



BOARD OF GOVERNORS
President's Quarterly Progress Report:
July – September 2014

1. Board Matters

I am delighted to welcome Dr. Linda Sissons, CNZM, Chief Executive Officer, Wellington Institute of Technology, as the new Chair of the Board of Governors. Dr. Sissons served on the COL Board for seven years as New Zealand's representative and as Deputy Chair from July 2010 to June 2011. The transition from the Honourable Burchell Whiteman to Dr. Sissons has been seamless and I look forward to her wise counsel as we advance our important work.

The next meeting of the Audit Committee is planned for November 6, 2014 to be followed by the Executive Committee on December 4. Both meetings will be held by teleconference.

2. General

COL organises regional meetings of Focal Points during the mid-term of its triennial plans. Earlier this year, two meetings for the Caribbean and Africa-Mediterranean regions were held in March and May respectively. During this quarter, we held the meetings for the Asia and Pacific regions, completing the cycle of Commonwealth-wide consultations in preparation for our next Strategic Plan 2015-2021.

The Asia Focal Points meeting was co-hosted by the Ministry of Education Malaysia in collaboration with the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang during September 17-19. The regional meeting of Focal Points for the Pacific was held immediately thereafter in Apia, Samoa from September 22-24. The meeting was co-hosted by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture in collaboration with the National University of Samoa. From the deliberations, it became clear that in addition to continuing to work with institutional and organisational partners, COL will need to align at least one substantive activity with the priorities of each education ministry to ensure that our work addresses the stated needs of Member States.

We took the opportunity of the Samoa meeting to formally launch the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD). This 'network of networks' will become an instrument for COL to intensify its capacity building efforts in

the Pacific and enhance its impact. Launching the Centre, the Honourable Magele Mauiliu Magele, Samoan Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, congratulated COL and said *'Our education institutions are appreciating the benefits of your work'* and promised to be an active advocate of COL in the region. The Centre is being hosted by The University of the South Pacific (USP), a regional university serving 12 member countries. The Vice Chancellor and President of USP had flown in specially from Fiji to be present on the occasion.

Fiji, after the successful general election in September, is now back in the Commonwealth as a full member. This is a welcome development and I hope that we will soon see Fiji become an active intellectual and financial contributor to COL. I have sent a letter congratulating the new minister, the Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy.

The Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) jointly organised a three-day induction programme for newly-transferred diplomats to London. I gave two presentations on COL and its work; chaired a panel discussion on *'Pulling Together as the Commonwealth'*; and participated in a session on *'Governance Arrangements and Accreditation of Commonwealth Organisations'*. COL has made it a point to participate actively in this annual event and support our sister organisations. This has resulted in more visibility for COL and its work, especially among the diplomats.

You will recall that COL had organised a very successful Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7) in Abuja, Nigeria in December 2013. The next PCF will be held in 2016 and in response to our call for Expressions of Interest, we received 13 applications from around the Commonwealth. We are grateful to each institution/organisation for their interest in hosting the conference. Following a rigorous selection process, the Open University of Malaysia (OUM) won the bid and Kuala Lumpur will be the venue for PCF8. You will read more about the OUM at Section 8.

One key highlight during this quarter was the result of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) annual review in which COL scored A+ for having *'met or exceeded the output milestones agreed with DFID'*. The report states that *'COL has exceeded many of the expected results and is therefore offering good value for money.'* This is certainly very encouraging and we are determined to keep up this performance.

COL will move to new premises in Metrotower I, Burnaby, BC from January 1, 2015. The lease was signed in July.

2.1 President's Activities

During this period, I accepted several invitations to speak at various conferences and forums. Since it was impossible to be present everywhere, for some occasions I sent video presentations instead. We have developed in-house expertise in video production using open source options and all such presentations are recorded at COL.

The Vice Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Professor M. Aslam, had invited me to deliver the 19th Professor G. Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture on July 2. Professor G. Ram Reddy was the founder Vice Chancellor of IGNOU, and also COL's first Vice President. I spoke about 'Open Universities in the time of MOOCs: reaching the unreached?'. I also gave a public lecture on MOOCs at the invitation of Wawasan Open University (WOU) during the Focal Points meeting held in Penang. Women Leaders in Development was the theme of the 4th Global Leadership Lecture that I delivered in Vancouver. The speeches and presentations are available at www.col.org/speeches and www.col.org/videos.

The Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Assam, India conferred a DLitt (*honoris causa*) on me at their first Convocation held on September 27. I was also elected to be a member of the Executive Board of the African Council of Distance Education (ACDE). Both honours indicate the high esteem that COL enjoys across the Commonwealth.

The Vice Chancellor & President of USP invited me to Chair an international panel to review flexible learning at the university. The three members of the panel were Professor Belinda Tynan, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), Open University, UK; Professor Mark Brown, Director, National Institute for Digital Learning, Dublin City University; and Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA. We visited USP headquarters in Suva and the regional campuses in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and spoke to over a hundred staff and students to inform our recommendations. USP funded the entire project and COL contributed staff time.

CEMCA has completed 20 years of its existence and I chaired its annual Advisory Council meeting in the wings of the Focal Points meeting in Penang. The Council has representatives from Asian Member States and gives direction and expert advice to CEMCA, which has continued to reinvent itself to remain relevant to the needs of stakeholders in the region.

All this hard work was punctuated by a very successful social event – the annual Meet and Greet for COL families in July. This was the third in the series and was marked by plenty of goodwill and collegiality!

3. Programme

The final year of the current Three-Year Plan is focused on achieving the outcomes and performance indicators that were set. Initiatives are being implemented according to agreed annual plans and we are already starting to see the results with outcomes achieved, and in some cases surpassed.

3.1 Education Sector

The Education Sector continues to provide capacity building support to institutions in ICTs, OER and ODL thus enabling learners to have greater access to courses and programmes in all four Commonwealth regions. The Sector has also focused on gender mainstreaming in its activities as a cross-cutting theme.

3.1.1 Open Schooling

COL supported the Papua New Guinea Flexible and Open Distance Education (FODE) unit to enhance its Management Information System. In India, the Asia Chapter of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) attended a five-day Quality Assurance Policy development workshop. Eleven Open schools from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the workshop and seven draft policies were prepared.

Ten curriculum-content developers were trained in a workshop held in Vanuatu. A baseline study was completed for the establishment of the Matelot and St. Joseph Community Open Schools in Trinidad & Tobago.

In Botswana, a workshop on Leadership for Adolescent Girls was held and a group of 20 mentors were trained to continue supporting the girls to ensure sustainability. In Bangladesh, 10 staff members and 100 girls participated in the Leadership for Girls for Change training programme.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

In Kenya, 60 master trainers were trained using the Open Resources for English Language Training (ORELT) course. These trainers then trained other teachers in different rural areas.

COL, in collaboration with the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in India, offered a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on 'Using OER to enrich teaching and learning'. This was initiated on September 5, National Teachers Day in India. The course ended on October 10.

3.1.3 Higher Education

An ICT Strategy and Policy for the planned new Open University in Botswana and an ODL policy for Maldives National University were completed. An ODL Policy workshop was facilitated at TA Marryshow Community College, Grenada at which a draft policy was developed. A workshop was held for 29 academic staff of Mzuzu University on how to design and develop ODL materials.

The evaluation of COL-RIM implementation at the National Institute of Health and Social Sciences in Seychelles was completed. A quality assurance workshop was

conducted at the University of Guyana to support the development of an institutional culture of quality.

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

Thirty-four staff from the School of Business and Applied Studies Limited (ROYTEC), at the University of the West Indies, participated in online training in preparation for the delivery of the Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship programme. The programme has been accredited by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad & Tobago (ACTT).

The Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) enrolled 85 students (55 women and 30 men) on the Master in Educational Leadership programme, being offered under VUSSC.

3.2 Livelihoods & Health (L&H) Sector

Building on the results achieved to date and working in all regions of the Commonwealth, L&H has made good progress. New courses and programmes are available and in use by learners in both formal and non-formal settings across the three initiatives. The main drivers of work in the sector continue to be integrated monitoring, evaluation and research, which feeds policy, advocacy and capacity building.

3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development

The TVET Flexible Open Learning Unit in Papua New Guinea benefited from a consultant's report on managing TVET systems. The consultant also conducted two training workshops on TVET systems and materials development. An evaluation study of the 2012 delivery of the Basic Trades "Working with Concrete" and "Vocational Literacy" courses in Nauru provided valuable information on the effectiveness of the programme. New audio content for the Pacific Basic Trades Literacy & Numeracy course has been developed by the National University of Samoa. The first cohort of 42 students from Fiji has completed the Certificate in Community Development at USP. COL supported the development of the course.

In Africa, a new COL online course has been developed on Teaching with PowerPoint and 50 teachers from the Innovation in Vocational Education and Skills Training (INVEST) Africa partner institutions participated. More than 40 teachers were trained in eLearning course design in Tanzania and Kenya. The Mombasa Technical Training Institute introduced a new programme in Cosmetology as part of its gender mainstreaming activity.

3.2.2 Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)

A co-operative in Kenya (Siyaya Seed SACCO) has adopted the L3F financial literacy and the 'learn and loan' approach. This has resulted in the co-operative turning

a profit for the first time. Of the credit of \$13.6 million that the 20,932 L3F participants had borrowed in Tamil Nadu, India, 98% was repaid by this quarter within two years instead of the stipulated five.

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare in Mauritius adopted ODL with the help of COL as one of the strategies for capacity building of women in the areas of climate change, agriculture and gender-based violence. This is part of the larger African Women's Decade Programme. The evaluation report shows that ODL enhances a person's capacity to understand, internalise and translate knowledge acquired into concrete actions. In Sri Lanka, Ericsson, one of the major players in mobile phones has joined L3F in empowering girls in villages by providing ICT infrastructure as well as building their capacity in the use of ICTs.

In Uganda, Agricultural Innovation System Brokerage Association, a social enterprise established by Makerere University, has entered into an MOU with the National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda for strengthening organic farming among 200,000 farmers with the help of the L3F approach.

3.2.3 *Healthy Communities*

Community learning programmes (CLP) are ongoing in 26 local areas – in South Africa (8); Bangladesh (7); India (9); and Jamaica (2) reaching over 30,000 *identified* users using radio and mobile phones. Approximately 80% of these programmes address women's learning needs with 40% focused on youth under 30 years.

Distance training and mentoring of CLP developers is increasing focus on programme creation and capacity. About 100 representatives of communication and development organisations in over 15 countries participated online for five weeks in *Step 3: Communication Channels & Media Forms* resulting in over 40 new community learning programme (CLP) plans. Eighty of these novice CLP developers are continuing with *Step 4: Participatory Learning Design*, a six-week blended course launched in September. With COL support, Farm Radio International launched the second Farmer Program eCourse in which 100 farm radio broadcasters from 16 countries in sub-Saharan Africa have registered.

Outcome-oriented research was completed in Malawi showing evidence of learning and improved health-seeking behaviour. COL ran a workshop for 15 senior representatives of the Constabulary Force and leading public and civil society actors in Jamaica to create a shared framework to address issues related to crime and violence.

3.3 **Cross-cutting Themes**

3.3.1 *eLearning*

Delivery of the online course *Developing & Teaching Online Courses* was completed for approximately 50 instructors in Trinidad & Tobago and Ghana. A major

revision of the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration was completed by Schoolnet South Africa. An eLearning workshop was held for 25 instructors at Mbeya University of Science & Technology in Tanzania. The final video in the Issues in E-Learning series, 'What Happened to the Social Agenda for Distance Education' was completed.

3.3.2 Gender

Two gender-related professional development events for staff were conducted on the themes of women's leadership and violence against women. A breakdown of COL consultants by gender and region from July 2008 to June 2014 was prepared. In collaboration with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Jamaica, strategies and areas of collaboration for gender mainstreaming were identified.

3.4 eLearning in International Organisations (eLIO)

eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO) received two new contracts. UNICEF, Geneva contracted eLIO to develop and deliver an Effective Writing course that will strengthen the Private Funding and Partnership Division in communicating effectively with its funders. UNHCR contracted eLIO to evaluate the Advanced Programme Management course, currently being piloted and to recommend post-pilot improvements.

3.5 Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)

CEMCA collaborated with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Information Centre, Dhaka and AMARC (World Community Radio Association) Asia-Pacific, to organise a panel discussion on "Journey Ahead towards a Robust Community Radio Sector" highlighting CEMCA's contribution in this area. A workshop on Community Women Broadcasters was organised in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where 20 women from ten Community Radio stations were trained in the process of developing Community Learning Programmes. CEMCA organised two panel discussions on 'Potential for Community Television in South Asia' and 'Self-Assessment of Community Radio: Tools and Experiences' at the International Association of Media and Communication Research conference in Hyderabad.

A revised version of Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit (CR-CIT) was published along with several other resources and publications, including *EduComm Asia*.

3.6 Regional Centres

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

RETRIDOL is developing its work plan for the current financial year.

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

SADC-CDE supported eight faculty members from Botswana and Malawi to successfully complete an online certificate in Project Management.

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

The Director of PACFOLD, Mr. Hasmukh Lal, visited COL to finalise the Strategic Plan. During the PACFOLD launch in Samoa, the *PACFOLD learn* online community at www.pacfoldlearn.ning.com was announced and participants were invited to join this community of practice.

3.7 **Vice President's Activities**

The Vice President spent much of this quarter conducting performance reviews, working with Education Specialists on their annual work plans and programme implementation. He continued to monitor the progress of the Impact and Outcome-based evaluations. He was on the interview panels for the recruitment of the Education Specialist – eLearning and Director, CEMCA. He chaired the Committee that I appointed to review the applications received for PCF8.

As part of the stakeholders' engagement in the planning of the next strategic plan, the Vice President attended the Regional Focal Points Meetings for Asia and the Pacific. While in Penang, he attended the CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting.

3.8 **Professional Development**

Professor Alan Tait, of the Open University, UK came to COL to work on the *Journal of Learning for Development*.

4. **Stakeholder Relations**

4.1 **Member Governments Support**

COL is forecasting contributions of over \$9 million from member countries in 2014-2015. In the previous fiscal year, \$9.2 million was received from 46 countries – a record number of countries. Our previous record was 44 countries.

So far, during this fiscal year, contributions have been received from 21 countries (compared to eight at the same time in the previous year). See 5.1 for a complete listing.

4.2 Focal Points

The Focal Points network continues to be a very valuable resource for COL. From time-to-time, new Focal Points are nominated by the ministers. During this quarter, we welcomed the following:

- Malaysia – Y.Bhg. Dato' Professor Dr. Asma Binti Ismail, Director General, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education Malaysia.
- Pakistan – Professor Dr. Mansoor Akbar Kundi, Executive Director, Higher Education Commission.
- Papua New Guinea – Mr. Bob Kiakari, Superintendent, Flexible, Open and Distance Learning, Ministry of Education.
- Singapore – Ms. Cindy Eu, Assistant Director, Planning Division, Ministry of Education.
- Solomon Islands – Dr. Franco Rodie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development.
- Vanuatu – Mr. George Jonathan Maetoka, Principal Education Officer, Education Services, Ministry of Education.
- Zambia – Mrs. Rhoda N. Mweetwa, Ag. Director, Directorate of Open & Distance Education, Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education.

4.3 Congratulatory Letters

Five congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed Ministers of Education, Foreign Affairs and heads of institutions.

5. Finances

5.1 Revenue

So far this financial year, COL has received \$3.3 million in voluntary contributions from member governments (including \$728,412 from Nigeria for shortfalls in past contributions).

The twenty-one countries that have contributed are:

Antigua & Barbuda – \$5,388; The Bahamas – \$65,580; Barbados – \$49,554; Belize – \$33,036; Guyana – \$16,518; India – \$715,348 (two of three instalments); Malaysia – \$50,000; Malta – \$16,395; Mauritius – \$60,000; Mozambique – \$54,450; Namibia – \$109,300; Nauru – \$5,506; Nigeria – \$728,412; St. Kitts & Nevis – \$33,036; St. Lucia – \$20,098; Samoa – \$65,580; Sri Lanka – \$32,490; Tonga – \$21,860;

Trinidad & Tobago – \$82,590; Tuvalu – \$10,930; and United Kingdom – \$1,165,905 (first of two instalments).

With India's increase in its level of funding this year and Nigeria's payment of shortfalls from 2010-2012, COL expects to exceed the 2013-2014 funding level of \$9.2 million in this financial year 2014-2015.

Contributions receivable from June 30, 2014 for the fiscal year 2013-2014 were received in this quarter from Lesotho, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Zambia.

In addition to contributions from member governments, COL is forecasting additional contributions from grants of \$810,000 and from fee-for-service activities of \$585,000.

Towards meeting these targets, COL recognised \$224,761 in revenues from grants and \$245,190 in fee-for-service revenues during the period July 1, 2014 to September 30, 2014.

5.2 Cash Flow

At September 30, 2014, COL held \$8 million in cash and cash equivalents. This level of cash and cash equivalents enables COL to meet operational costs and maintain a positive cash flow until outstanding contributions are received throughout the year.

At September 30, 2014, COL also held a restricted cash reserve of \$4.7 million to provide for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding, if needed. A term deposit of \$150,000 continues to be held as banking security.

5.3 Expenditures

In the first quarter, \$2.7 million was spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff and office costs. This amount comprised 25% of the annual budget of \$10.6 million approved for 2014-2015.

6. Human Resources

6.1 Staff Changes

6.1.1 Departure

Dr. Mark Bullen, Education Specialist – eLearning, left COL on September 30, 2014.

6.1.2 Recruitment

The Education Specialist – eLearning post will be taken up by Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, the current Director of CEMCA, in January, 2015.

Two posts are currently under recruitment – Director, CEMCA and Stakeholder Relations Manager at COL.

7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management

We have moved the Learner Management System (LMS) installations of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), to “the Cloud” and have set up further Moodle instances for Higher Education, Teacher Education and Healthy Communities. Besides savings in costs, Cloud-based installations allow greater operational freedom for programmes to add new training events. The physical location of Cloud servers is increasingly becoming a matter of importance because of local adherence to laws of privacy and we are paying close attention to this concern.

Work on our innovative offline server device, Aptus, has made considerable progress. Based on results available from field trials in 12 locations, we have improved the power bank capacity and memory. We have increased the volume of Open Educational Resources (OER) on Aptus to about 100,000 articles. The Ministry of Education in Vanuatu has come forward to deploy Aptus in its national project for Tablet distribution in schools. More information is available at www.col.org/aptus.

Our trials with MOOCs to explore the potential for outreach continue. We are offering a ‘MOOC on MOOC’ in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (Kanpur) and India’s Ministry of Human Resource Development. This course has 2,346 active learners from 92 countries, with a significant proportion coming from higher education.

8. Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8)

COL’s Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8) will be held in Malaysia in 2016. COL will partner with the Open University of Malaysia (OUM), which has a successful track record of hosting international conferences.

OUM was established in 2000 as Malaysia’s seventh private university. It is owned by a consortium of the country’s 11 public universities and holds the unique status as Malaysia’s first fully-fledged ODL institution. OUM has been awarded the COL Excellence in Distance Education award and its President & Vice-Chancellor, Tan Sri Professor Anuwar Ali, is a COL Fellow.

9. Visitors to COL

Some of the visitors to COL include:

Dr. Vasudha Kamat, Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Vandana Chakrabarti, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) Women's University, India.

Mr. Venkata Subbarao Ilapavuluri, Chief of Section, Literacy & Non-Formal Education (LNF), Division for Basic Learning and Skills Development (BLS), UNESCO.

His Excellency Membathisi Mphumzi S. Mdladlana, High Commissioner, South African High Commission, Canada.

Ms. Marina Young, Senior Director, Division of Technology, Training & Technical Information, and Mr. Brad Clarke, Manager, Information and Communication Technology, Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Jamaica.

Mr. T.J. Bliss, Program Officer for OER, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (US) with Mr. Paul Stacey, Associate Director of Global Learning, Creative Commons (Vancouver).

Ms. Myn Garcia, Deputy Director of the Commonwealth Foundation.

Dr. John Pampallis, Special Advisor to the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa.

10. Publications/Resources

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications (www.col.org/publications):
 - *Connections/EdTech News*, July 2014, Vol. 19, No. 2 (www.col.org/connections).
 - *EduComm Asia*, July 2014, Vol. 18, No. 3 (www.cemca.org).
 - *Journal of Learning for Development*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (www.jl4d.org).
 - Knowledge Series: *Increasing Access to Education for All Through Mobile Learning* by Mohamed Ally.
 - *Gender Analysis of Open and Distance Learning in the Caribbean Region* by Dana Peebles (www.col.org/consultancies).
 - *MOOC on Mobiles for Development Report* by David Porter (www.col.org/consultancies).
 - Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia *Annual Report, 2013-2014* (www.cemca.org).

- *Case Studies on OER-based eLearning* (www.cemca.org).
- *Technology Tools for Teachers* (www.cemca.org).
- *Quality Assurance Guidelines for Open Educational Resources: TIPS Framework* (Version 2.0) (www.cemca.org).
- *Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit* (Version 2.0) (www.cemca.org).

- Video series: *Issues in eLearning & Distance Education* (5 videos with transcripts: What is eLearning?; What is Instructional Design?; Deconstructing the Digital Natives Discourse; Reconsidering the Learning Management System; What Happened to the Social Agenda for Distance Education; by Mark Bullen (www.col.org/videos)).

- Other videos at www.col.org/videos.

- Speeches and presentations at www.col.org/speeches.

- COL blog at www.col.org/blog.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

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