Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls should be mainstreamed into development.” A commitment to prioritise this issue, as originally agreed in the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Communiqué, was reaffirmed at the 11th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministerial Meeting (11WAMM) in Apia, Samoa, held from 7–8 September 2016.

Hosted by the Government of Samoa, 11WAMM focused on the theme of “Gender Equality through Sustainable Development in an Inclusive Commonwealth” and reiterated the importance of gender equality and mainstreaming in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Delegations from 14 member countries attended the meeting, and ministers identified four priority areas for action: women’s economic empowerment, women in leadership, ending violence against women and girls, and gender and climate change.

COL’s Vice President, Dr K. Balasubramanian, attended the meeting and spoke on the relationship between the empowerment of women and profit, highlighting COL’s work with women farmers through the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme and a recent study which found that empowerment can lead to greater profits for micro-enterprises. Dr. Balasubramanian informed the ministers about the empowerment measurement toolkit developed by COL and offered to support the capacity building of the ministries in measuring empowerment using online learning and blended learning modes.

Recognising that advancing the goals of both women’s empowerment and gender equality is central to sustainable development and that open and distance learning can be especially helpful in enabling women and girls to access educational opportunities, COL has made education and training for women and girls a priority in its 2015–2021 Strategic Plan. COL’s involvement in 11WAMM is one more confirmation of its dedication to these efforts.

“Commonwealth ministers identify four priority areas for action: women’s economic empowerment, women in leadership, ending violence against women and girls, and gender and climate change.”
National Open University of Nigeria’s first MOOC meets with success

With about 458,000 students, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is one of the largest open universities in the Commonwealth. NOUN was interested in exploring massive open online courses (MOOCs) as a way to reach more learners at a lower cost, so it partnered with COL and the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT Kanpur) to offer its first MOOC. The five-week course was on the History and Philosophy of Science and ran from June to August 2016. Facilitated by COL, an IIT Kanpur team of MooKIT developers led by Professor Prabhakar worked with a team from NOUN led by Professor Agbu to run initial trials. Based on the outcome of these trials, NOUN decided to offer the course using MooKIT via COL’s MOOC4DEV portal (www.mooc4dev.org). The course included a total of 387 learners, most of whom had a degree, and approximately 22 per cent of them went on to receive certificates of participation or competence.

Surveys of learners revealed high levels of satisfaction with the course experience and with the functionalities of the platform, such as integration with social networks, capacity to deliver the talks via cell phones and easy navigability. The MOOC was the first of its kind in Western Africa and is a good example of South–South co-operation.

OER policies drafted for Sri Lanka provinces

With the consent and support of Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Education, COL worked with nine provincial education ministries to develop OER policies. The policies will help provide direction in the use of OER in order to support and increase access to quality teaching and learning in the school education system in Sri Lanka. The policies, and accompanying advocacy work, are a precursor to a national workshop on OER policy in Sri Lanka, tentatively scheduled for February 2017, which will focus on adopting and implementing the policies. This model is now being deployed in Botswana and Cameroon.

Researchers call Aptus a “monumental breakthrough”

COL’s Aptus was met with much praise by researchers at the National University of Samoa (NUS). Starting in July 2016, the researchers conducted trials of the technology, which is essentially an off-grid, offline virtual classroom – a classroom without walls. The trials involved a total of 226 students enrolled in a foundation course on computer studies. Students brought their own devices to their tutorial classes, such as laptops, smartphones or tablets, or were supplied with them, and they then connected to Aptus.

At NUS, most students have access only to the public computers in the library. Aptus was expected to increase the reach of library materials, since it could be deployed in classrooms with a large amount of digital resources loaded on it. The main purpose was to assess how useful Aptus was as a source of digital learning materials. The research team was led by Dr Ioana Chan Mow. Dr Emma Kruse Va’ai, Deputy Vice Chancellor of NUS and a member of COL’s Governing Board, had facilitated the initial contacts between COL and the research team.

The researchers collected data and surveyed the students. According to the research team, “the survey indicated very positive perceptions of staff and students [related] to the usefulness and ease of use of the Aptus.” Tutors were enthusiastic and requested their own personal Aptus devices. The research team termed the possibilities offered by Aptus as a “monumental breakthrough.”

Find the OER Policy at http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2360
Flexible TVET capacity building in St Lucia

Instructors at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) in Saint Lucia recently gained a deeper understanding of flexible and blended (FaB) learning, through a COL-organised workshop. Seventeen instructors from the Division of Technical Education and Management Studies participated in a five-day workshop in June 2016, which looked at strategies for designing and integrating FaB in the classroom. Training topics included the development of self-paced open online courses, open educational resources and copyright, and gender mainstreaming. It is anticipated that new online courses will be piloted early in 2017.

COL President and Ghana’s Minister of Education discuss education and skills

Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of COL, met with Ghana’s Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, in Accra on 2 August 2016. The two leaders discussed skills development for girls, open schooling and higher education.

Australia High Commissioner’s visit

COL headquarters welcomed Australia’s High Commissioner to Canada, Mr Tony Negus, in October 2016. The Commissioner was accompanied by Mr Kevin Lamb, Honorary Consul and Austrade Manager.

Nigerian Minister welcomes COL President

Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of COL, met with the Honourable Minister of Education, Malam Adamu Adamu, and the Vice Chancellor of the National Open University of Nigeria, Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu, on 29 July 2016. They discussed how COL can support the Minister’s priority to bring out-of-school youth back to education.

COL and Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc. (METI) are working together to bring healthy living and life skills training to 25 villages in Samoa. Through the development of a "Life Skills Training Manual for Taiala," the life skills training is being conducted at the grassroots level throughout the country. Taiala, which in Samoan means “path-breakers,” are multidisciplinary community workers. The objective is to encourage people to develop their own kitchen gardens, and 20 per cent of the more than 600 learners have already done this. The Life Skills Training, Permaculture, and Healthy Living learning materials are published as open educational resources (OER).

METI is one of COL’s longstanding partners in Samoa. COL has supported capacity building and the creation of quality learning resources at METI to strengthen sustainable development through three key areas in the METI programme: life skills coaching, permaculture and healthy living.

COL and Matuaileoo Environment Trust partner on life skills training

IN BRIEF
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM

Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

The Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8) is being held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 27 to 30 November 2016. Organised by COL in partnership with Open University Malaysia (OUM), PCF8 brings together the best minds in open and distance learning (ODL) to discuss issues of common interest, exchange ideas and explore best practices.

This year’s theme is “Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development” and is accompanied by four sub-themes:

- Quality and Equity in Learning
- Access and Inclusion
- Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Technology and Innovation

Not able to attend the forum?
Follow us on social media for videos, photos, links to papers and more.

Facebook: /COL4D
Twitter: @COL4D
Hashtag: #pcf8

New MOOC on technology-enabled learning

Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning is a massive open, online course (MOOC) designed for teachers in secondary education, post-secondary education and vocational education. The course, which starts on 9 January 2017 and runs for five weeks, was collaboratively designed by COL and Athabasca University.

To learn more and register, visit http://www.telmooc.org/

Developing institutional OER policies

Fifty institutional open educational resource (OER) policies have been developed this year as part of COL’s OER for Skills Development initiative, a three-year project funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, USA.

An institutional OER policy template is available as an OER for open and distance learning, eLearning or face-to-face institutions interested in developing their own. The template is available in both English (http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2361) and Spanish (http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2388).
Universities of Buea and Busitema develop quality assurance policies

The University of Buea, Cameroon, and Busitema University, Uganda, have both developed institutional quality assurance policy drafts with the support of COL. Quality assurance policies are a good step towards the establishment of sound institutional practices in relation to quality and its assurance.

COL President receives honorary degree from UNISWA

Professor Asha Kanwar, COL’s President and CEO, recently received an honorary degree from the University of Swaziland. She was made an Honorary Doctor of Laws in recognition of her contribution to educational development globally. The ceremony was held at the University of Swaziland in Kwaluseni on 8 October 2016.

TOP5
MAKING THE MOST OF A CONFERENCE

Conferences offer an opportunity to learn more about your areas of interest and the people who share them. With some thought and a little planning, you can make the most of the short time you spend in attendance and develop lasting relationships to support your work and theirs in the long term.

1. Make a plan
Most conferences will offer far more talks, panels, sessions and workshops than you have the ability to attend. Review the programme and make your own schedule in advance.

2. Ask questions
Contribute to sessions by asking the presenters questions. Similarly, exhibition booths, poster sessions and social events are all great opportunities for learning.

3. Follow the conversations online
Social media now means that there is almost as much conference activity online as in person. Follow the conference hashtags and social media accounts to connect with fellow attendees during the conference and after.

4. Connect and reconnect
Don’t wait too long to follow up with new and old contacts after the conference. A brief message is sufficient and can help establish lasting ties.

5. Spread the knowledge
Share what you have learned with interested friends and colleagues back home.
The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is conducting six Regional Consultations around the world in the lead up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, to be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from 18 to 20 September 2017. The consultations are being held in partnership with UNESCO, the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO and the UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for OER and Open Learning (Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia), and with the generous support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The Regional Consultations will be held between December 2016 and May 2017 and will follow a central theme of “OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: From Commitment to Action,” reflecting a strong focus on the role of OER in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. They will aim to explore strategies and solutions to the challenge of mainstreaming OER.

Each Regional Consultation will be organised in partnership with a ministry or other agency in the respective host countries and will include expert-facilitated workshops, pre-meeting activities and discussions. Ministers of education, senior policy makers, expert practitioners, researchers and other institutional stakeholders will be invited to participate in the events.

The first World OER Congress was held in 2012 and organised by COL and UNESCO, with the support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. It attracted over 400 participants from 70 countries and resulted in the adoption of the Paris OER Declaration, which encourages governments to openly license educational materials that are publicly funded.

### Dates & Locations

**Asia**
- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1–2 December 2016

**Europe**
- Valletta, Malta
- 23–24 February 2017

**Middle East & North Africa**
- Doha, Qatar
- 26–27 February 2017

**Africa**
- Port Louis, Mauritius
- 2–3 March 2017

**Americas**
- Brasilia, Brazil
- 3–4 April 2017

**Pacific**
- Auckland, New Zealand
- Late May 2017

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### Have questions about OER?

Want to know which Creative Commons licence to use? Wondering how to cite and attribute OER? As part of COL’s Community of Practice platform, a new OER FAQ forum hopes to help answer questions about the many facets of OER. The forum covers over 100 FAQs on everything from the basics of Creative Commons licences to OER quality, OER policy and developing OER. As a community of practice, you will be invited to share and contribute your ideas on OER.

Find your answers at oerfaq.info.

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### Upcoming Events

**OE Global Conference 2017**

The Open Education Global Conference 2017 will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 8 to 10 March 2017. The event is being organised by the Open Education Consortium and the University of Cape Town.

[conference.oeconsortium.org/2017]

**ODLAA 2017**

The Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia’s 2017 conference will be held from 5 to 7 February 2017 in Melbourne, Australia. This year’s theme is “Expanding Horizons in Open and Distance Learning” and has three sub-themes: Openness, Community and Innovation.

[odlaa.org/odlaa_events/2017-conference/]

**Explore Currents of Change at CAUCE 2017**

In May 2017, the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education (CAUCE) conference will take place in Vancouver, hosted by Simon Fraser University’s Continuing Studies. The three-day event will bring together approximately 200 continuing education leaders from across Canada to explore change and innovation in the learning community.

[cauce-conference.ca/2017]
Three East African Universities – Busitema University, Uganda, Egerton University, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam University College of Education, Tanzania – collectively launched a project called DigiTeacher, in August 2016, to tackle the challenges arising from the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning in the region.

Through the DigiTeacher project, the three universities will: (i) design a Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate in ICT Integration in Education (PGDIE), adapting course material from the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI); (ii) facilitate training in ICT integration; (iii) establish DigiTeacher centres in the different universities; and (iv) conduct joint research on ICT integration.

The project was the result of a training workshop organised jointly this past May by COL, Singapore’s Technical Cooperation Directorate, Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Singapore National Institute of Education.

Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of COL, delivered the first public lecture of the National Open University of Nigeria’s (NOUN) Distinguished Lecture Series, in Abuja, Nigeria, on Wednesday, 27 July 2016. Professor Kanwar spoke about the potential of open and distance learning (ODL) to reach the unreached.

“It is an honour to open the distinguished lecture series,” said Professor Kanwar. “COL and our Nigerian partners have worked together extensively, using ODL to improve access to quality education and training. Thanks to institutes like RETRIDOL and their host NOUN, these efforts are felt not only here in Nigeria but across West Africa.”

In collaboration with NOUN, COL supports the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), which serves as a centre of expertise in ODL for West Africa.
At the age of two, Marjorie lost both her parents. Her grandmother raised her and supported her through Grade 10, but at the age of 14, Marjorie left school so she could earn an income and help support her family. Her grandmother was over 80 years old and her 19-year-old brother was unemployed. Marjorie found work cleaning homes and was able to earn some money, but she aspired to do more.

Earlier this year, Marjorie received training in macramé, life skills and financial literacy through COL’s GIRLS Inspire partner the Mann Deshi Foundation in India. She took her newly learned skills and started her own small business making macramé hangings. Today, at the age of 16, she not only is able to supplement her house cleaning income, but saves all the income from her products in her newly opened bank account. She even has orders for her products from the community.

As Marjorie looks to her future, her motivation doesn’t diminish – she says she would like to complete her secondary education and go onto tertiary education. She does not want to get married until she has completed both.

COL’s GIRLS Inspire project is working to help many more women and girls like Marjorie.
The work of GIRLS Inspire rests on three pillars: building organisational capacity, raising community awareness and skills training for girls. Generating learning opportunities for vulnerable, hard-to-reach women and girls is one of the best investments we can make in working towards sustainable development. These individuals can inspire positive transformations in their families and communities.

If Marjorie can achieve so much in just six months, imagine what she can do in a lifetime. Imagine what the world’s women and girls can do if they are all empowered to shape their own futures.

To mark the International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October 2016, we asked the girls and women of GIRLS Inspire what they aspire to be and what education means to them. Here are just a few of their answers.
The Open University (OU) continually reviews the delivery of its courses and their impact on student experience. The growth of learning analytics has offered a valuable opportunity to optimise learning and teaching, and to provide proactive, directed student support services. This technology has been useful in assisting students who are susceptible to non-completion of planned study, and it provides an early alert system to warn if this is likely to be the case.

The OU underpinned these developments by becoming, in the autumn of 2014, the first university in the world to develop and adopt a policy relating to the ethical uses of student data for learning analytics. Two technologically innovative approaches have played a major role in the programme of work initiated in 2014: analytics for learning design and the OU Analyse predictive analytics tool.

Learning design is the practice of planning, sequencing and managing learning activities. Adoption of this approach, and an associated online bank of curriculum data, means that the OU for the first time can empirically analyse the design of its modules. By linking learning designs with student satisfaction and success measures, it became possible to systematically identify, measure and improve critical aspects of students’ learning experience.

OU Analyse uses predictive analytics to flag students deemed less likely to submit their next assignment, thus facilitating proactive interventions. The tool applies advanced statistical and machine learning techniques to trace the data associated with students’ online engagement and thereby generate actionable indicators.

Dr Bart Rienties, Reader in Learning Analytics at the OU, indicates that a marriage between learning design and predictive analytics would help educational institutions to maximise the opportunities of powerful, actionable analytics to support students’ learning.

The results brought about changes in staff development and in approaches to monitoring and improving module designs, as well as creating models for how learning design impacts learners. As a result, a better understanding was gained of how some forms of design (for example, those incorporating collaboration and communication activities) lead to improved performance and retention. OU Analyse has also made it possible for tutors to use just one simple indicator to monitor student engagement.

The development of the policy relating to the ethical uses of student data for learning analytics was fundamental to overcoming internal cultural barriers. By examining in detail the uses of student data and setting clear boundaries, it was possible to reach a shared understanding of the opportunities offered. Students, as key stakeholders, made a significant contribution to this work.

The OU Analyse predictive approach was scaled to cover over 45,000 students in 2015/16 and has been tested in a traditional university setting, resulting in other UK and overseas higher education institutions expressing interest in piloting the tool. The ground-breaking ethics policy has influenced the application of learning analytics across other parts of the OU and is published under a Creative Commons licence for other institutions’ use.

New projects using learning design data are already underway, allowing the OU to measure key learning outcomes, learning gains, personal development scales and readiness for employment. These measures are anticipated elements of the new Teaching Excellence Framework, which was introduced by the UK Government to recognise and reward excellent learning and teaching and will be implemented in 2017.

Dr Rienties has stated: “Learning analytics has the power to transform the potential of students into effective learning by providing personalised learning paths and tailored feedback. Institutions who want to start using learning analytics can learn from good-practice (http://evidence.laceproject.eu/) and should focus on identifying how flexible learning designs can help students on their optimal learning journey.”
Universities meet for Learner Support Project

As part of COL’s efforts to increase access to higher education in dual-mode institutions in Africa’s Commonwealth Member States, COL brought together representatives from 13 universities for a workshop in Pretoria, South Africa, as part of the Learner Support Project. Participants were drawn from institutions that are planning to introduce dual-mode education.

The workshop focused on introducing open and distance learning (ODL) and learner support to faculty members who were new to ODL. It also covered the implementation of an appropriate learner support system at their respective institutions, i.e., one that responds to the needs and expectations of learners with consideration for their unique learner profiles and contexts.

COL receives an A++

COL is pleased to announce that it has received an A++ score from the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) for its 2015/16 Project Completion Review. This is the highest score awarded by DFID and indicates that they found both outputs and outcomes from COL to have exceeded expectations.

“COL works to ensure our programmes and initiatives achieve significant outcomes and impacts for our Member States and the Commonwealth family,” said COL President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar. “It is thanks to the efforts of COL’s staff and many partners that we are able to do so. I thank and congratulate everyone who contributed to this remarkable achievement.”

Dr Johan Hendrikz, COL’s Senior Adviser – Open Schooling, met with Mr George Jonathan Maelitoka, the Vanuatu Ministry of Education’s Principal Education Officer, Education Services, and COL Focal Point, to discuss joint open schooling initiatives. COL is also supporting Vanuatu with policy development efforts.

During his visit to Tonga, COL Vice President Dr K. Balasubramanian discussed the possibilities of a partnership with the National Reserve Bank of Tonga for promoting financial literacy and financial inclusion. He met with Governor Dr Sione Ngongo Kioa (right) and Ms ‘Ungatea Latu, Assistant Governor – Policy (left).

In August 2016, COL Education Specialist Mr James Onyango met with Mr Jean Claude Kayisinga (centre), Permanent Secretary for Rwanda’s Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, and Ministry staff. They discussed introducing the Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative into Rwanda.
A champion of ICT integration in teaching and learning for the 21st century

To support teachers in improving their use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning, COL developed the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI). Mr Edward Ayo, a teacher at Dara Christian High School, in the Lira District of Northern Uganda, is one teacher benefiting from the training offered by the CCTI courses.

Mr Ayo is a graduate teacher of biology and chemistry with 15 years of teaching experience. He says that his teaching style has been positively influenced by the CCTI training, and he is determined to “plan for and facilitate world-class lessons that guarantee effective learning.”

“I have been able to identify and immediately put into use contemporary methods which originally I was very hesitant using. Examples include game-based learning and project-based learning,” he says. Mr Ayo has seen the techniques result in an increased interest in science subjects and a subsequent improvement in performance, even in areas where students previously scored poorly.

Mr Ayo is further pioneering projects that involve the integration of ICT in his school, and he is working with the school administration to improve ICT infrastructure and support training for staff to adopt various models recommended by CCTI.

To read more about Edward’s experiences and teaching experiments, follow his blog: www.cctiedwardayo.blogspot.ug.

Antigua and Barbuda to adopt L3F model

Antigua and Barbuda have adopted the Lifelong Learning for Farmers model (L3F) in order to stimulate their agricultural sector. COL is working with the Agricultural Extension Division and the Support for Women and Youth in Agriculture Project (SWAP), a joint initiative of the Ministry of Social Transformation and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs. SWAP uses agriculture as a means of achieving livelihoods for poor and vulnerable women and youths, making it a strong fit with the L3F initiative.

University of Mauritius adopts COL RIM

The University of Mauritius is now COL RIM verified, following a recent verification exercise with COL’s Education Specialist – Agriculture and Livelihoods, held in July 2016. COL RIM stands for Commonwealth of Learning Review and Improvement Model and is available for use by management teams in post-secondary education. It allows institutions to take a self-administered approach to quality assurance that is cost-effective. The model focuses on what’s right, rather than what’s wrong. The institutional findings can then be reviewed by a quality professional or a panel of verifiers.
VUSSC Management Committee

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth Management Committee met in Malaysia at the end of June 2016. The committee is comprised of six members: Dr Daniel Tau (Chairperson), Ms Pauleen Finlay (Vice-Chairperson), Mr Heroldt Murangi, Mrs Karen Best, Mr George Jonathan Maeltoka and Mr Franz Gertze (who serves as an ex-officio member). Also pictured: Mr John Lesperance and Dr Catherine Dunlop.

Outer island skills training in Tuvalu

Four pilot courses for technical and vocational skills development have been developed in Tuvalu, following a workshop in Funafuti, Tuvalu, in August 2016. The courses, which are developed as open educational resources, are Working with Concrete, Basic Horticulture, Introduction to Basic Painting Skills, and Basic Sewing Skills. They are intended to address the need for a viable alternative for students who are not suited to academic streams. The Working with Concrete and Basic Horticulture were adapted from existing COL OER and will form the foundation of the technical and vocational skills development programme for the island of Nanumaga.

The workshop was facilitated by COL in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Island Council and brought together 15 participants from the islands of Funafuti, Vaitupu, Nanumaga, Nukufetau and Nukulaelae. Additional course development is planned for early 2017.

Print2Screen: App bridges print and digital culture

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), a regional centre of COL, developed a new mobile application to integrate multimedia into printed course materials: Print2Screen. Using Quick Response Codes (QR codes) or 2D barcodes, the Android app allows learners to view multimedia embedded in a printed course material using a smartphone or mobile device. Typically, any multimedia references in printed course material are referenced by a hyperlink which must then be manually entered into a web browser. The app eliminates the need to retype a URL, as the reader simply uses a mobile device to scan the code. It also has the ability to keep a library of resources viewed, add notes to a particular resource for future reference and share a resource on social media for social learning.

The Print2Screen is available free of charge in the Google Play Store.

Print2Screen

Test out Print2Screen in a new batch of open educational resource courses now available on OAsis, COL’s online institutional repository. The courses were developed with the support of COL as part of a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. They include significant video components, which can be accessed with the Print2Screen app. http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2402
There are pitifully few women in higher education leadership positions across the Commonwealth. Whether this situation is due to active hostility to women in senior positions or benign indifference, we need vigorous and visible action to generate change. Since bold change initiatives are far more likely to succeed if they are top-driven, here is a checklist for institutional leaders who want to make a difference.

1. Set targets for departments and faculties, and monitor progress towards achieving them.

2. Ensure departments, faculties and senior administrators actively search for female talent. Some research has shown that females apply less often for promotion and have circumscribed notions of career advancement. Set an example by encouraging them to advance.

3. Take care over the composition of selection and promotion committees. Prejudice and discrimination is often subtle. A male-dominated selection or promotion committee may not be discriminatory per se, but the female candidates may feel that it is.

4. Nominate women to important and influential committees and boards – not only within the institution, but nationally and internationally. Women’s views need to be actively canvassed and properly represented. Never underestimate the importance of role models, and seek them out wherever possible.

5. Nurture the top female students (especially the senior and post-graduate students). They need to understand that academia is a sympathetic and supportive career option, conducive to their becoming future leaders.

6. Provide targeted career guidance to female staff. Although universities can’t hope to compete with the kinds of salaries and perks on offer in the private sector, greater support and planning for women’s career tracks can allow prospects and prestige to outweigh the lure of commercial offers.

7. Ensure adequate Internet access for all academic staff. Internet access is an educational imperative, and inadequate access can limit not only academics’ scholarly careers but also their knowledge of and access to research and other funding that would build their CVs.

8. Provide mentoring programmes for female staff. Mentoring is a powerful way of supporting individuals struggling to cope with conflicting demands and to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills for bettering themselves in their work and lives generally.

9. Provide child-care facilities on campus.

10. Establish policies and procedures for dealing with sexual harassment. These need to be widely publicised (especially to new students and staff) and applied with zero tolerance. Country statistics vary, but we know that across the world, one in three women will experience either rape or violent assault. The chance of such experiences is higher during women’s child-bearing years, when they will be trying to further their education and build a career.

11. Provide counselling services for female staff and students. These might include rape crisis lines as well as other forms of support for people dealing with trauma.

12. Regularly organise “diversity workshops.” We know that women and men often work from different assumptions, usually unspoken. Actively seek to change the quality of the debate and encourage the kind of dialogue that crosses the gender divide. In the process, begin to change attitudes, behaviours and cultures that militate against women achieving equality of opportunity in academia.

Those of us working in higher education have an important mission that contains a significant moral purpose. We must harness all relevant talent and not rest until we hold this mission to the highest standards of equity.
NEW RESOURCES

Guide to Developing Open Textbooks

This how-to guide has been developed to assist teachers, teaching support personnel and educational technology administrators to: understand the value of open education, OER and open textbooks for teaching and learning; appreciate the potential value of developing an open textbook platform; select appropriate technology to build an open textbook platform, using either existing services offered free on the Internet or open-source tools, based on local needs and resources; and build, manage and maintain open textbook platforms.

http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2390

Digital Learning: Reforming Teacher Education to Promote Access, Equity and Quality in Sub-Saharan Africa

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the present and future impact of digital learning on teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The focus of the report is student-teachers and teachers, and its central argument is that existing institutional structures will be insufficient to meet the scale of demand for well-prepared, qualified teachers. The report describes digitally enhanced programme innovations that can be identified in many institutions across the region, as well as three phases to full-scale adoption of new digital technologies.

http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2443

Curriculum for Digital Education Leadership: A Concept Paper

The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) is a long-term programme of COL to promote a digital education environment in Commonwealth Member Nations. This concept paper proposes a holistic approach to conceptualising digital education leadership. The C-DELTA programme will provide a framework for fostering digital learning, and will develop skilled citizens for lifelong learning.

http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2442

Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016

This study was conducted as part of the OER for Skills Development project of COL, supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The objective of the study was to collect baseline data from Commonwealth institutions with respect to the development, use and reuse of OER; the availability of support; and challenges faced in fostering the use of OER. Six research questions were formed, after reviewing previous studies, to analyse the status of OER in the Commonwealth, based on four recommendations of the 2012 Paris OER Declaration.

http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2441

Value For Money Review and Social Return on Investment Analysis

Between 2012 and 2015, COL provided financial support and other inputs for a range of processes and activities that were intended to promote the establishment of new open schooling programmes in Vanuatu and Belize, amongst several other countries. This report is an ex post value for money review of these activities, providing an overview of the review process and summarising its findings.

http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2440
Messaging is the most widely used application in networked communication, with billions of messages exchanged daily.

For most people in the developing world, a mobile phone is the only network-connected device they encounter daily, and their most widely used application is messaging.

Increasing adoption of smartphones has led to a rapid rise in the use of instant messaging (IM) across the globe. Today, IM has surpassed text messaging as the most widely used application. The top four messaging apps in terms of monthly active users are WhatsApp (owned by Facebook), Messenger (owned by Facebook), WeChat (operating from China) and Viber (operating from Israel). It is estimated that these messaging apps have over three billion active users on a monthly basis (as of early 2016). This is more than the combined number of users on the top four popular social networks.

Analysis of user data shows significant regional and age-based preferences. In general, people in emerging markets tend to use messaging services more. An example is China, where almost every smartphone user has WeChat (about 800 million monthly active users). WhatsApp has a massive user base in India. This is attributed to cost, as it is cheaper to use messaging services than social networking or email. The data also reveal that people aged 15–34 use messaging as their primary network service. Over 90 per cent of the millennials in the OECD countries use messaging.

Messaging has had a relatively minor impact on education at all levels. Text messaging is the more prominent application, used mostly for issuing alerts based on schedules. In some countries, schools use text messaging to alert parents about their children’s attendance. In general, messaging has been used as an auxiliary or support service.

COL has been a pioneer in the use of messaging as a powerful way of engaging learners, especially in flexible and informal segments. The L3F initiative has used a form of interactive messaging with basic mobile phones to generate measurable economic impact among very large numbers of farmers. COL has also successfully explored deploying sophisticated messaging services to offer a massive open online course (MOOC) for farmers on a large scale. Data show that connected learners tend to prefer mobile devices. In a recent MOOC with about 54,000 learners, almost 70 per cent accessed the course space using mobile devices. With appropriate technology innovations and support systems, it is possible that messaging services could move from the periphery to a more central space in education in developing countries. Innovations in harnessing messaging applications in educational technology will be helpful for affordably reaching and engaging more learners.

Chatbots, a new suite of technologies that bring together developments in artificial intelligence and mobile messaging, are being deployed in areas such as customer service and content delivery. They are found increasingly on platforms that rely on text-based conversational messaging. They are also cheaper to develop than mobile apps. Their deployment in flexible learning is worth exploring, especially with respect to access to and delivery of high-quality open educational resources, and to managing critical support services, such as access to learner analytics and records.