

Edna Dharmaratne Award in Linguistics

Edna Dharmaratne has been the face and cornerstone of the Department of Linguistics for the last 20 years, the greatest part of her 29 years at UBC. A special honour during her period of service in Linguistics was her award as the augural recipient of the Dean of Arts Award for Staff Excellence in 2002. As the present Manager of Administration for the Department, and previously as the Department's sole staff member, Edna has been instrumental in shaping its operations and reputation. You can honour her career with a gift to the new [[link to the Edna Dharmaratne Award](#)].

Edna came to Linguistics in 1997 after already several years served with distinction in UBC's Faculties of Engineering and Science. Her gentle, competent, thoughtful nature was immediately evident, and has been an enduring aspect of the work ethic she has brought to her position since. She displays admirable grace in her management of the Department, she takes great pride in her work, and displays a tenacious commitment to the very highest standards, often going far beyond the call of duty as a matter of course in the support of excellence and favorable outcomes. She also goes beyond the call of duty when offering help with the inevitable minor crises and catastrophes that befall those she oversees, namely everyone. Every one of us has benefitted in some way from Edna's quick response, her well nurtured cross-campus connections and mutual respect with staff from all parts of campus and at all level of administration, and her sturdy perseverance in mastering all components of UBC's ever changing complex educational and financial information systems. Edna is admired for her un-erring integrity, and admirable strength and force of character. She deserves the very highest praise for her performance both in and well beyond the responsibilities of her position.

In addition to her remarkable administrative technical and systems competence, Edna has consistently shown a fundamental respect for every single member of the department without judgement or distinction, from student to staff member to instructor and professor at every rank, and with the strongest compassion, authenticity, and human kindness. She is a generous and kind person in every area of her life. Outside her job, she has always donated to the extent of her ability to volunteer in hospitals and in residences for the elderly, as well as numerous church sponsored activities. This caring contribution has extended to the Department as well. In particular, in witness of the stressful conditions sometimes faced by underfunded students, particularly those with families, she has been consistently active in soliciting donations of all types (food, clothing, furniture, vouchers), all made available though her regular appeals to colleagues and personal acquaintances. Edna has been the heart of the Department to visitors, staff, students and faculty. Alumni from around the world remain in touch with Edna, visiting when they come to Vancouver, keeping her informed of their professional and personal achievements, attesting to the long-lasting and profound impact she had on them when they were students.

Edna's admirable and unselfconscious compassion has extended also to the emotional life of the department. She has the most tremendous empathy and respect for people from all walks of life. Students, staff and faculty alike have taken advantage of her open ear and willingness to engage

any issue, no matter how personal or difficult, whether psychological, ethical, personal, financial or relating to morale. Edna is and has been counsellor and friend to many and any members of the Department, most especially the students, but not solely. Her office has been a symbol of guidance, comfort and support to all. Her enduring loyalty, as well as her love and compassion for department members, led her to forego more strategic employment offers elsewhere on campus.

Edna will be greatly missed in the Department upon her retirement, although we whole-heartedly wish her all the best for the new phase in her life. Edna seems irreplaceable to us, and she is genuinely loved. Her legacy of compassion, competence and moral and respectful behaviour will remain a piece of us as we move forward, and is an enduring witness to the countless gifts she leaves behind.

In honour of Edna's approaching retirement in December 2017, the Department is establishing the Edna Dharmaratne Award in Linguistics an annual prize of \$1,000 to be awarded to a current graduate or undergraduate student in the Department of Linguistics. Please consider [*link to making a donation*] to this award in celebration of Edna.