The late Dr Jennifer Mao, a finance and economics professor, was yesterday recognised by NUS for her contribution to the lives and careers of students.

NUS alumni honour 16 mentors

Even when she was on her deathbed, Dr Jennifer Mao’s mind was on her colleagues and students.

Associate Professor Lan Luh Luh said the late National University of Singapore (NUS) finance and economics professor had asked colleagues who were by her bedside: “Is there anything else I can do for you, or the students?”

The professor, who died in 2004 of breast cancer at the age of 51, was one of 16 academics and administrators honoured yesterday – and the only posthumous award winner – at the inaugural NUS Inspiring Mentor Awards.

The awards are to recognise faculty members for the impact they made on the lives and careers of the university’s students. All recipients are nominated by the alumni.

Yesterday, Dr Mao’s god-brother Chew Soo Hong, a professor at the Hong Kong University of Science Technology, collected the award on her behalf.

Prof Lan said the late Dr Mao, a Taiwanese-born Singapore permanent resident, was a teacher who always put her students first.

“She had been feeling ill for a long time and we kept telling her to see a doctor, but she was so busy with her students that she just kept postponing it,” said Prof Lan.

In her last days, she told colleagues that if they were going to set up any fund in her name, she did not want it to be a scholarship fund, but a bursary fund for needy students.

The NUS Business School did that, by setting up the Jennifer Mao Bursary Fund. Besides being recognised as a caring teacher, Dr Mao was also known as the proposer of the open bidding system for vehicle certificates of entitlement and an active Lianhe Zaobao columnist.

Businessman and former Member of Parliament Peh Chin Hua, who studied for his executive MBA under her guidance, knew her through her columns before he became her student.

“Dr Mao was very open to answering questions, and she had very strong opinions that she was not afraid to express,” he said.

Other recipients include the de facto “father” of academic family medicine Associate Professor Goh Lee Gan, retired School of Computing professor Yuen Chung Kwong and former South-east Asian Studies professor, Dr Michael Montesa-no.