



**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**  
**President's Quarterly Progress Report:**  
**January - March 2019**

**1. Board Matters**

The 43<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Audit Committee was held on February 26, 2019 via teleconference to review progress for the second quarter of the financial year. This was followed by the 43<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee on February 28, 2019 to discuss progress on the action items from the June Board meetings.

Preparations are under way for the upcoming meetings of the Board of Governors to be held in Vancouver during June 26-27, 2019.

I am delighted to welcome Professor Belinda Tynan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Vice President, RMIT University as the member representing Australia. My warm appreciation is extended to Mr Martin Bean, the former representative, for his guidance which has enriched the deliberations of the Board and been especially helpful in the area of innovations.

A very warm welcome is also extended to Mr Philip Parham, Commonwealth Envoy as UK's representative on the COL Board. I would like to thank Ms Louise Ellis for her valuable contributions and support during her tenure.

**2. General**

In celebration of Commonwealth Day, observed every year in early March, COL organises a potluck lunch at the office where staff share their national dishes. This year Director: FAHR Ms Doris McEachern and I had a special reason to travel to London, thanks to the Canadian High Commission which hosted a reception to launch our Pan Commonwealth Forum (PCF9) on March 12. Hosted by the deputy High Commissioner Ms Sarah Fountain Smith, the reception attracted many eminent members of the diplomatic and education communities in London. Our Secretary General Baroness Patricia Scotland graced the occasion. COL's partner for PCF9 The Open University was represented by the Chancellor, Baroness Lane-Fox and several senior colleagues.

While in London, we had the privilege of attending the multi-faith Commonwealth service in Westminster Abbey attended by Her Majesty the Queen and members of the royal family. This moving service made us especially proud to be part of the Commonwealth family with its emphasis on 'connectedness' and environmental sustainability. The reception afterwards, hosted by the Secretary General in Marlborough House gave us the

opportunity to introduce our work to HRH Prince Charles and connect with key stakeholders including UK board members, Philip Parham and Louise Ellis.

This trip was also an opportunity to call on the Secretary General and brief the High Commissioners of The Gambia, Nigeria, Uganda and officials from Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

## **2.1 President's Activities**

The Education Ministers' Action Group met in Marlborough House in January, where I made a virtual presentation on 'Achieving SDG 4: Are ICTs the answer?' Ministers and senior officials from ten countries appreciated the paradigm shifts that COL is leading in promoting learning for sustainable development.

COL was invited to be a partner at the ICDE Lifelong Summit at Lillehammer, which was inaugurated by the prime minister of Norway, Her Excellency Erna Solberg. My keynote on 'Achieving Lifelong Learning for All: Where are we now? What next?' formed the basis of the Road Map which was adopted by the 400 participants from 37 countries.

I then travelled to Tanzania for a Girls Inspire meeting at which our stakeholders representing nine countries and members of parliament deliberated on how to ensure that child, early and forced marriage is prevented through appropriate legislation and implementation strategies. Hon Ummu Ally Mwalimu, Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Seniors and Children inaugurated the meeting which was also attended by Hon William Tate Ole Nasha deputy minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Her Excellency Pamela O'Donnell, Canadian High Commissioner to Tanzania.

While in South Africa on my way to Mauritius, I called on Hon Grace Naledi Pandor, Minister of Higher Education and Training, a COL Fellow who thinks highly of our work. I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Vice Chancellor of the University of South Africa, Professor Mandla Makhanya to formalise the invitation to COL to conduct a Quality Audit of the university. This was also an opportunity to brief the Chair of our Audit Committee, Professor Narend Bajjnath on the meeting scheduled for later in the month.

The Open University of Mauritius conferred an honorary doctorate on me at their seventh convocation—an honour which belongs to Team COL and all those who contribute to our success. The Hon Leela Devi Dookhun, Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, complimented COL on its performance and appreciated our support on several occasions.

This year again, I sent out a video message on International Women's Day. All speeches and presentations are available at [Speeches & Presentations](#).

I continue to receive more invitations than is possible to accept. It is important to balance my time at headquarters with that in the field. However, these visits are excellent opportunities to strengthen old ties and build new links towards Commonwealth cooperation and 'connectedness'.

### **3. Programme**

The programme usually gains momentum during the third quarter and some examples of our activities are provided below:

#### **3.1 Education Sector**

##### *3.1.1 Open/Innovative Schooling*

COL facilitated Bangladesh Open University to complete an audit review of the National Institute of Open Schooling, India.

Ten students were sponsored to enrol in the Graduate Diploma in Open School Operation and Management at the Namibian College of Open Learning. The Universal Basic Education Commission, Nigeria has formed a Project Advisory Committee to develop and implement an Open/Innovative Schooling initiative with COL support.

In Trinidad & Tobago, 261 resources have been developed for open schooling. Further content development has taken place with the creation of 2779 resources in Zambia and 599 resources in Malawi. In Mozambique, materials have been revised for deployment on Aptus.

##### *3.1.2 Teacher Education*

COL, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, hosted a five-day workshop on technology-enabled teacher professional development at Kiribati Teachers College. A total of 105 teacher educators and teachers participated.

A series of professional development workshops on Digital Literacy for Teachers and Communities of Practice was organised in three schools in South Africa with 78 participants. In addition, teachers from ten high schools in Eastern Cape and the University of Fort Hare attended a four-day learning design workshop.

Two training programmes on 'Leadership in Teacher Professional Development' and 'Community of Practice Management' were held in Sierra Leone.

COL supported the African Council for Distance Education to host a train-the-trainers' workshop on Quality Assurance in Tanzania with 35 participants from teacher education institutions in Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### *3.1.3 Higher Education*

COL supported a number of activities in Africa. Botswana Open University held a workshop on developing online courses with 20 staff members leading to the development of ten course blueprints. The pilot of an employability mapping tool was completed at the Open University of Mauritius.

The University of Namibia's Centre for Open, Distance, and eLearning held two workshops to develop an institutional Open Distance and eLearning policy and learner support and assessment strategies. The Centre enrolled 203 students in the newly-developed Bachelor of Laws online courses, supported by COL.

COL built the capacity of the University of Eswatini through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) policy development; revision of the Mature Aged Entry programme; development of the Business and Marketing Plan for the Institute of Distance Education; and course writing for the Bachelor of Nursing Science programme.

Thirty-nine participants in East Africa received online training in quality assurance through the use of four INQAAHE modules.

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

COL is supporting Botswana Open University to enhance the Special and Inclusive Education degree programme for in-service teachers.

With COL's support, a competency framework for the Certificate in Digital Entrepreneurship was developed by the University of the West Indies (UWI). The curriculum builds competency in business skills and digital entrepreneurship. COL provided a comprehensive plan for recovery of student data in the event of a disaster to the Ministry of Education, Dominica.

The UWI Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies is being supported by COL to expand access to the Master of Science in Development Studies by strengthening staff capacity for converting the programme for online delivery.

COL sponsored 17 students from Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu to take COL's Legislative Drafting programme offered by the University of the South Pacific.

### *3.1.5 GIRLS Inspire*

An end-of-project meeting for the Child, Early and Forced Marriage project took place in Tanzania to share the project model and results. Participants included members of parliament representing nine countries: Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

Mann Deshi Foundation, India trained 1834 girls at their centres and business school and an additional 1962 girls were trained using community radio.

In Sri Lanka, the Centre for Women's Development is a new partner in Reaching the Unreached women and girls. So far, 625 girls have enrolled in the skills training programme.

## **3.2 Skills Sector**

### *3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)*

COL supported a workshop to finalise the modules for the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications online verifier training. Staff from Barbados TVET Council, and the National Training Agencies of Grenada and Trinidad & Tobago participated.

In Papua New Guinea, the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology organised skills training for their staff in project management with COL support.

COL offered training in facilitating online courses and flexible skills development to 295 people from across the Commonwealth.

### *3.2.2 Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)*

Tonga Business Enterprise Centre in collaboration with COL, trained 300 participants in financial literacy, enterprise development, agriculture disaster preparedness and climate smart agriculture.

Reddiarchatram Seed Growers Association (RSGA), India facilitated 253 male and 890 female farmers to receive loans from banks and financial institutions. Of these recipients, 1085 were introduced to credit-linked learning through mobile devices. L3F members of this Association received loans of over \$900,000.

COL partner Matumaini Mapya held a meeting with the Central Bank of Tanzania to discuss upscaling the L3F model. The Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute has adopted the L3F model and is using m-learning to reach its clients. Farmers received text messages, DVDs and had access to weekly radio programmes.

### *3.2.3 Technology Enabled Learning (TEL)*

The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) was implemented in Bangladesh, South Africa and Uganda in collaboration with local partner institutions. Teachers were trained as champions of digital education to encourage students to use the platform. The C-DELTA platform is being used as a resource in a FutureLearn MOOC offered by the University of Leeds and the University of Cape Town.

A workshop on designing blended courses using open source Learning Management Systems was organised at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya. In Uganda, 78 of the 95 persons trained under a skilling project with Kampabits, are now employed.

COL supported the University of Papua New Guinea to develop a TEL policy.

COL's online course on 'Understanding Open Educational Resources' attracted 2869 new users since January, with 990 successfully completing the course.

### **3.3 Cross-cutting Theme: Gender**

The first phase of the Social Safety Nets project has been completed in Solomon Islands. Consultations were held with the ministries of Health and Medical Services; Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs; Development Planning and Aid Coordination and 19 civil society organisations to develop the project implementation plan. This was followed by a workshop on Social Protection Literacy for stakeholders. The objective is to empower women for the prevention of domestic violence.

Stakeholder meetings were held in Mchinji and Lilongwe, Malawi to consult prospective partners on a lifelong learning for women and girls project. This project aims to increase educational attainment, political engagement and labour force participation among women and girls, thereby improving the Gender Inequality Index in Mchinji district.

### **3.4 eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO)**

During the quarter, eLIO reported learner completion rates of over 90% for courses in writing skills (English and French), report writing and programme management offered to staff of ILO, UNHCR and the World Bank. A new three-year Agreement was signed with UNHCR to continue to deliver the 'Writing Effectively' course and a one-year extension was confirmed for the delivery of their Certificate in Programme Management. The pilot launch of UNFPA's 'Virtual Orientation Programme' was successfully administered to 87 staff. The 'Writing Skills' training module for UNICEF Tajikistan was developed and delivered to local office staff.

### **3.5 Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)**

CEMCA, in partnership with Rupantar, Bangladesh, counselled 2414 youth in skills training and job placement using community and web radio.

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences in collaboration with CEMCA, trained 1046 youth from urban slums in Delhi in soft skills. Subsequently, 365 individuals registered for further training, some of whom have already gained employment.

The Power Sector Skills Council reported that media-enabled learning content developed with CEMCA support has been used by more than 21,000 learners across seven states in India.

A Quality Assurance Toolkit was finalised at a workshop in India with 24 participants from 12 higher education institutions in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

### **3.6 Regional Centres**

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

SADC-CDE organised a workshop on Non-Formal Education for 19 participants from higher education institutions in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and Zambia in Botswana.

A workshop on Gender Mainstreaming was organised in South Africa for 17 participants from higher education institutions in eight countries to develop action plans for gender mainstreaming.

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

A workshop on Gender Mainstreaming was held at the National Open University of Nigeria for 29 participants representing 12 Nigerian universities.

In collaboration with the National University Commission, Nigeria, RETRIDOL organised a training programme on materials development for Open Educational Resources (OER) for 33 participants from 16 universities.

#### *3.6.3 Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD)*

PACFOLD developed a foundation course in basic maths for a MOOC to help improve the pass rates in the subject.

#### *3.6.4 Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning (CCCL)*

The International Advisory Board of CCCL held a meeting via teleconference to finalise the strategic and resource mobilisation plans. The Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta has allocated an operating budget for the centre.

### **3.7 Vice President's Activities**

The Vice President participated in the education convention of the Hewlett Foundation which supports COL's work in OER. The Foundation is increasingly focusing on OER in K-12 education in the USA.

Dr Balaji made a virtual presentation to the Education Ministers' Action Group meeting on 'Collaborate, Complement and Connect' to demonstrate how COL is taking forward the partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

The Vice President launched a help desk to support programme staff in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This facility enables staff to seek expert advice from Dr Robert Sauder (Canada) and Professor Robert McCormick (UK) both of whom are renowned for their research in M&E.

Dr Balaji is following up on the process of developing a partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand and the University of the South Pacific to undertake a baseline assessment of educational development in the region.

## **4. Stakeholder Relations**

### **4.1 Member Government Support**

At the end of the third quarter, contributions totalling \$9.5 million were received from 34 countries as compared to \$12.2 million from 40 countries as at the same time in the previous year. The main difference in amounts is due to the receipt of Nigeria's arrears in the previous year. This year its contribution is awaited. See 5.1 for a listing by country for this quarter.

## **5. Finances**

### **5.1 Revenue**

COL has received over \$11 million in revenue between July 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019 comprising member government contributions, additional contributions and miscellaneous income (compared to \$13.8 million in revenue between July 1, 2017 and March 31, 2018). The figure for this year represents over 80% of the revenue forecast.

During this quarter, member government contributions were received from the following countries:

Bahamas – \$79,236; Jamaica – \$60,156; Malawi – \$26,736; St. Vincent & the Grenadines – \$6,651; and Seychelles – \$20,052.

Additional contributions in the amount of \$1 million from grants and service fees were also recorded during this period.



## **5.2 Cash Flow**

At March 31, 2019, COL held approximately \$17 million in cash to meet operational costs for the balance of the current financial year and maintain a positive cash flow into the next financial year. COL continued to maintain a restricted reserve of \$10.7 million as per its policy.

## **5.3 Expenditures**

At the end of the third quarter, over \$8 million was spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff and office costs. This amount represents 64% of the annual budget of \$12.5 million approved for 2018-2019.

## **6. Human Resources**

### **6.1 Staff Changes**

#### *6.1.1 Departures*

Dr Johannes Hendrikz who held the post of Senior Adviser: Open Schooling left COL on January 31, 2019.

Mr James Onyango who held the post of Education Specialist: Agriculture & Livelihoods left COL on April 15, 2019.

#### *6.1.2 Recruitment*

Dr Tony Mays from the United Kingdom joined COL on February 1, 2019 as Education Specialist: Open Schooling.

Ms Margaret Suderman from Canada joined COL on March 5, 2019 as Communications Manager.

Dr Natalia Angheli-Ziacenco from Canada joined COL on April 15, 2019 as Stakeholder Relations Manager.

## **7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management**

COL continues to upgrade its internal infrastructure to keep pace with technology developments. The travel authorisation system was automated to streamline approval and reporting processes. The in-house video production facility was enhanced. Open House sessions to update staff on cybersecurity were held.

Two MOOCs in agriculture were launched attracting over 6000 learners from 93 countries. Aptus was customised for deployment in open school activities in Mozambique. A set of prototype learning materials were built using Virtual Reality technology while trials on the use of Augmented Reality for developing OER are in progress. The latter is aimed at serving learners in situations with no connectivity.

## **8. Ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF9)**

We are grateful to the partners who have confirmed their support to assist with travel sponsorships. These are: Association of Commonwealth Universities; Commonwealth Foundation; National Open University of Nigeria; The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and the University of London.

Over 340 abstracts and proposals have been received. Ms McEachern visited the conference venue in Edinburgh to assist the programme committee in planning various sessions. We have invited all Commonwealth Education Ministers to participate in PCF9 and seven confirmations have been received.

## **9. Communications**

COL was featured in 17 external media stories and 32 news releases on our website during this quarter.

Our social media presence continues to perform well in terms of followers and engagements. The Facebook following is holding steady at over 170,000 at the end of March. The number of Instagram followers has grown by 10% over this quarter and 62,500 Twitter impressions noted on @COL4D account. The GIRLS Inspire project recorded an additional 10,267 Twitter impressions.

The website is being updated regularly with news and content largely focused on informing and engaging stakeholders.

## **10. Visitors to COL**

Visitors to COL include:

- Mr James Coddington, CEO & Founder, Joy Business Academy, New Zealand
- Ms Kgomotso Motlotle, former COL staff member, Botswana
- Ms Julie Plourde, Senior Advisor, Commonwealth and Francophonie Division, Global Affairs Canada
- Dato' Dr Rashidah Shuib, School of Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia

## 11. Publications/Resources

Recent publications and resources of note are available at: <http://oasis.col.org>

- [Connections, March 2019, Vol. 24, No. 1](#)
- [Journal of Learning for Development, Vol. 6, No. 1](#)
- [Report on the Baseline Study of Technology-Enabled Learning at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology](#)
- [The Regional Community of Practice \(CoP\) Quality Assurance Guidelines in Open and Distance Learning \(ODL\)](#)
- [The Impact of Technology-Enabled Learning Implementation at Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies](#)
- [Student Guide to Effective Learning Using Information and Communication Technologies](#)
- [Integrating Employability in Higher Education Institutions](#)
- [Speeches and presentations](#)

*All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.*

*Professor Asha S. Kanwar  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Date April 15, 2019*