

## University Education: Let Not Poverty Stand In The Way

From time to time, we hear stories about students who having qualified to enter University are forced to make the painful decision not to proceed as they cannot afford the costs involved. Samudrika's father had passed away when she was just a toddler and was brought up by her mother with what little she earned as a laborer. When Samudrika was selected to enter the Arts Faculty of



Peradeniya University, they mortgaged their tiny land (paddy field) they had for Rs. 25,000 to pay for Samudrika's University expenses. Samudrika soon found out that this money was hardly enough to sustain her University education and was becoming increasingly anxious about her future. Her plight was recently highlighted by the "Sannasa" newspaper in Melbourne. Fortunately for her, from the moment the PUAAViC got wind of her situation and went to the alumni here, there was a spontaneous flow of

offers to support her. Thanks to the generosity of the Alumni members, Samudrika has been able to get their land back and is assured of financial support to complete her University education.

Samudrika expressed her appreciation as follows: "ජීවිතයේ නීරණාත්මක මොහොතක අනන්ත වූ දුක් කම්කටොලු අතර සිරවී සිටියදී ඔබතුමන්ලාගේ සංගමයේ පිහිටවීම දෙවිං දුන් තෑග්ගක් සේ මා හට වටිනේය. මා අධ්‍යාපනය තුළින් ලබන සියලු ජයග්‍රහණයන් ඔබලාගේ දයාබර බවෙහි ප්‍රතිපලයක් ලෙස දකිමි. ඔබ තුමන්ලා මා හට පිහිට නොවන්නට මා ඉදිරි අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳව සිතන්නේ කෙසේද කියාවත් මම නොදනිමි. මාගේ අධ්‍යාපනය සාර්ථක වන යම් දිනයක එහි ගවරවය ඔබ ආදිශිෂ්‍ය සංගමයට හිමි වන බව සිහිපත් කරමි. මා වැනි ජීවිතයේ පතුලටම වැටී සිටින තවත් සිසු සිසුවිද්‍රව්‍යට ඔබ තුමන්ලාගේ සහයෝගය ලබා දීමට ශක්තිය ධාර්ය පුර්වනා කරමි."

The quick resolution to Samudrika's predicament was possible because the alumni here were already helping students through PUAAViC in partnership with the parent Alumni with a well developed Scholarship scheme. Throughout the past 10 years, members have sponsored many a students to see them through difficult times. PUAAViC recognised the need and the desire of our alumni to support the needy students. A couple of years ago, the alumni embarked on an ambitious project to establish a sustainable scholarships program to assist students in greatest need. The new program was launched on the Fathers Day 2012.

The idea of conducting a fundraiser on Fathers Day came from the daughter of an alumna who suggested that it would be a wonderful opportunity for the parents and children of the Alumni to meet up and celebrate Fathers Day together. More importantly, it would provide an opportunity for the children to donate money to assist Peradeniya students in financial need rather than buying gifts for the dads, who in most cases didn't really need them. Of course, as we have observed, the parents not be outdone by their children, also make generous contributions.

It has now become customary to celebrate Fathers Day in the company of fellow alumni together with



their family and friends. The tradition which began as a relatively small gathering in 2012, has since grown in to a much bigger event as seen by the attendance of over 175 alumni family and friends for the 2013 event. Those who attended the last event enjoyed a fun-filled day with parents and children taking part in many activities, and all those present were treated to a delicious 'kottu' lunch prepared on site by volunteers.



The donations to the scholarship fund were spontaneous enabling the collection of over \$11,000 on the day. The money raised at this event together with the proceeds from Hantane Nite 2013 enabled PUAAViC to offer 143 scholarships in 2014, which is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PUAAViC.

The current PUAAViC scholarship scheme allows donors to choose between offering scholarships immediately or contributing to a capital fund where the money would be invested and the accrued interest is used for giving scholarships in future years. In addition to supporting students in financial need (Equity & Excellence Scholarships), the donors can also offer scholarships to recognise and



encourage academic excellence (Excellence Scholarships). There are also opportunities to name a scholarship after someone as long as there is assurance for its continuity for several years. Donors can also nominate the faculty, department or even such things as the school the student entered from. The 2014 offers were largely based on preferences expressed by the donors. Where there were glaring inadequacies in the numbers initially allocated by faculty, for example the Faculty

of Arts, the final offers were supplemented from the capital fund. The 2013 round of scholarships were awarded with the cooperation of our parent organisation, the Alumni Association of University of Peradeniya (AAUP) which advertised, interviewed and selected students for the scholarships. AAUP will oversee the process in 2014 as well, except that selection of students will be done by the Deans of the respective faculties.



Table: Scholarships Offered to Peradeniya Students by PUAAViC in 2014

FACULTY	Equity & Excellence		Excellence		Named Scholarships	
	Rs.12,000	Rs.24,000	Rs.12,000	Rs.24,000	Rs.12,000	Rs.24,000
Agriculture	10	0	1	0	0	0
Allied Health	7	0	0	0	0	0
Arts	35	0	1	0	0	3
Dental	3	0	0	1	0	0
Engineering	18	0	2	1	0	0
Medicine	18	0	0	1	0	0
Veterinary Science	3	0	0	0	0	0
Science	20	0	1	6	0	1
Special Needs Centre	10	0	0	0	0	1

This year's Fathers Day Celebration will be held on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at the St Simon Parish Hall, 2 Taylors Lane, Rowville. This is the same venue as last year. We look forward to the alumni families together with the fellow alumni enjoying a fun filled day and at the same time assisting financially disadvantaged students at the University of Peradeniya. It is a day when we remember in gratitude and affection what we received from a great institution and celebrate with joy what we give in return. Unlike most other events when you return home you will be enveloped with a rare feeling of lasting joy which results from a shared achievement of a community.

PUUAViC Scholarship Sub-Committee

For more information write to [scholarships@peradeniya.com.au](mailto:scholarships@peradeniya.com.au). Also visit [www.peradeniya.com.au](http://www.peradeniya.com.au)

