BOARD OF GOVERNORS
President's Quarterly Progress Report:
July – September 2010

1.   Board Matters

The Board met for its annual meeting in Vancouver on June 7-9. Minutes of the meetings have been circulated. Since the Board received comprehensive updates on COL's work in the 2009-2010 year at this meeting, a Quarterly Report for the period April through June 2010 was not necessary. This report therefore focuses on the first quarter of COL's 2010-2011 financial year, from July to September 2010.

Canada has appointed Ms. Janet L. Ecker as its representative on the Board. She is currently President of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance and a Public Policy Advisor in the Tramore Group. Previously she served as Minister of Education, Minister of Finance, Minister of Social Services, and Government House Leader in the Government of Ontario. Nigeria has appointed Mrs. Mariam Yalwayi Katagum, who serves as Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, as its representative. We warmly welcome these two distinguished new members.

I thank retired Board members Denise Chong and Michael Omolewa for their years of dedicated service.

Deloitte began COL's annual audit in September. They will complete it by November and a meeting of the Audit Committee is planned for November 8, 2010.

2.   General

At the Port of Spain CHOGM in 2009, the Commonwealth decided to create an Eminent Persons Group to "undertake an examination of options for reform in order to bring the Commonwealth's many institutions into a stronger and more effective framework of cooperation and partnership". On July 19, our Vice-President and I made a presentation to the first meeting of the Group by teleconference and we were also asked to make a written submission (www.col.org/speeches). I have invited the Canadian member of the Group, Senator Hugh Segal, to visit COL when he travels across Canada to seek inputs to the Group's recommendations.

Following the election of a new government in the United Kingdom, the Department for International Development is conducting an evaluation of the value for money that the UK taxpayer gets for its support to some 30 multilateral organisations, including COL. We

responded to this evaluation on August 19 and later responded to some supplementary questions. Our submission is at www.col.org/DFIDReview. Since COL operates in an open and transparent manner, all documents relevant to the DFID review were already on the COL website, greatly facilitating the preparation and transmission of the submission.

On July 23, we held meetings with two important partners, the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, to review and update our joint work plan agreements. These can be found at www.col.org/COL-ComSec and www.col.org/COL-UNESCO. I followed up these events by meeting UNESCO colleagues in Paris on September 3 & 6, and calling in at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London on September 7.

2.2   President's activities

The Commonwealth Secretary-General has been most helpful in creating contacts for COL that may provide opportunities for generating additional resources. In late June, I followed up on two of these contacts with a meeting at the office of HRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. As a result two of my colleagues (Dr. Balasubramanian and Mr. Pringle) whose work relates closely to some of the Prince's projects in Commonwealth countries, will also visit the office when travel takes them to London. I also had lunch with Sir Evelyn de Rothschild but found that his main interest is in supporting scholarships for full-time students in conventional universities.

The Secretary-General has reached an understanding with the Government of India that it will provide some support to the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. I shall follow this up with a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in New Delhi in November.

From August 9-12, I chaired the Academic and Executive Board meetings of the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. These meetings were generously hosted in Penang, Malaysia by the Wawasan Open University. I say more about the important outcomes of these meetings in the programme report on Higher Education.

Each year the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat hold a four-day induction programme for Commonwealth diplomats who have recently been posted to London or given responsibility for Commonwealth matters. The organisers invite COL to take part in this event. On September 9, I gave a short address about COL, entitled *Small, Successful, and not in London* to the 20 diplomats present.

The significance of COL's approach to rural development is increasingly recognised by the international community and I was asked to talk about it at the International Horticultural Congress held in Lisbon, Portugal in August. Our paper, authored primarily by Dr. Balasubramanian, had the title: *Knowledge Transfer for a Horticultural Revolution: The Lifelong Learning for Farmers Model* and argued for a new approach to extension education.

In September, I addressed the World Computer Congress 2010 in Brisbane, Australia, on the topic: *Computers for Secondary Schoolchildren: A busted flush?* From there I travelled to Hong Kong in response to an invitation from the University of Hong Kong to deliver the Tin Ka Ping Distinguished Lecture. T his was entitled *Technology in Education: Much Ado about Nothing?* I also addressed three lunch-time seminars with students, faculty, and government officials respectively. While in China I presented a similar talk as part of the International Famous Scholar lecture series at the East China Normal University, Shanghai.

The Chinese version of my book *Achieving Education for All: Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers* was launched in Shanghai in May.

The text and slides for my speeches and those of my colleagues can be found at www.col.org/speeches.

3.   Programme

Several training events were organised during this quarter in all four regions of the Commonwealth. The emphasis has been on capacity building and the challenge is to take this to the next level of 'capability maturation' through which individuals are empowered to contribute to the development of their own institutions and organisations. This would help COL to both scale up its impact and to achieve sustainability. Another area of focus in both sectors has been the development of Open Education Resources (OER). There is a great deal of interest in OER but there is still a pressing need for policy advocacy and effective implementation strategies, areas that COL has taken up as a matter of priority.

3.1   Education Sector

3.1.1   *Open Schooling*

During this quarter, 25 open and distance learning (ODL) practitioners enhanced their capacity in the integration of technology into their pedagogic practice. Another 25 ODL practitioners, representing 12 institutions improved their knowledge and understanding of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) techniques. Mobile technologies as a means to transfer content to learners was introduced in two open schools.

One hundred master teachers continue to develop open educational resources (OER) through online collaboration. Content in four subjects was uploaded to the COL Wiki and is available at http://colwiki.org/OS_Learning_Portal.

3.1.2   *Teacher Education*

COL's partners in teacher education met on July 26 in Vancouver and agreed that evidence-based advocacy was needed to promote the use of ODL in teacher education. Following a decision taken at the meeting COL commissioned a short advocacy document on the role of open and distance learning in Teacher Education from Honorary COL Fellow

Dr. Hilary Perraton. Dr. Umar and I will launch this document on World Teachers' Day, October 5, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. It can be found at www.col.org/TeacherEd_RoleODL.

The first phase of the COL-TESSA dissemination project in Uganda and Zambia was completed. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Standards Workshop was held during September 28-29 to train partner institutions on how to adapt and use the COL Quality Assurance Toolkit to develop standards for teaching and teacher education.

Under the UNICEF-COL Child Friendly Schools project several capacity-building workshops were held.

3.1.3   Higher Education

The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) was implemented at two institutions: the Dominica State College and the Open University of Sri Lanka. In addition, 30 representatives of universities and quality assurance (QA) and accreditation agencies from across the Commonwealth were trained in Colombo on the effective use of COL Quality Assurance toolkits.

Twenty-nine instructional design trainers at Mico University in Jamaica were trained in response to the University's initiative to upgrade in-service teachers to BA degree level to meet new government requirements.

COL has provided scholarships to 15 students at The University of South Pacific (USP) and five students at the Open University of Malaysia (OUM), to study legislative drafting and instructional design & technology respectively.

I have already referred to the meetings of the Academic Board and Executive Governing Board of the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) in an earlier section. Key decisions resulting from the meeting include a revised licensing structure for partner institutions; the consortium would bear the cost of future face-to-face meetings and professional development workshops; new members would be admitted to the consortium once the revision of all courses is completed; and partner institutions could name the programme according to the needs of their local markets. In short, COL will gradually transfer the responsibility of running this programme to the partner institutions.

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

The second Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) Management Committee meeting, followed by the second TQF Senior Officials meeting, was held from July 5-7 in Kuala Lumpur, hosted by the Open University of Malaysia.

Twenty-seven senior officials from 26 countries participated in the senior officials meeting including the Malaysia Qualifications Agency and the South African Qualifications

Authority (SAQA). Senior officials applauded the work undertaken by the TQF Management Committee in regard to the TQF Procedures and Guidelines document. The TQF has become a useful reference tool even for countries outside the Commonwealth.

3.2   Livelihoods & Health Sector

3.2.1   Skills Development

A flexible skills development workshop was held with ten institutions from The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria. It built the capacity of institutional managers to address the policy and planning issues of introducing new technologies into teaching and learning. With support from COL, the Distance Learning Secretariat in Trinidad & Tobago's Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education drafted a national plan to introduce ODL into the country's technical and vocational system.

Through the collaboration of Kenya Technical Teacher Training College (KTTC) and the Technical and Vocational Teachers College (TVTC) in Zambia, an online course in ICT in TVET was developed for Africa. Progress is being made in the development of open educational resources for nurse upgrading in Kenya and vocational literacy in seven countries in the Pacific.

3.2.2   Learning for Farmers

The lifelong learning for farmers (L3F) programme is gaining traction in the different regions of the Commonwealth. During this quarter, L3F activities were launched in Kenya, Mauritius and Uganda. A course on Honey Collection in the Rukiga language for the Batwa and Bakiga communities in Uganda was also completed.

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), in collaboration with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, completed learning materials for a course on Microfinance. Two hundred and fifty bank officers are currently enrolled in the course.

A consortium of Indian state-owned banks, including the Indian Overseas Bank has provided credit of CAD500,000 to L3F participants during this quarter. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in India provided funds to L3F partners requesting them to train other NGOs in the region in L3F and mobile phone-based learning.

Beta testing of the Learning through Interactive Voice Educational System (LIVES) developed by COL in collaboration with the University of British Columbia was completed in India.

3.2.3   Healthy Communities

The following capacity building exercises were completed:

1. One hundred and fifty African broadcasters and health workers were engaged in an online radio scriptwriting training to promote 'healthy communities'.
2. Eight health, development and media workers from Commonwealth African countries (Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and South Africa) were trained in online facilitation (learner support) skills.
3. Nineteen policymakers and health, development and media workers in the Solomon Islands and PNG have increased skills and knowledge of non-formal ODL.
4. Nineteen learning intermediaries were trained and one gender sensitive community learning programme on women's health was developed in Papua New Guinea.
5. Six policymakers developed a framework for a learning network in Solomon Islands.

3.2.4   Integrating eLearning

COL conducted an Orientation programme for the Trinidad & Tobago Laptop Programme and assisted them to develop a short-term plan for training teachers. COL also did a baseline study to initiate the development of a medium- to long-term plan and customisation of existing training materials for deployment in a multimodal format in Trinidad & Tobago.

Three online moderated forums were organised to address the OER issues raised at the workshops held in Namibia and South Africa earlier this year. The first forum *Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity* took place during September 23-29. Three hundred and twenty nine persons participated and the report is available at www.oerworkshop.weebly.com.

3.2.5   eLearning in International Organisations

This was a busy quarter for the eLearning in International Organisations (eLIO) team. First, eLIO submitted two technical proposals to UNHCR for converting the *Writing Effectively for UNHCR* into an online format, and to deliver the Operational Data Management Programme (ODMLP) course to 70 English and French learners using Moodle.

During this quarter, eLIO completed two eLearning cohorts, and two new cohorts started using Moodle. eLIO also re-developed the *Writing Effectively for WHO* course to add a section on *How to write funding proposals*.

3.3   CEMCA

The Ministry of Education, Government of Maldives, was the proud recipient of 35 EduFrames; low-cost computing devices developed by CEMCA and donated by the University of New England, Australia through COL. The EduFrames are part of an experimental study with 23 Grade III children from the atoll of Villigili, Maldives, to

understand whether the introduction of technology at the primary school level can contribute to improved learning outcomes.

The Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) and the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) adapted the guidelines (*Quality Assurance in Educational Multimedia Materials* developed by CEMCA in 2009) to suit the needs of their respective constituencies all over India.

A workshop on community radio management and community participation was held from September 21-24 at Kolkata in collaboration with Jadavpur University Community Radio station. Seventeen participants from organisations in Bangladesh who have obtained clearance for community radio licenses attended the workshop.

An open educational resources (OER) and Learning4Content (L4C) (Wikieducator) workshop was held for faculty members of Teerthankar Mahaveer University (TMU), Moradabad on September 3-5.

CEMCA facilitated the participation of seven delegates from the Commonwealth Asian region to the eINDIA 2010 Convention held August 4-6 at Hyderabad, India. The participants were from: India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka.

3.4   Vice-President's Activities

The Vice President participated in a three-day Executive Committee of the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) at Gijon, Spain. The participation was funded by the GKP. The VP was also invited to a two-day meeting on QA for eLearning organised by Athabasca and ICDE in Banff, Alberta during which QA Guidelines for eLearning were finalised.

During the quarter, COL entered into Memorandums of Understanding with the following organisations to establish a formal basis of collaboration for sharing knowledge and expertise: the Caribbean Examinations Council, the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa, the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, and Rupantar in Bangladesh.

In addition, COL established a Code of Practice Agreement to implement the COL Review and Implementation Model with the Open University of Sri Lanka and Dominica State College during the year.

4.   Stakeholder Relations

4.1   Member Governments Support

All invoices and requests for the 2010-2011 contributions were sent out by August 3, 2010 to all Commonwealth Member States.

So far contributions have been received from 19 countries. These are: Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Canada, Cyprus, Ghana, Guyana, India, Malaysia, Mauritius, Rwanda, St. Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago and Tuvalu.

AusAID is providing support towards the participation of up to 15 participants from the Pacific region to attend PCF6 in Kochi, India in November.

4.2   Focal Points Update

We welcomed the following new Focal Points and thank the outgoing ones for their excellent contributions:

1) Lesotho – Dr. H.M. Lephoto, IEMS, National University of Lesotho.
2) Malta – Mr. George Borg, Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family.
3) Mauritius – Mr. R. Auckbur, Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology.
4) Nauru – Dr. Maria Gaiyabu, Ministry of Education (*Interim Focal Point*).
5) Singapore – Ms. Mandy Cheng, Ministry of Education.
6) Tonga – Mrs. Peaua Heimuli, Tonga Institute of Higher Education.
7) Vanuatu – Mr. John Niroa, Ministry of Education *(Interim Focal Point).*
8) Namibia – Mr. Beans Ngatjizeko, Ministry of Education.
9) Papua New Guinea – Dr. Willy Ako, Ministry of Higher Education.

4.3   Congratulatory Letters

I wrote a personal note to the newly appointed Governor-General of Canada, Dr. David Johnston, whom I have known well since the 1980s, and received a most gracious reply.

Congratulatory letters were also sent to:

1) Prime Minister of Australia.
2) Minister of Education, Australia.
3) Minister of Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, Australia.
4) Minister of Foreign Affairs, Australia.
5) Vice Chancellor, University of Mumbai.
6) The newly appointed Vice Chancellor, University of South Africa.
7) Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs/New Zealand Aid Programme.
8) Consul-General in Toronto, Canada, Antigua & Barbuda.
9) Minister of Education, Malawi.
10) President of Talal Abu Ghazaleh Business University, Bahrain (Abdul Waheed Khan).
11) NOLNet Executive Secretary, Namibia.

5.   Finances

5.1   Revenue

COL has received a total of $4.2 million in voluntary member government funding since the beginning of the financial year (July 1, 2010). This represents over 50% of the annual funding forecast from member governments for this fiscal year. At the same time last year, 30% of the annual funding forecast had been received.

Contributions in the following sums were received from these member governments: Bahamas - $61,800; Bangladesh - $30,874; Barbados - $46,350; Belize - $31,290; Botswana - $46,350; Canada - $2.6 million; Cyprus - $15,859; Ghana - $124,920; Guyana - $15,345; India - $897,549; Malaysia - $50,000; Mauritius - $60,000; Rwanda - $13,300; St. Lucia - $19,142; Samoa - $61,800; Seychelles - $15,345; Tonga - $10,410; Trinidad & Tobago - $77,250; and Tuvalu - $10,300.

Based on the funding response in this first quarter and in the previous year, we are optimistic that the funding forecast of $7.8 million will be attained.

In addition to member government funding, over $2 million is expected from other sources in the grants and special projects and fee-for-service categories.

Grants and special projects: Work is ongoing under two major grants with expected revenues as follows: from UNICEF for Mainstreaming Child Friendly School Models (USD1.5 million with an expected completion of June 2011); and from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for Open Education Resources (USD60,000 with an expected completion of June 2011).

In July 2010, COL entered into a 16-month agreement with The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for support for VUSSC in the amount of USD300,000.

COL received sponsorship funds for PCF6 from these sponsors: AusAID - AUD50,000; UNESCO - USD25,000; University of London - £10,000 and The Open University (UK) - £10,000.

COL also entered into two smaller agreements – with UNESCO for support for a quality assurance workshop held in Sri Lanka and with the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities to participate in the E-xcellence NEXT project.

Fee-for-service contracts: Over $600,000 in revenue has been forecast for the year from the eLearning service with $65,000 available in deferred revenues at year end to complete existing agreements and another $200,000 under contract with international organisations for course delivery during this financial year. Proposals for further services have been submitted. Full cost recovery was not achieved in 2009-2010 but with revised

costing models in new agreements and if aided by a slightly weaker Canadian dollar than in 2009-2010, it will be achieved in 2010-2011.

5.2   Cash Flow

COL began the new fiscal year on July 1, 2010 with cash and cash equivalents of $8.8 million. This position has increased during the first quarter with receipts exceeding expenditures in the quarter.

In addition, COL holds a cash reserve of $1.7 million to protect against any shortfalls in expected revenues.

5.3   Expenditures

Using July and August 2010 figures (September data is not yet finalised), approximately $2 million of the $11.165 million budget is estimated to have been spent or committed in the first quarter to meet programme and organisational management activities, and staff and office costs. The budget for 2010-2011 includes $2.15 million of expenditures related to additional contributions.

6.   Human Resources

6.1   Staff Changes

6.1.1   Arrivals

Dr. Balaji Venkataraman joined COL on September 1, 2010 as Director – Technology and Knowledge Management.

6.1.2   Movements

Ms. Kris Roberts, who joined COL in November 2009 on a temporary appointment as Knowledge Management Coordinator, left COL in July 2010.

6.1.3   Recruitment

Recruitment is underway for the position of Education Specialist – Higher Education at COL which will become vacant at the end of December 2010 and for the position of Head – Administration & Finance at CEMCA which will become vacant in January 2011.

6.   Information Technology & Knowledge Management

I have asked Dr. Balaji Venkataraman, who joined COL as Director of Technology and Knowledge Management on September 1, to provide his initial assessment of COL's current status in his areas of responsibility as he finds it on taking office. He writes:

Information systems at COL, comprising server computers and standard network devices are up-to-date in their configurations and functions. This set up reflects the advantages of being compact and has the sophistication necessary to support the highly varied requirements of the programmes, the administration, partnership facilitation and external communication. There are three strategic investments in the information systems at COL that give it an edge for at least a few years in the rapidly changing scenario of information technology management.

First among these is "Server Virtualisation". This technology matured in the last few years and is known to offer significant reduction in management intensity in relation to network-based services. However, its implementation has generally been considered difficult. COL has fully implemented this task and we have far fewer physical servers now than a year back and yet more services are available to an even higher level of availability. This is going to allow us to add more services to staff and for external communication without significant additional costs.

Next is the implementation of a good content and workflow management system online using SharePoint 2010. This platform, made and marketed by Microsoft, is now considered to be a mature product after several revisions over the decade. Its availability in the COL network will make design of new online workflows considerably easier, and will contribute much to further improvements in the efficiency of many current and future internal processes.

Third is COL's decision to adopt Moodle as the standard Learning Management System. This Open Source platform is finding far wider adoption across the globe in the last two years, even replacing more sophisticated, proprietary ones. COL has launched a number of Moodle installations to store or to deliver some of the special courses. The installations are robust in performance and are stable against increased loads. As new features are released, they can be easily incorporated in these installations if they add value to the program efforts.

The arrangement of building special-purpose news feeds using online aggregators gives a unique edge to COL's external communication along with its web site which serves as a highly functional repository of all the publications.

Together, these are the assets that will help COL stay the course on all occasions and move ahead on partner and program demand in offering advanced and reliable information and knowledge services.

8.   Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF6)

PCF6 will be held from 24-28 November 2010 at Le Méridien Cochin Resort & Convention Centre, Kochi, Kerala, India. The theme will be: *Access & Success in Learning: Global Development Perspectives.*

Over 200 full papers have now been received in response to submitted abstracts that were accepted. COL Education Specialists are currently leading the development of the final programme.

Major sponsors include COL, Indira Gandhi National Open University, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), UNESCO and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS, India). Other sponsors include The Open University (UK) and the University of London.

Sponsorship funds have enabled COL to sponsor about 80 delegates from around the Commonwealth, none of whom have received funding from COL in the past to attend a PCF.

COL also takes advantage of PCFs to schedule meetings prior to the event to advance various COL initiatives. Several such COL meetings will be held prior to PCF6 in Kochi and in India, including an L3Farmers meet in Tamil Nadu, an Open Schooling conference in Delhi, and a "Participatory Communication in Education" workshop in Kochi in collaboration with UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector.

9.   Visitors to COL

We received several distinguished visitors to COL. Two of them were with us on our Executive Secondment programme. Dr. Cream Wright, formerly Head of Education at UNICEF, undertook his Executive Secondment at COL in July while Dr. Pandora Johnson from the College of the Bahamas came to COL in September to develop a Strategic Plan for establishing a University in her country.

Dr. Caroline Seelig, Chief Executive of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ) and an Honorary COL Advisor visited COL in July.

Ms. Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić of UNESCO and Dr. Pauline Greaves Aylward and Mr. Virgilio Juvane of ComSec participated in the meetings on the joint work plans that I referred to earlier. They stayed on to participate in a Partners Consultative meeting for Teacher Education which followed on July 23.

Professor Ram Takwale, Honorary Fellow of COL and President of the Indian Consortium for Educational Transformation (I-CONSENT), visited us from September 13-16 and gave a seminar on his work on the reform of Teacher Education in India.

On September 13, COL received a delegation of eight visitors from the Tianjin Television University, China and other TV Universities. On September 20, we received another Chinese delegation – from the Shanghai TV University.

Mr. Anthony Ming of the Governance and Institutional Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat visited COL on September 20-21.

10. Publications/Resources

The following is a list of recent publications and resources:

Perspectives on Distance Education: Teacher Education through Open and Distance Learning. Patrick Alan Danaher and Abdurrahman Umar, eds. www.col.org/PSTeacherEd.

Teacher Education: The Role of Open and Distance Learning, by Hilary Perraton, Visiting Fellow, Institute of Education, University of London, September 2010. Prepared for presentation by COL and its teacher education partners at UNESCO's World Teachers' Day (Paris, 5 October 2010). www.col.org/TeacherEd_RoleODL.

In addition, COL staff members were published in two learned journals:

1) K. Balasubramanian, P. Thamizoli, A. Umar and A. Kanwar: 'Using mobile phones to promote lifelong learning among rural women in India.' *Distance Education*, Vol. 31, No. 2, August 2010.

2) A. Kanwar, K. Balasubramanian, A. Umar. 'Towards Sustainable OERs: A Perspective from the Global South'. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April-June 2010.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

Sir John Daniel
President & Chief Executive Officer
September 30, 2010