
- (4) We organized a Soft Skills Programme over a period of 3 days, 3 hours at a time, for students to prepare them for the world of work which had been successfully conducted in all universities in the country. But this was abandoned after the 2nd day as the participation was not adequate. We believe that the reasons for poor interest was owing to the programme coinciding with the Faculty opening its door to physical lectures and

the students being not geared to handle classroom type interventions, with some of the students seeing the insides of the study halls for the first time.

- (5) We had many learnings from these interventions and these experiences fashioned some of the other work we set out to do during the year.
- (6) Thus, though we had planned to assist the students to prepare for Law College examinations by conducting lectures in some of the subjects that are not offered at the Faculty, we decided against it as we felt that time of resource personnel will be wasted if there is inadequate attendance.
- (7) Likewise, we had organized a programme to provide students with life skills and conduct a few sessions on the themes of Fundamentals of emotional intelligence, Achieving success and happiness, Entrepreneurship, managing finance and Gratitude. This was pursuant to a recommendation that was made at the last AGM by the members.

However, we decided not to pursue this programme as we were not confident of and could not gauge the interest of the students, as in past programmes though they confirmed their participation many dropped out without any intimation.

- (8) Of course, this also reinforces our belief that ethics in general should be part of the degree programme so that we can confidently continue to say that we are proud of our graduates, whether they end up as lawyers or not, as they conduct themselves professionally, ethically and responsibly and be the change we want to see in this country.
- (9) Despite these setbacks, we are pleased to state that we had a webinar with the Principal Law College and his staff, with our Dean too participating, where students were advised of the history of Law College thus preparing the ground for their easy assimilation to the Law College and what they need to do to be successful in Law college examinations. Over 150 students participated in this programme.
- (10) We also conducted a programme for the freshers' intake of 2023 to introduce them to the Association, the work it does, including the disbursements from the Educational Trust. We were able to get a motivational speaker to speak to them and it was very well received by the approximately 300 students who participated.
- (11) We are pleased to inform you that the Association was able to contribute a further 700,000/= to the Education Trust during the year, making the total contribution Rs. 900,000/= to the Trust. With funds from well-wishers, as at 31 March we have approximately Rs. 1.1 Mn in the Trust and the Trustees have been able to disburse a monthly sum to one student and another 4 students will be provided scholarships commencing May 2023. Though we are happy to help as many students as possible, we are constrained by funds and the assistance thus far given has been with matching funds given by some of our alumni, to whom we are grateful. It is of importance that we have sufficient funds for the Trust to be self-sustaining and I look to the members to support this endeavour with whatever you could contribute.

- (12) We are also pleased to report that our membership has grown by 80 members during the period ending 31 March 2023.
- (13) The main fund-raising activity and the membership drive was the “**Back to Faculty**” event held in December 2022. It was by all counts a successful event with more than 1000 alumni participating in the event, which we were delighted to put together. We hope you have seen the photographs that have been posted on the WhatsApp group, Facebook and the AAFL website. From the proceeds of the event (962,000) we were able to provide the Trust with the Rs. 700,000/= referred to earlier. We are indeed grateful for the sponsorships we received, and services provided to us in kind by the alumni. Without the assistance we got, we could not have collected 1Mn for the Association.
- (14) We have also taken action to ensure that the work of the Association is shared with all of you in a timely fashion via our website, WhatsApp group and facebook page. Extra effort was made in this regard during the year, and we are on course despite some setbacks.
- (15) As you would note from the accounts that are presented, our financial standing got significantly better during the year with a net cash surplus of over 1.5Mn before a write off of Rs. 131,000/= which was an owing of over 10 years. Further the total assets have grown to nearly 3 million.

As mentioned previously after Covid and the issues faced by the country in the immediate aftermath, the University reopened its doors only in mid-September. We believe that the programmes conducted for the students will gain greater traction when the students fully assimilate with the Faculty of Law and begin to understand and appreciate the importance of such interventions.

We also believe that without constant advocacy by the members of the faculty we cannot successfully undertake any of our programmes as there is a clear gap in appreciation of the importance of these interventions. We look to Prof. Punchihewa to make this a reality.

We also thank the Dean, Prof Punchihewa for always being available for discussions and supporting us, despite his busy schedule. We also wish to thank 2 staff members of the Faculty in particular. Sachitha Dilshan and Dumindu Madushan. We thank you for your unstinted cooperation and assistance during the year.

We wish to also thank the sub committee established for the purposes of executing Back to Faculty and Mr. Prasanthalal de Alwis, PC who mooted the idea of having such an event and guided us using the prior knowledge he had when he organized a previous Back to Faculty event. This committee is comprised of Exco members led by Mr. Senaka de Saram, Tharindu Ratnayake, Kalhara Liyanage, Madura Witharana, Attorneys at law and Dr. Kokila Konasinghe and Shermila Anthony from the Faculty. We also thank the administrative staff of the faculty who oversaw the services.

We would be failing in our duty if we do not thank the sponsors, who assisted us in funds and services, namely Derana media, Gamma Pizza Craft, Elephant House, Keells Food Products, Aitken Spence Hotels, American Water.

This concludes our report and I, together with my committee members, will be pleased to answer any questions you may have under AOB on the agenda.

Thank you.

Dilani Alagaratnam

President AAFL