



BOARD OF GOVERNORS President's Quarterly Progress Report: April – June 2007

Note

A preliminary version of this Quarterly Report, dated June 15, 2007, was made available to the Board at its recent meeting on June 19-20.

1. General

This quarter has seen COL continue its focus on programme delivery. The Programme Update Meeting, held during the 'no-travel' period in April, focused on the evaluation of the 2006-2009 programme to-date. The results were presented to the Board at its June meeting.

At the end of March, thanks to the help of Laura Griggs, the new Advisor to the Canadian Board member, I paid useful visits to CIDA and IDRC in Ottawa. My presentations at CIDA focused on Poverty Reduction and Open Schooling.

In May, Vice-President Asha Kanwar and I participated in a number of meetings and events in London. These included: 1. A meeting of the Board of the Commonwealth Secretariat, to which COL made a report; 2. A meeting of the CHOGM liaison committee; 3. Meetings with the UK Board Member, Dr. David Levesque, and the new Director of Policy and Research at DFID, Mr. Andrew Steer; 4. The Commonwealth Foundation Annual Lecture by Dr. Ali Mazrui; 5. A weekend conference of the British-North American Committee; 6. A conference on *African Development: The Next Generation* organised by the Open University; 7. The London launch of PCF5 (see 4 below); and 8. A conference of the Association of Commonwealth Studies on the topic *Educating the Commonwealth about the Commonwealth*.

Whilst in London, I was pleased to meet the Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Ransford Smith, to sign the agreement under which the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) will make £1 million available over four years in support of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). These funds had provided partial support for the second of the VUSSC's course development meetings (familarly referred to as 'boot camps') that was held in Singapore in March to launch its programme in Teacher Education. In this quarter, they helped to finance the third boot camp, which convened in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, in June, to initiate work in Life Skills.

In early May, I spent a week in Accra chairing an international Visitation Panel constituted by the University of Ghana, Legon, to review its academic programmes, administrative processes and governance arrangements. We had a most productive visit and our Panel will return to complete its work in August. COL is also leading a mock institutional audit of the University of South Africa (UNISA), to help it prepare for a formal audit by the Council for Higher Education next year, and an institutional audit of the Namibian Open Learning Network (NOLNET). Now that the World Bank and other development agencies are again promoting higher education in Africa after two decades when their priorities were elsewhere, the search is on for cost-effective ways of renewing African universities and improving their quality after the years of neglect. COL is well-placed to help in this process and leadership of these institutional audits will help us develop useful know-how.

In June, during a visit to Trinidad & Tobago to attend the opening of the course development session (boot camp) of the VUSSC on Life Skills (see 3.3 below), the Minister of Education, the Honourable Hazel Manning, involved me in two ceremonies to launch the new National Open School. COL has been working with the Ministry for some years on this programme and it was gratifying to meet the first students. At these ceremonies, the Minister and her staff paid fulsome compliments to COL for the effectiveness of our assistance to the National Open School and our style of working generally.

Also in June, I gave the opening keynote address at the International Conference on Open and Online Learning (ICOOL 2007) in Penang, Malaysia, and also led a session on the VUSSC. Whilst there, I was able personally to thank my predecessor, Tan Sri Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, who had kindly stepped in to substitute for me in COL's role of Advisor on the Council of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, which met in Penang the previous week. This followed the departure of ACU Secretary-General John Rowett, who has been replaced in an acting capacity by Professor John Tarrant. Unfortunately, Professor Tarrant was not able to attend COL's June Board Meeting in the role of ACU Advisor.

2. Board and Board Committee Meetings

The Board and its Committees (Audit Committee, Executive Committee and Performance Committee) held meetings in Vancouver from June 17-20. The Board conveyed its best wishes for a rapid recovery to the Chairman, Mr. Lewis Perinbam, who was in hospital convalescing from surgery at the time of the meetings.

With the proviso that the formal texts of these decisions will be captured in the full minutes of the meetings that will be circulated for approval, I note here certain Board decisions. The Board:

- Will henceforward elect annually a Vice-Chair who shall, in the event of the incapacity of the Chair, discharge the duties of that office.

- Elected His Excellency The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, O.J., Vice-Chair for 2007-2008.
- Acknowledged the contribution of New Zealand's departing representative on the Board, Ms. Shona Butterfield.
- Extended the terms of the current Board representatives for the Caribbean (His Excellency The Honourable Burchell Whiteman) and Asia (Dr. Tara de Mel) until December 31, 2008.
- Requested the Vice-Chair to encourage the current Secretary-General to make Board appointments of regional representatives from Africa and the Pacific before demitting office.
- Ratified the audited Consolidated Financial Statements for 2005-2006.
- Ratified the current version of the Governance Manual, to be posted on COL's website, noting that further changes would be proposed at the 2008 meeting.
- Approved a Programme of Activity and Budget for 2007-2008, including financial provision for Performance Management and Cost-of-Living Adjustment.
- Asked for a statement of policy on extrabudgetary funding.
- Extended the Employment Agreement with the President from June 1, 2008 to May 31, 2012.
- Directed that henceforward the Director of Finance, Administration and Human Resources, should take the minutes of any in camera sessions of the Board and its Committees and that these minutes should be held, on a confidential basis, by the Board Secretary.

The Executive Committee directed that the audited Consolidated Financial Statements be posted on COL's website once approved by the Audit Committee.

3. Programme

The Board received a full update on programme implementation for 2006-2007 at its June meeting so I shall simply note here some other relevant developments.

3.1 Copyright Guidelines

For some years, COL has been working with Member States to help them use copyright and legal copyright exemptions effectively in order to give their citizens access to documents for educational purposes without unnecessary expense. I have noticed that my letters to Ministers of Education about copyright issues generate more responses than those on any other topic. In this quarter, COL has given Ministers a copyright audit questionnaire to help them assess how effectively their countries are using copyright provisions. COL has also updated its Copyright Guidelines to include a fuller treatment of

the restrictions that can be applied to the Creative Commons licences that are in increasingly common use. See www.col.org/copyright.

3.2 Partnerships

3.2.1 UNESCO

COL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO in 1994 and updated the associated work plan in 1999. A new joint work plan will shortly be signed by both parties. COL is referred to as partner in UNESCO's Plan for 2007-2009 (34C5) that will be presented to the General Conference at the end of 2007.

3.2.2 La Francophonie

COL will be working with the Francophonie in the area of teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa. We have been invited to share our expertise in two major meetings of francophone African countries later this year and early in 2008.

3.2.3 Commonwealth Secretariat

The Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD) has nominated Dr. Roli Degazon-Johnson to liaise with COL and CFTC in relation to VUSSC. We are working with Dr. Jyotsna Jha of the STPD to finalise our gender mainstreaming policy and Action Plan. The STPD will be an active partner at PCF5.

3.2.4 Commonwealth Foundation

COL and the Commonwealth Foundation will work in partnership for PCF5. COL is also holding discussions on how ODL can expand the scale of the CF interventions in governance.

3.2.5 Association of Commonwealth Universities

As the ACU reviews its future strategy following the departure of Secretary-General John Rowett; it may adopt a 'membership/accreditation' procedure similar to that used by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Given COL's growing experience of institutional audits this might lead to a productive partnership. COL is also working with the ACU to make the reports issued by the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education available to the VUSSC countries.

3.2.6 UNESCO-UNEVOC

COL and UNESCO's International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC) organised and hosted the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Summit: "Access to and inclusion in TVET in Africa through new ICT-based solutions",

held in conjunction with eLearning Africa (the 2nd International Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training), which took place in Nairobi at the end of May. COL also participated in the eLearning Africa exhibition. See www.elearning-africa.com.

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

Twenty-five life skills educators from 18 countries convened for 2.5 weeks in Trinidad & Tobago in June to learn a range of ICT skills that will help them develop ODL materials and form an international network. In addition to ICT and online skills, participants learn to work with people from diverse backgrounds, which enriches the resulting materials and their teaching. This was the third VUSSC 'boot camp'.

COL is working with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to help VUSSC countries create a Transnational Qualifications Framework and strengthen regional and national qualifications authorities.

3.4 Knowledge Finder

Taking advantage of constantly improving search technologies, COL's website now has various new search fields. The aim is to give access to additional resources, customised to the topic area of the website the user is reviewing. Examples are:

- Knowledge Finder page – www.col.org/kf.
- Education page – www.col.org/education.
- L&L page – www.col.org/LearningforLivelihoods.
- Human Environment – www.col.org/HumanEnvironment.
- MDGs – www.col.org/MDGs.
- Knowledge Management – www.col.org/KnowledgeManagement.
- Knowledge Services – www.col.org/KnowledgeServices.
- WikiEducator – www.col.org/WikiEducator.
- Copyright – www.col.org/copyright.

4. Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

COL's Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) was launched in London on May 17, 2007, in front of an invited audience representing educational institutions, governments, development agencies and Commonwealth organisations. As Conference Co-Chairs, Sir Graeme Davies, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, and I delivered remarks at the event. The keynote speaker was Professor Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director General for Communications and Information at UNESCO and a former Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU.

PCF5 will explore how open and distance learning can help to achieve the international development goals and education for all. The conference theme is “Access to Learning for Development”, with a focus on four key areas:

- Governance, conflict and social justice;
- Health;
- Livelihoods; and
- Provision for children and young people.

The conference will be hosted by COL in partnership with the University of London as part of its celebrations of 150 years of external studies, a seminal event in the development of distance learning worldwide. PCF5 will run from 13-17 July 2008.

The purpose of the launch event was to encourage the education and development communities to engage in discussion about how ODL can help achieve international development goals and education for all. The organisers have ambitious sponsorship targets: the goal is to fully sponsor at least one in six delegates to PCF5. I was able to announce at the launch that the University of London and the UK Open University have each made sponsorship commitments of £25,000 which translate to approximately 40 delegates from sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the small island states: www.col.org/pcf5.

5. Stakeholder Relations

Remittances in this quarter have brought the number of countries contributing to COL's budget in this fiscal year to 36, up from 27 in 2005-2006. During the financial years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, only 20 countries contributed to COL annually. What are some of the success factors? First, a system for stakeholder relations comprising Focal Points, Country Profiles 2003-2006 and Country Action Plans 2006-2009 is in place. (Board members will be pleased to note that Ministers of Education have now nominated COL Focal Points in all 49 countries where we work). Second, we have a rigorous follow-up schedule. Third, there is a concerted effort to balance regional priorities and national needs. Fourth, we have developed a Monitoring and Evaluation strategy with a focus on feeding lessons learned back into annual Action Plans. Fifth, strong emphasis is placed on accountability for all our initiatives and actions. Finally, the process of implementing the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth has raised COL's profile in the small states.

6. Finances

6.1 Revenues

Member Governments contributions of \$663,382 were received in the quarter as follows: Bangladesh - \$31,486; Ghana - \$31,500; Kenya - \$36,772; Nigeria - \$500,000

(which represents its arrears payment for 2005-2006); Pakistan - \$35,000; and Tuvalu - \$29,104. This brings year-to-date contributions received to a level of \$7.7 million, exceeding the forecasted level of \$7.4 million for the year by 4%.

Close to \$1.7 million in extra-budgetary revenues should be recognised by June 30 (subject to any deferred revenue adjustments at year end) based on existing contracts during the year and new contracts entered into in the quarter. The contract from CFTC for VUSSC totalling £1,000,000 over a four-year period was signed recently as mentioned earlier with £200,000 allocated and received for this year's work. Extra-budgetary revenues for 2006-2007 make up about 18% of COL's total revenue sources which exceeds the target set for this year of 15%.

6.2 Cash Flow

With member Governments and extra-budgetary revenues exceeding forecasts, estimated cash on hand at June 30 will be higher than expected. All cash and cash equivalents on hand, now estimated at \$6 million, will be used to support the budget for next year and settle any year end accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Another \$1.85 million continues to be held as a cash reserve and as collateral by a bank in the form of term deposits.

6.3 Expenditures

Based on May 31 figures (June in progress), \$8.1 million of the \$8.7 million budget has been spent or committed. The balance of the budget will be spent in June based on preliminary figures at year end. Organisational management costs, human resource and office costs are all within approved budget levels with any under spent portions made available to the programme through the virement process.

7. Human Resources

7.1 Staff Changes

7.1.1 Arrivals

Dr. Tanyss Munro joined COL on April 1, 2007, as Education Specialist, Governance, from Bangladesh where she recently served as Education Advisor with Concern Worldwide.

7.1.2 Recruitment

The position of Education Specialist, Media (Vancouver) has been re-advertised and interviews will be held in July.

Mr. Dalip Tetri will join CEMCA (New Delhi) as Head, Administration and Finance, in August 2007. He is currently Registrar at the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

8. Publications

A June 2007 issue of Connections/EdTech News will be published by the end of June. The newsletter is published three times per year.

COL has released four new titles in its *Knowledge Series*:

- Acquiring Accreditation in Distance Learning (by *Wendy R. Kilfoil*).
- Adapting Learning Materials for Distance Learning (by *Clayton R. Wright*).
- Designing Learning Objects for Online Learning (by *Solvig Norman and David Porter*).
- Knowledge Management Strategies for Distance Education (by *Neil Butcher*).

The *Knowledge Series* – a topical, start-up guide to distance education practice and delivery – now includes 25 titles, all are available in print, CD-ROM or by download from COL's website: www.col.org/knowledge.

9. Visitors

Although I do not plan to report on visitors to COL in every quarter, the Board may be interested to note the variety of visitors who come to our Vancouver office. In this quarter some of the visitors we received were:

- New Zealand's new High Commissioner to Canada, Her Excellency Mrs. Kate Lackey, along with New Zealand's Consul-General in Vancouver, Ms. Anne Chappaz (April 12).
- Dr. Rosina Smith, Executive Director, Alberta Online Consortium (April 19).
- Dr. Catherine M. Casserly, Programme Officer, Education, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (April 19).
- Dr. Michael Gurstein, Executive Director, Centre for Community Informatics Research, Development and Training (April 19)
- Mr. David Holtzman, Senior Knowledge Exchange Specialist, Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) (April 20).
- India's new High Commissioner to Canada, His Excellency R.L. Narayan, along with India's Consul-General in Vancouver, Mr. Ashok Kumar (April 23).
- Ms. Molly Harrington, Chief Executive Officer/ADM, Crown Agencies Secretariat, Ministry of Finance, Government of British Columbia (April 23).

- Professor Kwaku Appiah-Adu, Head of Policy Coordination, Monitoring & Evaluation, Office of the President of Ghana and Ghanaian Project Director for the Central Governance Project, (May 4).
- Dr. Paul Grimwood, Chief Executive, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (May 30).
- Dr. Neeru Khosla, CEO and Mr. Murugan Pal from CK-12 Foundation, Palo Alto, CA (May 31).
- Dr. Ralph Nilson, President, Malaspina University College, BC (June 7)
- Professor Dayantha S. Wijeyesekera, former member of COL's Board of Governors, former Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Sri Lanka and the University of Moratuwa and currently involved with the newly formed Sri Lanka Association of Distance Educators and the Distance Education Modernization Project (June 11).
- Ms. Laura Griggs, CIDA, Advisor to the Canadian Board Member (June 21).
- Dr. David Levesque, UK Board Member, (June 25)
- Mr. Edward Cameron, Deputy Chief of Mission-designate for Maldives' new joint Embassy to the US-High Commission to Canada (June 28).

We also hosted:

- A workshop for the four Life Skills specialists chosen to lead the teams at the VUSSC 'boot camp' held in Trinidad & Tobago.
- A seminar, the Tectonic Shift Think Tank, of experts on Wikis from all over the world.
- A review meeting for the COL/UNESCO Computer Navigator's Certificate with participants from all Commonwealth regions.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Sir John Daniel
President & Chief Executive Officer
June 30, 2007*