

# TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

## COL activities in 2003-2006

### BACKGROUND

By taking advantage of its reserves of oil and its status as the business hub of the Caribbean, Trinidad & Tobago intends to achieve developed country status by 2020 and has policies for developing the education and training of its people in line with this ambition. Trinidad & Tobago has always been a consistent supporter of COL but the significant increase in its voluntary contribution to COL's budget in the 2003-2006 triennium and the endorsement of its link with COL by Cabinet symbolised a new phase in the relationship. The formal reporting point for COL is the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education but it also works closely with the Ministry of Education. The Honourable Hazel Manning, Minister of Education, visited COL in Vancouver in 2005 to discuss the development of a strategic plan for the implementation of open and distance learning (ODL) methodology and the President of COL, Sir John Daniel, visited Trinidad & Tobago in both 2005 and 2006.

### SUMMARY

Trinidad & Tobago is emerging as a key mover in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). This builds on its work in making the some of the curricula of the Caribbean Examinations Council available in self-instructional formats. In keeping with its regional leadership role, Trinidad & Tobago hosted the foundation meeting of the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL) in 2005 and participates regularly in the COL sponsored meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers (CEOs). Trinidad & Tobago hosted a regional consultation to provide input for the preparation of COL's 2006-2009 Plan.

## **SYSTEMS AND POLICY ENHANCEMENT (REGIONAL INITIATIVES)**

### **Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning**

A regional association, the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL) held its foundation conference in Port-of-Spain in 2005 with the title *Commonwealth Cooperation in Distance Education: Potential Benefits for Small States*. CARADOL is a joint organiser of the 4<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum in Open Learning (PCF4)**

PCF4, which will attract some 500 delegates from across the Commonwealth and beyond, is being held in the Caribbean for the first time in late 2006. Trinidad & Tobago has been closely involved in planning the event, where the Ministry of Education will chair the sessions on Open Schooling and share its policy on the use of ODL in this area.

### **Chief Education Officers**

Trinidad & Tobago has been an active participant in the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers (CEOs) of the Caribbean sponsored by COL. Their meeting in 2003 focused on the use of Open and Distance Learning in Teacher Education. In 2004 it was held at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in New Zealand, where the CEOs spent a productive day in discussion with their counterparts from the Commonwealth Pacific Island countries.

### **Cross-Border Higher Education**

The provision of higher education by foreign institutions is a live issue in the Caribbean. To develop the knowledge base on this issue Trinidad & Tobago hosted a three day meeting in 2005 on *Foreign Tertiary Education Providers in the Anglophone Caribbean* with participants from ten countries in the region. The resulting book (also available as an eBook, on CD-ROM and on the COL and UNESCO websites) will be launched at PCF4 in late 2006.

### **ICTs in Education**

COL has supported the Ministry of Education in developing policy for the use of ICTs in education and in planning Schoolnet Trinidad & Tobago. In both cases COL was able to give Trinidad & Tobago the benefit of experience in similar initiatives elsewhere in the Commonwealth, including topics such as the qualities of a good education portal and teacher attitudes.

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

Trinidad & Tobago participated in planning meetings for the VUSSC (see section on Pan-Commonwealth initiatives for more details of VUSSC) in Singapore in September 2005 and April 2006, in a course team

leaders meeting in Vancouver in July 2006 and a working session on course development in Mauritius in August 2006.

The delivery of VUSSC courses and materials in the Caribbean will benefit from the parallel developments of the Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network (CKLN) and the EU-funded initiative, Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education (CUPIDE).

### **Caribbean Examinations Council**

With COL's help the Caribbean Examinations Council developed learning materials to accompany part of its secondary education. These were launched in Trinidad & Tobago by the Minister of Education, The Honourable Hazel Manning, at a ceremony in Port-of-Spain in February 2005. COL is working with the Distance Education Unit in the Ministry of Education to create learning resources to supplement these core materials and helping them select consultants to build capacity within the country.

### **Forestry and Environmental Sustainability**

Since 2000 COL has supplied video equipment and intensive training so that forestry officers in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment can sensitise the population to the value of conservation and the benefits of eco-tourism. Equipment is refreshed by COL when necessary and training updates are also arranged.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **ODL and Development**

A representative from Trinidad & Tobago took part in a high-level institute in Vancouver in 2005 that explored the relationship between open, distance and technology-mediated learning and development. Seventeen countries took part and the conclusions of the institute have been published as a book.

### **Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning**

Trinidad & Tobago was well represented at the 3rd Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in New Zealand in 2005. Even stronger representation is expected at the 4<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum in Jamaica from 31 October – 3 November, 2006.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

Closer working with COL in 2003-2006 has enabled Trinidad & Tobago to make considerable improvements to its own systems as well as helping it to emerge as a regional leader. The next triennium promises well and Trinidad & Tobago will take a leading role in VUSSC as it develops.