



BOARD OF GOVERNORS President's Quarterly Progress Report: January – March 2007

1. General

My previous report particularly noted two important international events, PCF4 and 16th CCEM, that took place in the last months of 2006. This quarter has seen COL focus on programme delivery.

The Executive Committee met in London on February 2. We took advantage of being at the Commonwealth Secretariat to strengthen links with our colleagues there and to hold a planning meeting for the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5), which is to be held at the University of London in July 2008. A formal launch event for PCF5 will be held at the University on May 17, 2007.

My own travels this quarter began in India, where I visited the state open universities of Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu and took part in a review meeting of COL's expanding Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative. Then in late January, Professor Mohan Menon and I paid a productive return visit to the World Bank, which is particularly interested in COL's work in open schooling. COL is preparing an evaluative review of open schooling to assist the World Bank in determining how to support this response to the rapidly increasing demand for secondary schooling that is emerging as universal primary education is achieved.

With the Chairman's approval, I have accepted invitations to join two advisory groups. The first is the High-Level Panel of Advisors to the Global Alliance for Information and Communications Technology and Development (GAID), which was set up by the UN Secretary-General last year. I attended a conference entitled *GAID meets Silicon Valley*, which was a useful opportunity to inform players in the UN and ICT communities about COL's uses of technology for development. The second is the advisory board of the Whitney International University System, which is making a large investment in support of ambitious plans to use technology-mediated ODL to effect the drastic reductions in cost necessary to make higher education accessible to poorer people in developing countries.

In late February, I was privileged to give the Dennis Irvine Lecture in Guyana. Dato' Professor Raj Dhanarajan inaugurated this series in 2001 and mine was the first since the death of Dr. Irvine in late 2005. It was a pleasure to honour the memory of this distinguished Caribbean and Commonwealth figure, who contributed so much for COL as a staff member and advisor over 15 years (<http://www.col.org/colweb/site/pid/4389>).

The Audit Committee met by teleconference on March 26.

2. Programme

2.1 General Evolution of the Programme

At the end of March we said goodbye to Mr Rod Tyrer, who completed his secondment to COL from DfID that began in 2003. I pay tribute to the way in which Rod has helped us focus the programme and sharpen its management during his time at COL. As he explained to the Executive Committee on February 2, there have been five important changes over the last four years:

- Evolution from project to programme mode;
- Flat management to team working culture;
- Meshing of strategic management and programme operation;
- Supply driven to more demand driven; and
- Closer alignment to international development targets.

To manage the programme, we have created three sectors each with a team leader. Each sector has 5 programme initiatives with defined outputs, outcomes and an impact statement, all measured by performance indicators. More sustained programme interventions now complement the role of our education specialists in networking and influencing policy. The bureaucratic load of programme administration has been lightened and a culture of monitoring and evaluation now permeates COL's work.

The current programme strategy was developed after 13 regional consultations involving 400+ people in all regions of the Commonwealth and the commissioning of six regional environmental scans by outside experts. These laid the foundation for the 2006-2009 Plan, '*Learning for Development*'. Individual Country Action Plans, resulting from discussions with governments, give specific focus to the overall Plan and focal points within countries ensure that ongoing links with governments remain strong.

The challenges now are: to balance a team-working culture with high individual performance; to reflect constantly on practice; to enhance staff skills in the art of monitoring, evaluation and reporting as a complement to their operational skills; and finally, to remain focussed on Commonwealth governments' needs while keeping abreast of shifts in development thinking and methods.

Using the programme management structure outlined above (3 sectors with 5 initiatives in each), I give below a succinct narrative account of noteworthy activities within each initiative in this quarter. In future quarterly reports I shall report in greater depth on selected initiatives. The June Board meeting will receive a report card on each initiative keyed to the performance indicators in the Corporate Logic Model (see Plan: pages 30-31).

2.2 Education Sector

2.2.1 Quality Assurance:

The Pan-Commonwealth Quality Indicators for Teacher Education that were developed under COL's leadership are being tested and finalised and a collection of case studies in best practice in teacher education is at the editing stage. An Assessors' Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will soon be completed.

2.2.2 Teacher Development:

Content development for the online version of the Green Teacher diploma is on schedule. COL and TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) jointly organised a workshop in Ghana for the West African Consortium for Teacher Education Development (WACTED).

Research and development work has readied a programme of networking sub-district resource centres for school and teacher development for roll-out in Zambia and India. The World Bank Institute (WBI) seeks to collaborate with COL on this programme and has taken part in initial discussions with the Government of Karnataka (India) and the University of Zambia. Work will begin in 2007-2008.

2.2.3 Open and Alternative Schooling:

An evaluative review of open schooling, initiated with the encouragement of the World Bank, will include case studies of India's National Institute for Open Schooling and the Namibian College of Open Learning. COL is supporting Trinidad & Tobago and Bangladesh in the planning and management of open schooling.

2.2.4 Higher Education:

A national forum for policy formulation was organised in Uganda and COL is helping the University of South Africa with a mock quality audit in preparation for undergoing the real thing with the Council on Higher Education in 2008.

2.2.5 E-learning for Education Sector Development:

A workshop on eLearning, held in Delhi in March, trained 40 teacher educators in eContent development.

Use of COL's WikiEducator has been growing rapidly during the past year with the number of registered users passing the 600 mark and number of visits per month now exceeding 20,000. A wiki is a website on which any user can edit and update pages. The best known is Wikipedia, the biggest encyclopaedia ever produced. Wikis are a part of the emerging "Web 2.0" environment that includes user-contributed works such as Wikipedia, YouTube and MySpace. COL's WikiEducator creates online communities whose members participate from remote locations to create educational content collaboratively (e.g., the VUSSC and other free educational content), and to plan conferences and other events. The site provides an online transnational workspace for a variety of educational purposes and is free for anyone to use. All

materials submitted to WikiEducator are licensed under the Creative Commons CC-BY-SA 2.5 copyright license which permits copying, editing and free reuse of the materials, with attribution (www.wikieducator.org).

2.3 Learning for Livelihoods Sector

2.3.1 Learning and Skills for Livelihoods:

Various African countries (Botswana, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Tanzania) are collaborating with COL to integrate ICTs and ODL into Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA), UNEVOC-UNESCO and the African Development Bank, in partnership with COL, are raising awareness of using ICTs for TVET and building the capacity to use Open Educational Resources (OERs) for developing TVET course materials in Africa.

South Pacific countries, in collaboration with COL, the Pacific Association of TVET and the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, have produced a third ODL module for on-the-job training of users of small outboard motors.

In the Caribbean, Trinidad & Tobago has requested COL to assist in training trainers and in developing ODL materials for TVET.

COL and India's Tamil Nadu Open University are collaborating in the development and adaptation of ODL courses in basic technical and vocational skills. They will be shared with South Asian and Sub-Saharan African countries.

2.3.2 Rural and Peri-urban Community Development:

Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka, are in the process of introducing and adapting the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) programme. In the Theni district in Tamil Nadu, India, where the L3 Farmers programme originated, the income of 200 households has increased and the members have been repaying their loans regularly for the last 18 months.

New partnership arrangements are in place with agricultural education, research and development institutions and non-government agencies in India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Sri Lanka; as well as with the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the World Vegetable Centre.

2.3.3 National/International Community Development:

COL has reinforced its strategy of collaborating with influential national and international institutions and agencies with mandates and resources committed to agricultural education, extension, research and training in the food sector in order to build their ODL capacity. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) (a system of 15 international agricultural research centres), the Global Forum on Agricultural Research

(GFAR), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and three new US-based partner institutions/agencies invited COL for discussions on the use of ODL for reforming agricultural education.

2.3.4 Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth:

The draft VUSSC business plan has now been posted on COL's website for comment by all member countries (www.col.org/vussc). Boot Camp #2 was hosted by COL and the Singapore Government in March. Twenty-five people from 22 countries took part in this immersion training programme on the use of ICTs and wiki technology for professional development in education. Each boot camp creates a new online community (Diaspora) in a particular subject area. The subject areas have been previously agreed by Ministry interlocutors and participants are nominated by Ministries as people who will train others and continue content development for their country as part of this newly formed Diaspora. A quality assurance framework is being designed and will be recommended to countries for their use. It will draw on existing frameworks, notably those previously created by developing countries and small states. The South African Qualifications Authority is helping with this process.

2.3.5 Transnational Programmes:

The eLearning course in Report Writing created for the World Bank has been launched and the World Bank has already increased the size of the contract with COL for this work.

COL has been closely involved in a survey of the use of ICTs in African schools initiated by the World Bank's *infoDev*. Consultants across Africa gathered information and a website has been established at www.col.org/ICT4AfricaEd with links to www.wikieducator.org/ICT4AfricaEd where country reports are being published. Comments and improvements are invited by wiki (self-edit), email, fax and letter. A consolidated report will be published in the spring for comment. The final report will guide the work of the World Bank in education in Africa.

2.4 Human Environment Sector

2.4.1 COL Media Empowerment:

COL has implemented media technology (editing systems, cameras, etc.) and training in Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis in order to increase the media capacity of the Ministries of Education in these small states. Similar work is scheduled for the Ministry of Education in Tuvalu to create an educational media unit there. An FM radio station was set up for the Ministry of Education in Barbados for use in primary and secondary schooling. COL has assisted the Ministry of Education in the Bahamas in the planning of a television channel, the Bahamas Learning Channel, to deliver educational content throughout the country by a local cable provider. Launch of the channel is imminent.

2.4.2 Health Education:

COL's Health initiative continues in Barbados, the Gambia, Guyana, India, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland and

Tanzania, supporting these activities with training and technology updates. A new activity has been agreed with the WHO in Malawi. COL will work with an instructional design Resource Organisation (MACRO) and a local NGO focused on HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma. Officials from the Ministries of Health and Education will take part in this training.

2.4.3 *Good Governance:*

COL has renewed its relationship with the Commonwealth Youth Programmes (CYP) and will address governance issues for youth at a workshop for curriculum writers planned for May in conjunction with the CYP Caribbean Regional Centre and the HEART Trust in Jamaica. Discussions about assisting the CYP's Office in London to put its well-known Diploma Programme in Youth Work online are under way.

2.4.4 *Gender and Development:*

In addition to the gender work within the organisation, which has been the major focus in the past quarter, several new initiatives are being developed with ComSec and the ACU for roll-out in the new fiscal year. We shall develop a joint web page on gender and education resources for the Commonwealth and support the newly formed Association for Strengthening Higher Education for Women in Africa (AHSEWA).

2.4.5 *Environmental Education:*

COL is building institutional capacity to use ODL for developing and delivering high quality environment educational materials. Through strategic partnerships with reputed Indian institutions such as the Centre for Environmental Education (CEE) and the Indian Institute of Science (IISC), COL is contributing to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

To address the global environmental issues of Climate Change and Water Resource Management, COL has completed a study that identifies niche needs and opportunities to enhance the use of ODL to develop learning materials and institutional capacity.

3. Stakeholder Relations

Remittances in this quarter have brought the number of countries contributing to COL's budget during this fiscal year to 30, up from 27 in 2005-2006. Following India's announcement at the 16th CCEM that it will increase its contribution to COL, Nigeria has indicated its intention to follow suit in 2007-2008.

When he formally opened the National Open University of Nigeria in March, His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo paid glowing tribute to COL's support of this re-emergent institution.

4. Finances

4.1 Revenues

Contributions of \$1,203,899 were received in the quarter as follows: Guyana - \$11,293; Kiribati - \$36,513; St. Lucia - \$21,093; and United Kingdom - \$1,135,000 (the final instalment for 2006-2007). This brings year-to-date contributions received to a level of \$6.9 million against forecasted contributions of \$7.4 million. The forecast will be met when Nigeria's contribution for its outstanding pledge of \$500,000 for 2006-2007 is received.

Over \$1.0 million in extra-budgetary revenues has been recognised at March 31 (target of \$1.3 million set for the year). New contracts totalling \$300,000 were signed in the quarter with international organisations for eLearning. The contract for the funding announced earlier from ComSec for the VUSSC totalling £1,000,000 over four years (£200,000 for 2006-2007) is pending finalisation and therefore not reflected in these figures.

4.2 Cash Flow

At March 31, 2007, approximately \$6.7 million is on hand in the form of cash and cash equivalents. This represents a slight increase from the previous quarter of \$6.6 million. Another \$1.75 million continues to be held as a cash reserve and as collateral by a bank in the form of term deposits.

4.3 Expenditures

Based on financial reports to February (March figures to be finalised), it is estimated that \$6.2 million will be spent and/or committed by the end of the third quarter to meet programme costs, salaries and site and office costs. This represents 71% of the approved budget of \$8.7 million for 2006-2007. Indications are that the budget will be spent. Virements from organisational management to the programme sectors were approved in the quarter to accommodate requests for increased expenditure for programmes.

5. Human Resources

5.1 Staff Changes

5.1.1 Departures:

Mr. Rod Tyrer, Programme Director, who joined the COL staff on leave from DfID (UK) in 2003, returned to DfID at the end of March.

5.1.2 Arrivals:

Ms. Frances Ferreira, formerly Director of the Namibian College of Open Learning, joined COL on January 22, 2007 as Education Specialist, Basic Education and Open Schooling.

Dr. Ramamurthy Sreedher joined us as Director of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) on February 1.

5.1.3 Recruitment:

The position of Education Specialist, Governance has been filled by Dr. Tanyss Munro who will join COL on April 1, 2007 from Bangladesh where she recently served as Education Advisor with Concern Worldwide.

The positions of Education Specialist, Media (Vancouver) and Head, Administration & Finance at CEMCA (New Delhi) are under recruitment.

5.1.4 Locally Hired Staff:

Effective April 1, Ms. Lydia Meister is confirmed in her appointment as Programme Coordinator where she has been acting since 2005 and Ms. Ruvani Ameresekere is appointed as Programme Assistant.

6. Publications

Publications released this quarter include:

- *Connections/Ed Tech News*, February 2007: www.col.org/connections.
- *Brochure: Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)*.
- *Brochure: Commonwealth Computer Navigator's Certificate*.
- *Counselling for Caregivers: a learning series for caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in Africa*.
- *Forum on Flexible Education: Reaching Nomadic Populations in Africa. Summary Report*. Rapporteur: Alba De Souza. This is a joint COL/Commonwealth Secretariat publication that came out of a Forum held in Garissa, Kenya, from June 20-23, 2006.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Sir John Daniel
President & Chief Executive Officer
March 31, 2007*