

Greetings from the Commonwealth of Learning



*Greetings from the Commonwealth of Learning ,
Reception to celebrate the announcement of
the UNESCO-COL Chair in Open Educational Resources
at Athabasca University*

*Monday, 31 January 2011, Government
House, Edmonton, AB, Canada*

Dave Wilson, Commonwealth of Learning

Transcript

Minister, Mayor, Superintendent, Mr. President, Honoured Guests:

I am very pleased to be here from the Commonwealth of Learning. I bring greetings from COL's President, Sir John Daniel – who is a former Vice President of Athabasca University in its early days – and Vice President Professor Asha Kanwar, as well as from my other colleagues in much-warmer Vancouver.

COL is an international, intergovernmental organisation. We've been privileged to be hosted in Canada since our inception in 1989. The Government of Canada is one of COL's six major donor governments. We work with partners throughout the 54-member Commonwealth, including Athabasca University, to help improve opportunities for learning through the application of open, distance and technology-mediated teaching methods.

Lately, we've not only been a vocal proponent of Open Educational Resources – including working with UNESCO on OER policy development – but we're also active in practical applications. In our work, emphasis on the adaptation of OERs is vital. The best of world-class content still needs to be adapted to suit local needs.

In Africa, TESSA – the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa programme – is a great example. It's a consortium of 12 African universities, the UK Open University and international organisations, including COL, that has produced a huge range of OERs for teacher education.

They are available in Arabic, English, French and Kiswahili and are widely used and proven to be beneficial.

We're very directly involved with the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, which is all about the development and adaptation of OERs. 32 countries are working together and with COL, producing materials and courses for both distance and face-to-face teaching.

And we're also facilitating a similar process of OER creation and adaptation for the senior secondary curriculum; that's with five African countries plus Trinidad & Tobago in the Caribbean.

These initiatives, and many others, will be encouraged by the creation of this UNESCO-COL Chair and will benefit greatly from the research, scholarship and policy recommendations that it will generate.

We congratulate Athabasca University on establishing this Chair and we are very pleased to support it financially. Athabasca has *already* established itself as one of the world's leaders in OERs, and also distinguishes itself by its open access publishing including one of the very few open access academic research journals. As a world-renowned distance and online learning institution, you have a particularly rich set of skills and experience to bring to the OER movement.

And congratulations, Rory. *You know* that you always have COL's support.

Thank you.