1. Board Matters

The 29th Audit Committee Meeting was held via teleconference on February 19, 2013 to review the financial statements from July 1-December 31, 2012, critical success factors and risk management as well as three additional papers – ‘Achieving a Balanced Budget Approach’ which included a revised Cash Reserve Policy, ‘Financial Indicators for Monitoring Financial Performance’ and ‘Full-Cost Recovery for Fee-for-service’.

The 34th Executive Committee Meeting was held via teleconference on February 27, 2013 to review the positioning of COL post-MDGs as well as to consider a new risk management matrix and action items stemming from previous meetings.

Preparations are underway for the upcoming meetings of the Board of Governors which will be held in Vancouver from June 12-14, 2013 – these are the Performance Committee Meeting and Board Orientation on June 12, Audit Committee Meeting and Board Retreat on June 13, followed by the Board Meeting on June 14. A reception to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of COL will be held on June 13.

I thank Ms. Jo Bourne, Board Member for the United Kingdom, for her service to COL. Ms. Bourne left the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in January to take up the post of Associate Director & Chief of Education, Education Section at the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in New York. The United Kingdom will be nominating a new Board member in her place.

2. General

The Honourable Julian Fantino, Minister of International Cooperation, Canada, visited COL on April 11. This is the first time that a CIDA Minister has ever visited COL in the past 25 years. As you may know, CIDA is being amalgamated with DFAIT, which will lead to a new Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development under which the Government of Canada will maintain its mandate of poverty alleviation and international development. The Minister said that ‘Our government is a strong supporter of the Commonwealth and is proud to be the largest contributor to the Commonwealth of Learning’. In addition to reaffirming long-term institutional support to COL, Minister Fantino announced that CIDA would contribute an additional $840,000 for ‘Scaling up
Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) in Sub-Saharan Africa’. This would reach out to smallholder farmers, particularly women in Ghana and Tanzania and build their capacity to move them out of poverty to prosperity (www.col.org/newsreleases).

The L3F initiative is already successful in India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, Jamaica and Papua New Guinea. COL has been tracking results in these countries and is able to provide concrete evidence of the difference it has made to the livelihoods of local communities. The success of this initiative can be attributed to the ‘three P’s’: perseverance, partnerships and prudence. Development takes a long time to show results, especially interventions related to ‘learning’. COL stays the course even when there may be occasional setbacks until the initiative takes root. The L3F is ten years old and beginning to show results. In addition, COL catalyses appropriate partners who take ownership so that even when COL leaves, the activities are sustained by the communities themselves. COL is prudent and seeks value for money in all that it does. One strategy is to develop models which can be replicated in different contexts to help us scale up, reach out and achieve more with less. Underpinning all this is the ‘fourth P’: the passion to make a difference and to empower marginalised communities in the remotest regions of the Commonwealth (www.col.org/l3f).

Most donors are looking for greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. Capturing evidence of results continues to be a priority for COL. It is for this reason that COL is commissioning two evaluations during this triennium: 1) an impact evaluation to assess the difference COL has made over the last nine years; and 2) an outcomes-based evaluation which will assess the extent to which the performance targets set for this Three-Year Plan were met. A Request for Proposals was released and following a review of the proposals received, COL is completing the selection and contracting process. I will keep you updated on progress as the evaluation process unfolds.

During this quarter, we have announced our plan to establish a new Journal of Learning for Development. This online Journal will provide a forum for research with a focus on innovation in learning and how it contributes to development. Professor Alan Tait of the Open University, UK will be the honorary Editor-in-Chief and Dr. Mark Bullen of COL will be the Associate Editor. Fifteen internationally renowned scholars and development professionals have agreed to be members of the editorial board. This Journal will be launched during PCF7 (www.col.org/jl4d).

2.1 President’s Activities

I had been invited to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10) held at UNESCO, Paris during February 25-27 at which I made three presentations relating to ‘from digital to knowledge divide’; ‘technology and system-wide change’; and ‘open solutions for addressing global challenges’. It was also an opportunity to meet the ADGs and other colleagues from the Education and Communications and Information sectors to review the joint UNESCO-COL Work Plan for this triennium.
On my way to Paris, I stopped by in London and met the Commonwealth Secretary-General to invite him to our June Board meeting, given its special 25th anniversary status. Unfortunately the Secretary-General is already committed but has promised to visit COL in September. I also met key COL stakeholders such as DFID and the Commonwealth Foundation to discuss how our partnership could be further strengthened.

An open school for girls was formally launched in Pakistan during my visit in early April. I also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) to support an institutional Quality Review.

I was invited to give a keynote at the Asia-Pacific Quality Network conference in Taiwan and made presentations at an OER Workshop during the event. All presentations are available at www.col.org/speeches.

3. Programme

3.1 Education Sector

The focus of the Education sector was on building capacity and engaging with partners in Africa and South Asia for the successful implementation of the activities.

3.1.1 Open Schooling

Various capacity building activities were held including two learner support workshops in Zambia and Lesotho. The Commonwealth Open Schools Association (COMOSA) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in India and new members from Canada and Kenya joined. The Association also held a workshop for 24 open schools representing 14 countries and focused on Draft Guidelines for Gender Equity in Open Schools.

Open schooling uses various social networking platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and ‘Open Schooling Connect’ to promote the integration of technology and use of open educational resources (OER). In this regard, three online professional development workshops were organised, namely: Instructional Design Best Practice, Creating an Open Classroom and Teaching at a Distance using the NING Platform.

A baseline study for girls’ education in Bangladesh was completed.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

The Teacher Education initiative focused on capacity development of partner institutions on OER and the dissemination of the Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) in Jamaica, Kenya and Nigeria to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning in junior secondary schools. Similarly, capacity building
of teacher educators at the Faculty of Education, the Open University of Sri Lanka on adopting, adapting, and integrating ICT and OER into teacher education programmes was successfully completed. In collaboration with Gauhati University, India, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Nigeria and Kenyatta University, Kenya baseline studies for evaluation were conducted.

3.1.3 Higher Education

Vice-Chancellors from 22 universities met at the YCMOU, India under the aegis of the Association of Indian Universities and received leadership training based on an online course developed by COL. A workshop on leadership in higher education was organised in partnership with the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) for senior women academics from four South Asian countries. Further capacity building for academics from Sri Lanka and India focused on the use of OER. An MOU was signed with the African Council for Distance Education to collaborate on quality assurance and capacity building in leadership and research methods in African universities. Ten revised courses were completed and sent to CEMBA/CEMPA partner institutions. RETRIDOL, Nigeria organised capacity building workshops on course material development and quality assurance for academic staff from institutions in West Africa.

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

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) continues to expand with more countries showing interest in joining its network. The Barbados Community College has offered some modules of the Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture for Small States to students enrolled in their full-time agriculture programme. The capacity of IT managers from ten countries was enhanced when they followed an online ‘Linux for IT Managers’ course. The Maldives Villa College offered the ‘Managing and Facilitation Instruction’ online course to educators from 14 countries. Educators and IT managers of The University of the West Indies (UWI), Saint Augustine campus, attended three Moodle workshops on how to install Moodle and create online courseware. A workshop to enhance the capacity of implementers from the Asia-Pacific region on monitoring and evaluation was held in the Maldives.

3.2 Livelihoods & Health Sector

The focus of the Livelihoods and Health sector was on facilitating its partners in implementing planned activities. In particular, the sector focused on studying the scope of establishing COL-supported regional centres in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development

African partner institutions focused on strengthening course design for the informal sector with a workshop and cascade training. Three new courses were launched in Kenya for 88 new learners. At Auchi Polytechnic, Nigeria, 120 teachers were involved in capacity building for institutional policy development, use of audio, radio and
eLearning and establishing a Centre for Flexible Skills Development. In Zambia, capacity was strengthened at the Technical & Vocational Teachers College and the Zambian Institute of Business & Industrial Practice to enable them to emerge as dual-mode institutions. The Pacific TVET Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) Forum took place in Tonga. Each of the seven participating countries identified start-up projects to introduce flexible approaches into their TVET systems. In Bangladesh, five non-formal gender-sensitive skills training courses have been completed and distributed through Dhaka Ahsania Mission centres and other NGOs.

3.2.2 Lifelong Learning for Farmers

In Uganda, the Ministry of Agriculture and Makerere University developed open and distance learning (ODL) materials which reached 2,900 participants. COL supported the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare in Mauritius to produce the first module of an interactive DVD based on themes from the African Women’s Decade 2010-2020. The DVD was released by the Prime Minister of Mauritius.

The Minister of Natural Resources and Industry in Seychelles hailed the L3F model as a “perfect marriage between Seychelles Farmer Association, Ministry of Natural Resources and Industry, Seychelles Agricultural Authority (SAA) and Airtel to leverage low interest loans”. COL trained 30 officers from SAA in ODL and L3F.

In Sri Lanka, evidence showed that the turmeric and ginger farmers participating in L3F increased the area under cultivation by 33 times in one village. MOBITEL, a mobile phone company and OUSL launched L3F to promote learning among rural women in farming communities. The National Institute of Bank Management (NIBM) in India conducted a workshop with officials from banks and financial institutions to study the social rate of return of L3F.

3.2.3 Healthy Communities

The focus was on building capacities among local development and communication stakeholders to plan and design community-based learning programmes. Topics included domestic violence, conflict resolution, youth sexuality, maternal health, sanitation, diabetes and hypertension. Target users are predominantly women and youth. Representatives of 85 health/development organisations, media and community groups were actively engaged in programme planning, over 60% represented by women. Collaborative planning and participatory design took place in 34 sites in 11 countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Saint Lucia, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Africa and Trinidad & Tobago). Twelve thousand individuals have been identified as active learners. Seven national/regional partners have provided monitoring data as part of the M&E process. MaiMwana, a COL Health NGO partner secured 12 months of funding for Phukusi la Moyo (a community learning programme on maternal and child health that was developed with COL support) from Wellcome Trust (UK). UNESCO is using COL programme design tools for its SIDA-funded work in East Africa on integrating new ICTs in community radio.
3.3 Cross-cutting Themes

3.3.1 eLearning

COL supported the development of the draft ICT in Education policies with embedded OER policies for Grenada and Antigua & Barbuda. The draft policies are currently under review and revision and will be submitted for formal approval by the end of June. As well, an agreement has been reached with Grenada for COL to support the delivery of the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI) and help train local tutors to deliver the programme. Teachers and instructors in Grenada were also the first to receive training using COL’s newly developed online course on how to develop and teach online and blended courses using Moodle.

3.4 eLearning in International Organisations (eLIO)

eLIO received three new eLearning delivery contracts from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organization and the Inter-American Development Bank. As a result, eLIO will deliver training to over 500 staff from these organisations between 2013 and 2015. eLIO completed three cohorts (under existing contracts) with an average completion rate of 80%. Other activities include updating the content of Writing E-mails and Letters for the World Bank.

3.5 CEMCA

CEMCA focused on open schooling, technology and community radio.

The Feasibility Report on Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) in India was released. This report will assist in developing a platform for the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools in India to offer open courses, increase access and improve the quality of learning in open schools. CEMCA has established the Community of Practice for Teacher Educators (www.teacher-network.in) to develop the culture of sharing and networking amongst teachers, and has started providing ICT skills training for teacher educators in the region. CEMCA advocated for OER policy and strategic ICT planning for higher education institutions at the Vice-Chancellors meeting on ICT Leadership in Higher Education organised in partnership with the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, the Indira Gandhi National Open University and the British Council. Dr. M.M. Pallam Raju, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India inaugurated the event, which was attended by senior leaders from Asian universities.

In the Livelihoods & Health sector, CEMCA assisted the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to organise two Community Radio awareness consultations, and one Training of Trainers for women broadcasters.
3.6 Vice President’s Activities

Mr. Vis Naidoo, Vice President, has initiated a process of developing seven videos which will highlight COL’s accomplishments, focusing on the organisation’s positive effect on communities and individuals in the field. The videos will be completed by the end of September 2013.

In February, the Vice President gave a presentation about COL and its work within the Commonwealth at the Royal Society of Arts and Manufacturing function at the Fairleigh Dickinson University, Vancouver.

The Vice President sent a video message which was presented on March 25 at the INVEST Pacific Open, Distance & Flexible Learning TVET Forum in Tonga and is available at www.col.org/videos. He also represented COL at the Hewlett Grantees meeting held in San Diego, California in early April.

3.7 Professional Development

Professor Alan Tait, former Pro Vice-Chancellor at the Open University, UK, was on a one-month Executive Secondment to COL in January. Professor Tait worked with Dr. Balasubramanian on the concept of learning for development.

COL supported Canada MoodleMoot 2013 conference, which was held in Vancouver in February. The conference brought together various stakeholders of the Moodle learning management system (LMS) to share experiences and expand networks.

Arul Anandar College (AAC) organised a two-day conference titled National Conference on Food Security: Issues and Concerns held in Madurai, India in February. COL supported a workshop to discuss strategies for strengthening food security through the L3F initiative with the involvement of financial institutions.

4. Stakeholder Relations

4.1 Member Governments Support

Contributions were received from 36 countries up to the end of this quarter: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Pakistan, Rwanda, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Zambia.
4.2 **Focal Points**

We welcomed the following new country Focal Points:

- **Jamaica** – Dr. Phylicia Marshall, Ag. Assistant Chief Education Officer, Tertiary Unit, Ministry of Education, Jamaica.
- **Maldives** – Mr. Ramiz Ali, Dean & Head, Centre for Open Learning, The Maldives National University.
- **South Africa** – Ms. Trudi van Wyk, Director: Career Development & Open & Distance Learning, Department of Higher Education & Training.
- **Tonga** – Lady Siatukimoana Vaea, Deputy Director, Post-Secondary Education, Tonga Institute of Higher Education, Ministry of Education & Training.

4.3 **Congratulatory Letters**

Twenty-one congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed Heads of Government, Ministers of Education, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth High Commissioners to Canada and Heads of Institutions.

5. **Finances**

5.1 **Revenue**

COL has received just over $5.5 million to March 31, 2013 from member governments as voluntary contributions towards the approved annual budget for 2012-2013. Thirty-six countries (*six in this quarter in bold*) in total have paid up as follows since July 1, 2012:

- Antigua & Barbuda – $4,948; Bahamas – $59,376; Bangladesh – $29,616;
- Barbados – $44,023; Belize – $29,763; Botswana – $98,960; Cameroon – $56,538 (two payments); Canada – $2.6 million; Cyprus – $15,137;
- **Ghana** – $60,600; Guyana – $15,412; India – $899,576; Jamaica – $44,024;
- **Kiribati** – $20,474; Lesotho – $69,925; Malawi – $9,872; Malaysia – $50,000;
- Malta – $14,675; Mauritius – $60,000; Mozambique – $50,500;
- Namibia – $99,612; Nauru – $4,892; **New Zealand** – $674,785;
- Pakistan – $35,000; Rwanda – $12,936; St. Kitts & Nevis – $29,349;
- St. Lucia – $18,153; Samoa – $58,698; Seychelles – $14,844;
- **Solomon Islands** – $5,050; South Africa – $250,000; Sri Lanka – $29,763;
- Tonga – $19,842; **Tuvalu** – $9,921; **Vanuatu** – $4,960; and Zambia – $29,616.
These funds represent 63% of the level forecasted from member governments for 2012-2013. Contributions from the three outstanding major donors, making up 34% of the forecasted level, are expected in the next quarter. COL recently signed, for the first time, a three-year funding agreement with the Government of New Zealand covering the current plan period.

On the release date of this report, Australia’s contribution of $533,540 was also received.

COL forecasted additional contributions from grants of $1 million and from fee-for-service activities of $530,000 for the fiscal year.

Towards meeting these additional contribution targets, COL has recognised revenues of over $700,000 from grants for the programme and from international organisations for eLearning to March 31, 2013. In addition to these revenues and based on activities to date, revenues to be recognised during the fourth quarter include: a portion of a new $840,000 two-year agreement signed with the Government of Canada to support L3F in Sub-Saharan Africa; up to $100,000 with international organisations for agreements already in place; and $150,000 in additional contributions received but deferred at March 31, 2013 for agreements in progress.

COL will continue to source new revenue streams wherever feasible and submit further funding proposals to various funding bodies in support of its programme work towards reaching the targets set.

5.2 Cash Flow

COL held close to $6 million in cash and cash equivalents at the close of the third quarter as compared to $6.5 million at the beginning of the financial year. This level of cash and cash equivalents enables COL to meet operational costs and maintain a positive cash flow until outstanding contributions are received to replenish cash flows.

COL also holds a cash reserve of $3.3 million, in addition to the above cash, to provide a source of funds for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding if needed. A term deposit of $150,000 is held as banking security. Both of these items are classified as long-term assets and are not expected to be utilised in the year.

5.3 Expenditures

An estimated $6.5 million or 58% of the approved budget for 2012-2013 at a level of $11.13 million was spent or committed through agreements at the end of the third quarter to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff costs and office costs. This compares with 64% in the same period of the previous year.
6. Human Resources

6.1 Staff Changes

There were no staff movements in the quarter. Recruitment for the newly created post of Gender Equality Manager is underway.

7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management

Key developments were: the launch of a new Intranet called Connect; upgraded email services; a new approach to using Moodle; and the value addition to Directory of OER (DOER) through large-scale semantic reclassification.

7.1 KM Technology – Programme Support

COL conducted a quantitative study of Moodle usage and decided to consolidate Moodle installations into two: 1) for courses that lead to certificates (sponsored by third-party international organisations); 2) the second to help partners familiarise themselves with various features and functionalities of Moodle.

The DOER online service, linked to the Commonwealth Connects Portal, was reviewed to make it even easier to locate resources. Teacher Education, Skills Development and Open Schooling were added, resulting in over 200 additional OER catalogued. KM collaborated with the LinkedUp Data Challenge project led by the Open University UK and the University of Hanover in addressing the computational aspects of OER in social networking spaces.

7.2 KM Technology – Administration support

The Logframe and Event Reports databases and some organisational workflows were integrated within the new Intranet. The new platform was built entirely in-house using functionalities available in Microsoft SharePoint 2010. Another new feature this time was that our Newsletter Connections was brought out entirely as an in-house publication.

7.3 IT Systems

COL Email service was upgraded to Microsoft Exchange 2010, which enables users to have much larger mailboxes and attachment sizes and an even higher guarantee of availability. Planning for the upgrade was carried out systematically and no downtime was experienced by the organisation.
8. **Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)**

PCF7 will take place at the International Conference Centre in Abuja, Nigeria from December 2-6, 2013. A Local Organising Committee, coordinated by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), oversees local arrangements in close collaboration with a planning committee at COL (chaired by Dr. V. Balaji). Both committees have been meeting on a monthly basis via teleconference. COL’s principal coordinator for PCF7 (Mr. Dave Wilson) visited Abuja in February to meet directly with local organisers.

Dr. Anne Gaskell (the Open University, UK) has been brought on board as Programme Manager for PCF7 to work with a programme sub-committee at COL (chaired by Dr. Abdurrahman Umar) and counterparts at NOUN. An online Conference Management Tool, courtesy Microsoft Research, is in place to receive submissions of abstracts and to conduct reviews (www.col.org/PCF7submissions).

A sponsorship sub-committee at COL (chaired by Ms. Doris McEachern) has developed a database of potential supporters and made several contacts.

The conference website has been launched by NOUN at wwwpcf7.net and the registration system is in place (www.col.org/registrations).

9. **Visitors to COL**

The following are among the visitors to COL during this quarter:

- Ms. Myn Garcia, Deputy Director and Ms. Diana Atungire-Ocaya, Partnerships Manager of the Commonwealth Foundation to discuss the development of a joint work plan.
- Mr. Clive Wright, Head of Foreign Policy Team, British High Commission, Ottawa, and Mr. Rupert Potter, Consul General, Consulate General of the United Kingdom, Vancouver.

10. **Publications/Resources**

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications (www.col.org/publications):
Perspectives on Open and Distance Learning: Open Educational Resources: An Asian Perspective, Gajaraj Dhanarajan and David Porter, Eds.; jointly published by COL and OER Asia. (www.col.org/psOERAsia).
- 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
April 15, 2013