



**BOARD OF GOVERNORS
President's Quarterly Progress Report:
October – December 2012**

1. Board Matters

The 24th Audit Committee was held via teleconference on November 29, where the audited consolidated financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2012 were approved. The financial statements are available at www.col.org/GovInfo. The next Audit Committee meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2013 via teleconference.

The Risk Management Discussion Group held its meeting via teleconference on November 30 to clarify the risk management roles for COL. A draft Risk Management matrix is now ready and will be discussed further at the Executive Committee meeting to be held via teleconference on February 27, 2013 and subsequently at the June Board meeting. I am very grateful to the Chair, the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, Dr. Linda Sissons and Professor John Wood for their valuable inputs.

We warmly welcome these distinguished new members to the Board:

- Shri Ashok Thakur, Secretary, Higher Education, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, India.
- Professor Narend Baijnath, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of South Africa.

We also thank the outgoing members Ms. Jenny Glennie of South Africa and Ms. Vibha Puri Das of India for their dedication and invaluable contributions to COL.

The Secretary General, His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma, invited Mr. Martin Bean to continue to be his appointee to the Board for another three years, an invitation which has been accepted.

The Honourable Peter Garrett, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, Australia, has written saying that they are 'currently in the process of selecting a candidate to put forward to the COL Board to represent Australia' (14 Dec 2012).

2. General

This quarter began with two new colleagues joining COL: the Vice President – Mr. Vis Naidoo (South Africa) and the Education Specialist, eLearning – Dr. Mark Bullen

(Canada). Both appointments followed Commonwealth-wide search processes and generated substantial interest.

In the second quarter, we usually see an acceleration of activities in the field. Across the various programme initiatives, the main thrust has been on capacity building. For an outcomes-based organisation such as COL, it is important to go beyond capacity building to capability maturation. How does COL do this? COL (i) organises training workshops as part of a longer-term intervention rather than a once-off activity; and (ii) continues to work with partners in the field until they begin to take charge of their own development processes. As it takes time to see the results of 'learning for development', COL perseveres in its various initiatives.

Another area which requires perseverance is gender equality. In many Commonwealth countries, there are very progressive and sound constitutional provisions for women. Yet because of prevalent cultural practices, widespread and ongoing violence against women continues to surface in horrendous ways. Education can play a major role in promoting respect and understanding between and across the gender divide. An educational curriculum that promotes values among boys and girls is essential to changing attitudes to help achieve gender equality. We have intensified internal discussions on how COL can raise its profile in gender mainstreaming.

In addition to gender equality, promoting the development and use of open education resources (OER) to lead to quality education for all is a key priority for COL during this triennium. Thanks to the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Foundation Open Society Institute, COL has carried out several policy advocacy and capacity building activities in OER during this quarter. Board members will be pleased to note that a funding proposal to the Hewlett Foundation for implementing the 2012 Paris OER Declaration has been successful, providing additional contributions to continue to work in Kenya and Trinidad & Tobago as well as to convene two regional forums for West and East African states in collaboration with UNESCO, Paris.

2.1 President's Activities

This has been a very busy and productive quarter for everyone at COL.

I continue to receive many more invitations to speak at international events than I can accept. I gave keynotes at conferences organised by the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU, Japan), Beijing Open University (China), the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (Jamaica), the Open University of Malaysia, the University of Hyderabad (India), and the National Institute of Open Schooling (India). Travel costs to non-Commonwealth countries were covered by the organisers.

In addition, I gave inaugural presentations at the AAOU conference, a COL OER workshop in Jamaica, a video message for the National Symposium on Open Education, New Zealand, and a message presented *in absentia* at the Graduation Ceremony of the

National Teachers' Institute (NTI), Nigeria. All speeches are available on COL's website (www.col.org/speeches).

It was my honour to be made a Fellow of the NTI during their Graduation Ceremony in November, an honour shared with the former President Olusegun Obasanjo and the late Abubakar Mahmud Gummi (renowned Islamic scholar and inaugural chairman of the Institute's Board of Governors). This is a tribute to the work of COL. During the same month, COL received an Appreciation Award for its outstanding contribution to the development of the Open University of Tanzania presented at their Convocation.

I met the Ministers of Education of Jamaica and India when I visited these two countries. The Honourable Burchell Whiteman and I met the Rev. the Honourable Ronald Thwaites, Minister of Education and Grace McLean, Permanent Secretary, in Kingston. It was an excellent opportunity to brief the Minister about COL's work and to present an Android tablet that had been distributed to ministers and officials at the 18th CCEM in August 2012. COL has a fairly substantial programme in Jamaica and based on the government's priorities, will focus on integrating ICT into teacher training and supporting the development of professional standards for teachers.

In India, I met the new Minister for Human Resource Development (MHRD), the Honourable Shri M.M. Pallam Raju, the Minister of State, the Honourable Jitin Prasada and the new Education Secretary and COL Board Member Shri Ashok Thakur. They were interested in COL and its work and particularly in how COL could share best practice to strengthen open and distance learning (ODL) in the country. The Minister for MHRD requested the Director of CEMCA, Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, to make a presentation on some of the possible options that can be adopted to enhance the quality of ODL. The new Education Secretary is very supportive and will do his best to participate in the Board meeting this June.

The annual CEMCA Advisory Council meeting was held in December and is chaired by the President. It has members from institutions and ministries in Asia and provides a valuable platform for encouraging wider involvement and receiving expert guidance as well as building strong relationships with partner institutions. CEMCA continues to perform well under the new Director.

A 'meet and greet' event for COL staff and their families was organised in October. This was an opportunity for families to meet COL staff and to make new friends and was warmly welcomed by all. Such events help generate goodwill and serve to create an *esprit de corps*.

3. Programme

This quarter focused on capacity building, policy, materials development and the use of OER. A key feature of the quarter is the increased networking to identify appropriate partners to support the activities over the triennium.

3.1 Education Sector

3.1.1 Open Schooling

The Open Schooling initiative built the capacity of education personnel from Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu on 'Costs and Financing in Open Schools'. Following discussions with the University of the South Pacific (USP) Tonga Campus and Ministry of Education officials, a proposal for the establishment of the College of Open Schooling was developed. Concerted efforts were made to strengthen the online skills of faculty members and expand their networks through the use of social networking tools. This resulted in a 20% increase over the previous quarter in the number of participants on the Open Schooling Online network. Four online Moodle workshops were facilitated via the OpenSchoolingConnect platform with representation from across the Commonwealth.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

Instructional design and online course design workshops were organised at the Open University of Sri Lanka and the Jamaica Joint Board for Teacher Education. Similarly, capacity building workshops on OER for English Language Teaching were organised for junior secondary school teachers in The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria. Capacity building workshops on the integration of Child Friendly Schools (CFS) principles and models into pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula were completed in Zambia and the final report submitted to UNICEF.

3.1.3 Higher Education

Academics from five institutions in Ghana and the Open University of Tanzania were trained in ODL and OER. Staff of the National University of Lesotho participated in a quality assurance workshop. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the COL Review and Improvement Model (COL-RIM) implementation was finalised for Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, India and an agreement to collaborate in higher education was signed with the African Association of Universities (AAU).

3.1.4 Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

One of the most important achievements of the VUSSC initiative was the enrolment of students from 11 countries in 'Linux for IT Managers', an online course. This is an important step and an indication of VUSSC's gradual strategic shift from course development to delivery. Another milestone was the completion of the Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship programme and the Transport and Logistics course, both of

which are now available as OER. A capacity building workshop on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was organised in Lesotho for senior officials from small states in southern Africa.

3.2 Livelihoods & Health Sector

3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)

In Tanzania, an access programme for girls admitted 160 learners to diploma level technical and vocational programmes. Five new WITED (Women in TVET) chapters have been established and more than 350 girls and women in Kenya participated in a sensitisation session for women in TVET. Two COL online courses on flexible and blended learning for institutional staff and policy makers as well as an online course for Moodle Administrators were completed. Policymakers and stakeholders in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia identified strategies for strengthening the Innovation and Vocational Education and Skills Training (INVEST) programme. In India, a workshop was held to finalise four distance learning courses for the Certificate in Community Development. COL helped the newly formed Flexible & Open Learning Branch of the TVET Division of the Department of Education in Papua New Guinea to develop a strategic plan for 2012-2015 and an action plan for 2013.

3.2.2 Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)

Capacity building of two partner organisations from Papua New Guinea on the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) were strengthened through site visits and training in ODL, gender sensitive approaches and results-based management (RBM). Similarly the staff of Makerere University in Uganda was trained in Rapid-eLearning techniques. Makerere University trained 23 senior staff of various units of the Ministry of Agriculture, Uganda, in mLearning which resulted in an action plan for scaling up L3F in that country. In Tamil Nadu, India, 738 participants, mostly women, joined the L3F programme during this period after obtaining credit worth US\$200,000 for various agricultural activities. Studies showed that around 400 farmers of Kandy district in Sri Lanka have started increasing the cultivation of turmeric, ginger and orchids after participating in the L3F programme. The Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) in Jamaica used the L3F programme to reach 2,500 farmers through mobile phones and delivered a course on disaster management to prepare farmers for Hurricane Sandy. A follow-up study showed that 88% of the farmers who received the messages felt that the course was timely and useful.

3.2.3 Healthy Communities

Baseline studies were initiated in Cameroon, India and Jamaica in the context of wider monitoring and evaluation (M&E) planning and implementation. Capacity building on community learning programme development took place in 30 local areas in 10 countries in four regions, namely: Cameroon, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa; Bangladesh, India; Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago; and the Solomon

Islands. Over 100 female and male representatives, including senior decision-makers in government departments and non-governmental organisations, were engaged in policy dialogue about participatory communication for development in Africa and the Caribbean. Three major training programmes (including a 12-week online course) were conducted in programme planning and design skills, which had 204 participants including broadcasters and community health workers from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. A further 73 individuals – with an equitable balance in gender and age – from the health and development sectors were involved in participatory planning processes.

3.3 Cross-cutting Themes

3.3.1 eLearning

A regional policy development workshop was held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica in November as a follow-up to the Paris OER Congress. The event brought together educators from Caribbean Commonwealth countries to begin the process of developing national OER policies. COL has developed a template to assist countries to develop OER policies. A toolkit that brings together various resources and tools to assist in the implementation of the UNESCO ICT-Competency Framework for Teachers (CFT) was completed and is available online and in CD format. The toolkit was presented at the recent UNESCO Experts Meeting on developing an ICT CFT Guidebook held in Paris in December.

3.4 eLearning in International Organisations (eLIO)

eLIO completed four cohorts of the Effective Writing eLearning course for the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization. Eighty-seven per cent of the 281 learners registered (of whom 70% are female) successfully completed the courses. Under the eLIO initiative, nearly 150 officers and youth, half of them women, completed the Commonwealth Secretariat eLearning courses in Debt Management System and Embracing Commonwealth Values.

3.5 CEMCA

The focus for this quarter has been on strengthening sustainable partnerships and capacity building. An agreement was reached with Wawasan Open University in Penang, Malaysia to develop a course on OER-based eLearning. The Open University of Malaysia conferred a CEMCA award for best female student in information technology and communication at their Convocation held in December. CEMCA has developed a leadership position in the area of Community Radio and organised a workshop to develop a community radio technology course. CEMCA supported the development of a manual for Web Radio and tested it in a capacity building workshop. The new CEMCA website was launched and the *EduComm Asia* Newsletter has been re-launched. A short three-minute animation film about CEMCA was also released on the Web and is available at (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6M29p8kSjo>).

The Director, CEMCA, gave a keynote at the annual International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP) Meeting and Policy Forum, and also delivered an address at a National Seminar for ICT enabled teaching and learning at the Central University of Hyderabad.

3.6 Regional Centres

3.6.1 Southern African Development Community-Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE)

The SADC-CDE, Botswana, published the DEASA/SADC-CDE International Journal for Open and Distance Learning during this quarter. Two female students (Namibia) and one male student (Botswana) wrote their final examination for the Post-Graduate Diploma in Distance Education offered by IGNOU, India, an important example of south-south collaboration.

3.6.2 Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning (RETRIDOL)

RETRIDOL, based at the National Open University of Nigeria, conducted a capacity building workshop on OER for 30 participants from six countries in West Africa.

3.7 Vice-President's Activities

Mr. Vis Naidoo spent much of the first month in briefings and other meetings to ensure a full understanding of COL's Three-Year Plan, and the operation of the organisation.

In November, Mr. Naidoo visited Gaborone, Botswana and gave a presentation on the 'Value of Partnerships in Building an Education System' at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) Seminar. He represented COL at the UNESCO International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All Policy Dialogue Forum in Windhoek, Namibia where he delivered a paper.

Mr. Naidoo attended the Asian Development Bank's International Forum in Manila, Philippines in December and presented a paper on 'ICT for Skills Development – Building for the Future'. As part of his orientation, he travelled to India to meet with CEMCA colleagues and was briefed on their activities. He also attended the Annual CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in Delhi.

3.8 Professional Development

During this quarter, COL supported the participation of four experts from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives to participate in the conference on 'Radio for Equitable Education for All' organised by IGNOU in Delhi, India.

4. Stakeholder Relations

4.1 Member Governments Support

So far this fiscal year, contributions were received from 30 countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Pakistan, Rwanda, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tonga and Zambia.

4.2 Focal Points

We welcomed the new country Focal Point from Maldives, Ms. Sameera Ali, Director, Foreign Relations Section, Ministry of Education.

Mr. David Geyer has succeeded Mr. Chris Chung as COL's contact at AusAID.

4.3 Congratulatory Letters

Twelve congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ministers of Education, Commonwealth High Commissioners in Canada and Heads of Institutions.

5. Finances

5.1 Revenue

COL has received just over \$4.7 million to December 31, 2012 from member governments as voluntary contributions towards the approved annual budget for 2012-2013. Thirty countries (11 in this quarter) have contributed as follows since July 1, 2012:

Antigua & Barbuda – \$4,948; Bahamas – \$59,376; Bangladesh – \$29,616;
Barbados – \$44,023; Belize – \$29,763; Botswana – \$98,960;
Cameroon – \$26,120; Canada – \$2.6 million; Cyprus – \$15,137;
Guyana – \$15,412; India – \$899,576; Jamaica – \$44,024; Lesotho – \$69,925;
Malawi – \$9,872; Malaysia – \$50,000; Malta – \$14,675; Mauritius – \$60,000;
Mozambique – \$50,500; Namibia – \$99,612; Nauru – \$4,892;
Pakistan – \$35,000; Rwanda – \$12,936; St. Kitts & Nevis – \$29,349;
St. Lucia – \$18,153; Samoa – \$58,698; Seychelles – \$14,844;
South Africa – \$250,000; Sri Lanka – \$29,763; Tonga – \$19,842; and
Zambia – \$29,616.

These funds represent 54% of the level forecasted from member governments for 2012-2013. Contributions from the four outstanding major donors, making up 42% of the forecasted level, are expected in the next quarter.

COL is forecasting additional contributions of \$1 million from grants and \$530,000 from fee-for-service activities for the fiscal year.

COL has recognised revenues of close to \$500,000 from grants for the programme and from international organisations for eLearning to December 31, 2012. In addition, COL will recognise during this financial year: a portion of a new US\$200,000 two-year agreement with The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (WFHF) for OER capacity building signed in this quarter; up to \$150,000 with international organisations for agreements already in place; and \$200,000 in deferred revenues.

COL will continue to source new revenue streams wherever feasible and has submitted further proposals to various funding bodies in support of its programme work.

5.2 Cash Flow

COL held close to \$7.2 million in cash and cash equivalents at the close of the second quarter as compared to \$6.7 million at the beginning of the financial year. This level of cash and cash equivalents enables COL to meet operational costs and maintain a positive cash flow while outstanding contributions are replenished throughout the year.

COL also holds a cash reserve of \$3.3 million, in addition to the above, to provide a source of funds for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding, if needed.

5.3 Expenditures

An estimated \$4.6 million or 41% of the approved budget for 2012-2013 at a level of \$11.13 million was spent or committed through agreements in the first half of the financial year to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff costs and office costs. This compares with 38% in the same period of the previous year.

6. Human Resources

6.1 Staff Changes

6.1.1 Arrivals

Mr. Vis Naidoo joined COL on October 1, 2012 as Vice President.

Dr. Mark Bullen joined COL on October 1, 2012 as Education Specialist, eLearning.

Ms. Alena Kovar joined COL on December 17, 2012 as Receptionist.

6.1.2 Departures

Ms. Lorraine Wilson, Executive Assistant to the Director – Finance, Administration & Human Resources, retired from COL on December 31, 2012 after 23 years of service.

6.1.3 Movements

Ms. Sharmila Gracieuse, currently Programme Assistant, eLIO, has been appointed to the above post of Executive Assistant.

7. Knowledge Management & Technology

Key developments in KM and Technology in this quarter are: (i) a comprehensive document management platform for COL staff; and (ii) a novel prototype to integrate searches across various OER repositories linked to COL initiatives. Following the interest in tablets expressed by Ministers and Senior Officials at the 18th CCEM, the KM group has developed an initial prototype for a ‘classroom without walls’. A set of preliminary trials have been conducted and the results are reported at <http://techpaper.colfinder.org>.

The online platform for authoring Logframes and Quarterly Reports was improved further so that searches are even more targeted and efficient. An important development was the upgrade of the COL Virtual Learning Environment (www.col-vle.org) to the most current version, namely, Moodle 2.4. During the quarter, we also moved the COL catalogue of information resources (about 16,000 records) to a platform developed in-house, resulting in substantial savings.

Plans to upgrade corporate email to MS Exchange 2010 have been finalised. As an inter-governmental organisation, COL is sensitive to the importance of the integrity and safety of corporate data. Cloud Services providers today do not offer clear guarantees that data hosted by them will not be shared without prior authorisation. Therefore, COL will continue to host its organisational email service locally.

COL now has a comprehensive document management system online for COL staff. Built on MS SharePoint 2010, it uses built-in functionalities rather than developing new ones. This was done in-house resulting in considerable savings.

8. Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)

PCF7 will be held from December 2-6, 2013 in Abuja, Nigeria. The Conference theme is ‘Open Learning for Development: Towards Empowerment and Transformation’ and the following sub-themes have been developed:

- Girls’ and Women’s Education;

- Skills Development;
- Promoting Open Educational Resources (OER);
- Innovation and Technology; and
- Institutional Development.

Detailed descriptions of these sub-themes are available at www.col.org/pcf7.

COL has entered into a contract with a Canadian conference services firm to provide pre-conference registration services.

9. Visitors to COL

The following are among the recent visitors to COL:

- The Honourable Margaret Mensah-Williams, MP, Vice-Chairperson of the National Council, Parliament of Namibia.
- Former COL President, Tan Sri Dato' Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Honorary Director, Institute for Research and Innovation, Wawasan Open University.
- Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot, Minister Counsellor, Political Affairs & Public Diplomacy, Canadian High Commission, London.
- Professor Peter E. Kinyanjui (former COL staff), International Education Consultant, Kenya.
- The Honourable Mary Collins, PC, Vancouver (with Robert F. Taylor, CA, LVO, Director, McTay Holdings Ltd.).
- Ms. Anne Gaskell, Assistant Director, Teaching & Learner Support, The Open University, UK.

10. Publications/Resources

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications (www.col.org/publications):
 - *Connections/EdTech News*, November 2012, Vol. 17, No. 3 (www.col.org/connections).
 - *Theoretical Perspectives on the Contributions of COL-PROTEIN to Open and Distance Learning for Development*, by Krishna Alluri and K. Balasubramanian.
 - CEMCA brochure.

- Videos (www.col.org/videos):
 - Distance Education Leadership and Management – COL video series (interviews with seven experienced ODL leaders).
- Speeches and presentations at www.col.org/speeches.
- COL blog at www.col.org/blog.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President & Chief Executive Officer
January 15, 2013*