



BOARD OF GOVERNORS
President's Quarterly Progress Report:
January – March 2014

1. Board Matters

The 28th Audit Committee meeting was held via teleconference on February 13, 2014 to review progress to December 31, 2013.

The 36th Executive Committee meeting, held via teleconference on February 27, 2014, reviewed the progress of the outcome-based and impact evaluations and finalised the amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the number of major donors on the Board.

Preparations are underway for the upcoming meetings of the Board of Governors which will be held in Vancouver from June 11-13, 2014.

I am delighted to welcome Dr. Emma Kruse Va'ai, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the National University of Samoa, as the new Board member representing the Pacific region and Ms. Janet Ecker, President, Toronto Financial Services Alliance, who will continue to serve as the Canadian Board Member.

2. General

We are at the mid-point of this triennium (2012-2015) and the process of drafting the post-2015 strategic plan has been initiated. This will take into account, among other things, the recommendations of the outcome and impact evaluations currently underway and the needs identified at the Regional Focal Points meetings.

The evaluation process is on course. The outcomes-based evaluator met with management and education specialists during his visit to COL in January and is currently reviewing relevant documents and reports. The interim report will be available in early October. The impact evaluators have undertaken field visits and conducted interviews with over 200 key stakeholders. The interim report will also be available at the end of October 2014. Meanwhile, the two evaluation teams are in touch with each other to ensure that there is a complementarity rather than duplication of effort.

COL organises meetings of Focal Points in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth at the mid-term of our Three-Year Plans. These are very important events

in the life of COL and are critical to our strategic planning process. We began by organising a meeting for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, co-hosted by the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. The Minister, Honourable Fazal Karim, was not only generous in providing local hospitality for the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and Focal Points meetings but has consistently supported COL on several occasions, including at PCF 7 in Abuja. Most of the Focal Points from the 12 Member States were new and this was a useful induction meeting for them. They in turn highlighted the national and regional priorities that COL needs to address going forward beyond 2015.

Eduvision's 2014 Award of Excellence was conferred on COL for 'its exemplary contribution to the development of small states through innovative interventions' at their annual conference. This was received on behalf of COL by our Jamaican Focal Point Dr. Phylisia Marshall.

India contributed an additional \$136,000 to COL's core budget and we are very grateful to our Board Member Shri Ashok Thakur and the Government of India for this increase.

2.1 President's Activities

In early March, I had accepted an invitation to serve on a Grants Committee of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), a federal funding agency for research and training in Canadian universities. During this visit to Ottawa, Ms. Mia Mouelhi, Senior Advisor, had very kindly arranged a meeting with Ms. Diana Jacovella, Assistant Deputy Minister, Multilateral and Global Programs Branch, and Mr. Yves Beaulieu and Ms. Kate Fiander of the Democracy, Francophonie and Commonwealth Division, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. COL continues to be regarded as a highly performing organisation by Canada.

Following these meetings, I went on to Kingston to deliver the Dennis Irvine Lecture organised by the University Council of Jamaica. My presentation on 'Developments in distance and online learning: do they address development challenges?' was chaired by the Honourable Burchell Whiteman. Burchell and I had a very productive meeting with the Minister of Education, the Honourable Ronald Thwaites. Jamaica is in the process of distributing tablets to students and the Minister was concerned about connectivity. He was enthused by the prospect of COL's Aplus or the "Classroom without Walls" to meet this need in a cost-effective manner. I have since sent him a device to explore the possibility further.

During the Focal Points meeting, Professor Clement Sankat had invited me to speak to his senior staff about MOOCs at the St. Augustine campus. All the Focal Points were present and my lecture on 'Old Wine in New Bottles? Exploring MOOCs' was followed by a reception hosted by Professor Sankat.

I was invited to give a keynote to the Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEEdMM) on the theme of 'Moving towards relevant and inclusive education' held in the Cook Islands. This is an important meeting of education ministers and senior policy makers in the Pacific and of the 16 members, 11 ministers of education were present. Key development partners such as AusAID (now DFAT) and NZAid (now MFAT), World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank were also present. This meeting has raised COL's profile in the region and resulted in very positive references to COL in the Outcomes Document agreed upon by the ministers and senior officials. Reflecting on my keynote, ministers agreed that ICT must be adopted to improve access, quality and inclusion in education across the region and called upon development partners 'to explore emerging opportunities such as virtual universities and OER'. All the speeches are available at www.col.org/speeches.

We organised a reception to celebrate the appointment of Sir John Daniel as an Officer of the Order of Canada in recognition of his 'advancement of open learning and distance education in Canada and around the world'.

3. Programme

Even though we are a small organisation, we have activities involving 48 countries. The strategy has been to combine in-depth work in specific countries with regional and pan-Commonwealth initiatives such as VUSSC. As we approach the final months of the current financial year, the focus is on the completion and consolidation of the various activities.

3.1 Education Sector

The Education Sector focused on capacity building, materials and policy development. The sector continues to be active in all Commonwealth regions with a strong presence in the small states.

3.1.1 Open Schooling

A quality assurance policy development workshop was held in Zambia with participants from Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. A quality assurance template and draft policies were completed. In a workshop in Botswana, three Open Schools (Botswana, Malawi and Trinidad & Tobago) developed OER work plans to repurpose OER for TVET.

The Bangladesh Open University (BOU) Open School developed an OER policy and hosted a Symposium. The girls' innovation project in Bangladesh organised a ten-day instructional design workshop for content development in three subjects.

Fifteen teachers from Vanuatu were trained by the Te Kura Correspondence College (New Zealand) to develop curriculum content for the newly launched Open School.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

Nineteen course writers participated in a curriculum development workshop in the Maldives to develop six modules for three diploma programmes in teacher education. As part of COL's effort to promote OER, all modules will be published under a Creative Commons license.

Modules developed by Gauhati University, India, for the Diploma in English Language Teaching have been completed.

3.1.3 Higher Education

The national open and distance learning (ODL) policy for Sri Lanka has been completed and will be presented to the Ministry of Higher Education for approval. The ODL policy framework for the Caribbean region developed by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and COL has been approved by ministers of education and is being finalised for implementation.

The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL-RIM) self-assessment exercise was completed by Jaffna University in Sri Lanka and the Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan. Both reviews were supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

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

In collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), a workshop was organised in Barbados to review two courses in Tourism and Hospitality. Thirty participants from 12 countries, three regional organisations and the private sector participated.

A capacity building workshop in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for VUSSC Interlocutors (Caribbean Region) was held in Port of Spain, co-hosted by the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Development, Trinidad & Tobago.

3.2 Livelihoods & Health Sector

The Livelihoods & Health sector continues to build the capacities of agencies and partners, enabling more 'learning for development' opportunities to reach larger numbers of Commonwealth citizens in all four regions.

3.2.1 *Technical and Vocational Skills Development*

In Asia, a team from the University of Technology in Sri Lanka was trained in instructional design and is adapting a TVET teacher training programme for eLearning delivery. In the Pacific, NGOs in Samoa and Vanuatu were trained in instructional design and are creating community-level learning materials. In Africa, the Technical & Vocational Teacher's College, Zambia, has revised its print-based teacher training materials. In the Caribbean, a large group of instructors was trained in eLearning and as a result, more than 30 online TVET courses are under development.

With the Dom Bosco Institute in Maputo, Mozambique joining INVEST Africa, the partnership has extended to 13 institutions in seven countries. Twenty five OER champions were trained to promote the creation and use of OER for TVET.

3.2.2 *Lifelong Learning for Farmers*

The University of Ruhuna extended the mushroom-based Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative in Sri Lanka to two more districts. Two workshops were organised in which 210 farmers participated in planning the L3F strategy.

The farmers participating in L3F in India uploaded video clips to YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQNnNtvcwcBYpRvuOjX5IOQ>) and farmers' success stories on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/rsga.seedkannivadi/friends>) demonstrating the use of social media by the farming community.

In India, Mannadeshi Women's Cooperative Bank introduced Aptus to strengthen financial literacy training. The General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU) began its L3F initiative in Ghana by launching preliminary studies. The Honourable Minister for Natural Resources, Mr. Peter Sinon, formally launched the Seychelles Agricultural Agency's (SAA) L3F programme. In Jamaica, COL strengthened its L3F initiative by involving three producer marketing organisations (PMOs) of farmers in addition to its existing work with Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA).

3.2.3 *Healthy Communities*

The Community Learning Programme (CLP) Developer's Certificate entitled 'Communication for Development (C4D): Why? How? Now?', was delivered online to over 200 participants from 24 countries in all four Commonwealth regions. Twenty CLPs developed earlier, on topics ranging from women's reproductive health to domestic violence, continued in eight countries in three regions. Face-to-face training and mentoring took place in Bangladesh, India and South Africa. The development of distance training and mentoring materials has made this sort of large scale, geographically dispersed capacity building possible.

Research results from the first phase of outcome studies in India and Malawi have been analysed and presented. Initial findings from India indicate that there is an increased

awareness and knowledge resulting in changes in behaviour and practice among the stakeholders. Research in Malawi shows audiences are actively learning about maternal and child healthcare through community media, leading to actions towards better health.

3.3 Cross-cutting Themes

3.3.1 eLearning

A graduation ceremony was held in March for the 24 teachers and administrators from Antigua & Barbuda who completed the Commonwealth Certificate in Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI). This is the first cohort to complete the two-year programme which was launched in 2012. The Open Textbooks prototype pilot was also launched in Antigua & Barbuda. This included training teachers and ministry staff in how to use the online materials. The second issue of the *Journal of Learning for Development* was published and is available at <http://www.jl4d.org>.

3.3.2 Gender

Two gender refresher workshops for COL staff were organised. Seven workshops have been conducted to pilot test the gender guidelines for open schools in Belize, Tanzania and Tonga. A gender analysis of ODL in the Caribbean was presented at the Focal Points meeting. Analysis and recommendations on the proposed roadmap for gender in TVET for the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigeria were provided. A draft of the gender mainstreaming toolkit for teacher education institutions was reviewed by 28 teachers and teacher educators from four countries in a regional workshop held in Jamaica where gender awareness training was also delivered to L3F partners.

3.4 eLearning in International Organisations (eLIO)

eLIO secured three new contracts for the Operational Data Management Learning Programme and Programme Management Learning Programme for the staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Writing Effectively Course for staff of the Inter-American Development Bank. The total sum for all contracts is \$686,750. Two distance learning courses registered an average learner completion rate of 83%.

3.5 CEMCA

CEMCA has been playing the role of a policy facilitator in the region. CEMCA and COL have provided continuous support to the Government of India's flagship programme entitled National Mission on Education through ICT, which has adopted an open license policy. Policy support was provided to the Government of Sri Lanka for the development of an ODL policy. CEMCA facilitated a study tour of a team of policy-makers from India to understand the quality assurance systems in Malaysia.

In partnership with UNESCO, CEMCA organised the Community Radio Video Challenge competition for Indian media students. Award-winning videos can be viewed at <http://www.cemca.org.in/media-centre/unesco-cemca-crvc-2014>.

A series of workshops and training programmes were organised in ICT skills, community radio and web radio for participants from India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. An OER-based online professional development course was launched. The learning materials for the Community Radio Technology course were released by the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of at the National Community Radio Sammelan (Convention) in March.

3.6 Regional Centres

3.6.1 Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL)

RETRIDOL organised a regional workshop at the University of Ghana (UG) on Developing and Writing Fundable Research Proposals, as a follow-up to an earlier workshop on research methods. RETRIDOL continued with its monthly seminars focusing on key aspects of ODL and technology.

3.6.2 Southern African Development Community - Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE)

The SADC-CDE Centre facilitated the enrolment for two certificate courses offered by the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and supported by COL. The annual Advisory Committee meeting of SADC-CDE was held in Mauritius. Twenty students from Botswana and Namibia completed a two-month eLearning course at the Polytechnic of Namibia. BOCODOL developed an OER policy. Thirty-five participants attended a Research and Publication workshop which was held in Tanzania. During this workshop, SADC-CDE signed an agreement with the Open University of Tanzania to offer its Master of Education in ODL programme to students in the sub-region.

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

A strategic plan has been drafted and is being discussed by stakeholders.

3.6.4 Caribbean regional learning for development activities

Two representatives of Panos Caribbean met with COL staff in Vancouver to discuss visions and plans, and to finalise a letter of intent between the two organisations.

3.7 Vice President's Activities

The Vice President's activities include programme implementation and the evaluation exercise. With the departure of the Education Specialists – Teacher Education and Higher Education, Mr. Vis Naidoo was overseeing the activities in the two initiatives.

As part of the planning exercise for the Three-Year Plan 2015-2018, Mr. Naidoo organised the Stakeholders' Consultation meeting (Caribbean) in Port of Spain. Seventeen stakeholders attended the meeting where they discussed the needs of the region and how technology and distance learning methods could be used to address these needs. This information will help us develop the next Three-Year Plan.

While in Trinidad & Tobago, Mr. Naidoo attended the VUSSC Monitoring and Evaluation workshop and the Focal Points meeting. He made a presentation to the academic staff of ROYTEC, School of Business and Applied Studies, the University of the West Indies.

3.8 Professional Development

Dr. Fred Lockwood, Emeritus Professor of Learning and Teaching at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, visited COL on a one-month executive secondment to introduce and trial a new course development model which could benefit COL partners.

Two representatives of the Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE) College in Papua New Guinea undertook a five-day study tour of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) to study how effective open schooling can be implemented.

COL supported the following conferences:

- The 19th annual Indian Distance Education Association (IDEA) Conference titled "Quality Assurance and Sustenance of Open Distance Education: Issues, Concerns, Challenges and Development" hosted by the Directorate of Distance Education at the University of Jammu, India; and
- The 2014 Forum Ministers of Education Meeting (FEEdMM) organised by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

4. Stakeholder Relations

4.1 Member Governments Support

COL is targeting contributions at a level of \$9 million from member countries in 2013-2014 (\$8.6 million was received from 43 countries for the financial year 2012-2013). With an increase in India's contribution level of 15%, Nigeria's commitment to make up shortfalls from 2010-2012 and the expectation that Australia will re-commit as a funding partner, COL expects to exceed the 2012-2013 level in 2013-2014.

Contributions have been received to March 31, 2014 from 35 countries so far (compared with 36 countries in the same period last year): Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Pakistan, Rwanda, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Tuvalu, United Kingdom and Vanuatu.

4.2 Focal Points

We welcomed the following new Focal Points:

- Antigua & Barbuda – Mrs. Patricia Benn, Deputy Principal, Antigua State College.
- India – Shri Praveen Prakash, Joint Secretary (TEL), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- St. Vincent & the Grenadines – Ms. Lou-Anne Gilchrist, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education.
- Zambia – Mr. Athanasius Mulenga, Acting Director, Open & Distance Education, Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training & Early Education.

4.3 Congratulatory Letters

Five congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed Heads of Government, Ministers of Education and High Commissioners.

5. Finances

5.1 Revenue

COL received \$7.6 million from member governments as voluntary contributions towards the budget for 2013-2014. During the same period in the previous year, \$5.5 million was received.

Seven countries have contributed in the third quarter of this year as follows:

Botswana – \$109,420; Cameroon – \$34,732; Grenada – \$11,107; Maldives – \$5,553; Malta – \$16,582; New Zealand – \$711,120; and Seychelles – \$16,583.

During the third quarter, COL also received the second instalment of \$1.1 million from the United Kingdom.

Subsequent to March 31, 2014, contributions from two additional countries were received – Kiribati and Uganda – and the increase in India's contribution of \$136,000 was received.

In addition to member government funding, COL expects to exceed its initial forecast for additional contributions of \$975,000 from grants and of \$550,000 from fee-for-service activities where revenues from these sources of \$1.4 million have been received to-date this year.

5.2 Cash Flow

COL held \$7 million in cash and cash equivalents at the start of the financial year and is projecting slightly higher levels at March 31, 2014 based on receipts and expenditures.

At March 31, 2014, COL held a cash reserve of \$4.7 million (at June 30, 2013 – \$3.3 million) to provide a source of funds for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding, if needed. A term deposit of \$150,000 is also held as banking security.

5.3 Expenditures

Sixty-one percent, or \$6.9 million, of the annual budget was spent by the end of the third quarter to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff costs and office costs. This level is higher than in the third quarter of the previous year and does not include contractual commitments. The annual budget approved for 2013-2014 of \$10.5 million is inclusive of additional contributions estimated at a level of \$1.2 million and capital expenditures of \$20,000.

6. Human Resources

6.1 Staff Changes

6.1.1 Arrivals

Mr. Aaron To joined COL on January 15, 2014 as eLearning Assistant.

Ms. Alexis Carr joined COL on February 17, 2014 as Project Assistant.

Ms. Charisse Cruz joined COL on March 17, 2014 as Programme Assistant.

Dr. Godson Gatsha joined COL on April 1, 2014 as Education Specialist – Higher Education.

Dr. Jessica Aguti joined COL on April 15, 2014 as Education Specialist – Teacher Education.

6.1.2 Departures

Dr. Madhulika Kaushik, Education Specialist – Higher Education left COL on January 31, 2014.

7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management

The KM team demonstrated Aptus during the UNESCO Mobile Learning Week, where it attracted significant attention. Based on the expressions of interest received, we have identified 12 institutions (in India, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa and Vanuatu) to run trials in their own locations. Partners have agreed to bear all the costs related to testing while COL provides the free content and a trial device set. Results are expected to come in during the next quarter. So far, the impression is that Aptus is a highly relevant and affordable innovation which is consistent in its performance. Many partners are adding their own content, according to preliminary reports.

COL's Directory of Open Educational Resources (DOER) contains over 4,000 full courses covering Teacher Education, Technical and Vocational Education, Open Schooling and Higher Education. This is one of the few global catalogue services that cover both developing and developed country institutions.

We transitioned smoothly to a new IT support services provider and in the context of current concerns of unauthorised access to data, we have reviewed our systems and are formulating policies and procedures to mitigate potential risks.

8. Visitors to COL

During this quarter, COL welcomed:

- His Excellency Mr. Gordon Campbell, Canada's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.
- Mr. Imbenzi George, Honorary Consul, Consulate of the Republic of Kenya.
- Ms. Indi Mclymont-Lafayette (Regional Director, Community, Media & Environment) and Mrs. Petre Williams-Raynor (Senior Programme Officer), Panos Caribbean.
- Dr. Nantha Kumar Subramaniam, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Information Technology & Multimedia Communication, Open University Malaysia.

9. Publications/Resources

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications (www.col.org/publications):
 - *Connections/EdTech News*, March 2014, Vol. 19, No. 1 (www.col.org/connections).
 - *Introducing MOOCs to Africa: New Economy Skills for Africa Programme – ICT*, by Sandi Boga and Rory McGreal (www.col.org/consultancies).
 - *Investments by the Commercial Banks in Training of Rural Communities and its Impact: Scope of Open and Distance Learning*, by Naveen Kumar K and Anjali Kulkarni; published by the National Institute of Bank Management, Pune, with COL (www.col.org/consultancies).
- International Women's Day 2014 (8 March 2014):
 - *Inspiring Change*: A news release and video message by COL's President (www.col.org/NewsReleases).
 - Blog posting by COL's Gender Equality Manager (www.col.org/blog).
- Speeches and presentations at www.col.org/speeches.
- Videos at www.col.org/videos.
- COL blog at www.col.org/blog.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President & Chief Executive Officer
April 15, 2014*