



BOARD OF GOVERNORS President's Quarterly Progress Report: July – September 2008

1. Board Appointments

I am delighted to report the following appointments to the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning.

On the nomination of the Secretary-General, the Board has appointed His Excellency, the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, O.J., as Chair for an initial term of three years. Currently Jamaica's High Commissioner in London, he began his professional career in education more than 40 years ago as a teacher and subsequently as school principal. He joined the Jamaican cabinet in 1992 and distinguished himself as a Minister of Education, Youth and Culture for ten years before becoming Minister of Information and Leader of Government Business in the Senate until 2006. In 2002, he was appointed as the Regional Representative for the Caribbean on the COL Board of Governors and has served as Acting Chair since 2007. In 2004, he was named an Honorary Fellow of COL.

As Burchell was both Deputy Chair and Acting Chair until this appointment, Ms. Jenny Glennie now becomes Deputy Chair, as was decided at the Board's meeting in June.

After consultations in the respective regions, the Secretary-General has recommended the following appointments, which are made formally by the Governments of the countries of which the Members recommended are citizens:

For Africa: Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr (Ghana). Professor Sawyerr retired as Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities (AAU) earlier this year. He taught Law at the Universities of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (1964-1970), Ghana (1970-1982) and Papua New Guinea (1979-1984) specialising in the Law of International Trade and Investment. In 1985, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, a position he held till 1992 when he joined the AAU, initially as Director of Research and, from 2003, as Secretary-General. He is familiar with COL from the joint leadership training programme for African Vice Chancellors that COL ran with the AAU, the ACU and the University of Abertay Dundee.

For Asia: The Honourable Zahiya Zareer (Maldives) is a graduate of American University of Beirut, studied in the United States and started her public service as a teacher. A former Chair of the Maldives National Commission for UNESCO, she

was Minister of Gender, Family Development and Social Security in 2004-2005 and has been Minister of Education since 2005. Her late father was a minister in the former government, her mother sat in the parliament and her uncle is the current Foreign Minister. Links between COL and the Maldives have become stronger in recent years under her leadership. She is also a member of the Advisory Council of CEMCA.

On behalf of the COL community, I warmly welcome these new appointees.

2. President's Activities

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5), held in London from 13-17 July, was COL's major activity in this quarter. It was an unqualified success and I report on it more fully below.

On my way to London for PCF5, I made stopovers in Canberra, to address the conference of the Australian Universities Quality Agency, and in Lagos to give the final keynote speech to the conference of the African Council for Distance Education.

I returned to London in early September to attend, with our Board Chair, a meeting convened by the Secretary-General of the Chairs and CEOs of the Commonwealth's three wholly or partly intergovernmental bodies: the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, COL and the Commonwealth Education Trust. The main aim of this very useful meeting was to take forward the process of harmonising the work of these bodies in education, as requested by Ministers at the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers.

While in London I was able to address a briefing conference for Commonwealth diplomats newly posted to London that is organised annually by ComSec and the Commonwealth Foundation.

In my previous Quarterly Report I noted that when Professor Kanwar and I first met the new Secretary-General, His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma, he urged COL to lead other Commonwealth bodies in producing multi-media learning materials to give greater reach to the report of the Amartya Sen Commission on Respect and Understanding, *Civil Paths to Peace*. We have submitted a proposal to him along these lines. This was one agenda item at a meeting between the Secretary-General and Professor Sen on September 10, at which our Chair, Burchell Whiteman, was present. Foreign Ministers reviewed progress of the Commonwealth's work on Respect and Understanding at a meeting in New York on September 24 and we hope that COL will now be invited to implement its proposal.

I am pleased to note that the joint work plan between COL and UNESCO is being implemented in an impressive manner. Our Vice-President & Programme Director, Professor Asha Kanwar, spent a week in Paris in mid-September meeting our UNESCO counterparts and updating the report on the 20 actions in the work plan.

In late September, I gave the final keynote address at the Asia/Pacific Region's preparatory meeting for UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education that will convene in Paris in July 2009. This meeting was held in Macao and I went on from there to Sri Lanka to visit COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative in the east of the country and give a guest lecture at the newly-established University for Vocational Technology, UNIVOTEC.

Finally, I was flattered to be the only non-American invited, along with six other higher education leaders including the US Secretary of Education and the President of the American Council on Education, to address an open letter to the next President of the United States for publication in *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*. The letters can be found at www.changemag.org/September-October%202008/full-looking-ahead.html and mine is also posted on our website at www.col.org/colweb/site/pid/5409, indexed from www.col.org/speeches ("Speeches and Presentations").

3. Programme

All the feedback received, including the formal evaluation, indicates that PCF5 was a highly successful event that fully met its objectives. One of the Board's criteria for the success of PCF5 was that 'the conference sessions devoted to COL's programme initiatives have a demonstrable impact on the content of the programme going forward'. I am therefore devoting the Programme section of this Quarterly Report to a summary of the comments that I have received from my colleagues about the impact of PCF5 on their work.

The thematic arrangement of PCF5 around 'children and young people', 'health', 'livelihoods', 'governance, conflict and social justice' generated lively discussions and triggered ideas about what COL might do during its next Three-Year Plan (TYP) in the three programme sectors.

These proposals are listed below by sector and initiative. Clearly COL will not be able to implement all these suggestions, but having this wide stakeholder input will be most useful as we prepare the 2009-2012 Three-Year Plan.

3.1 Education Sector

Teacher Development

- (i) Access and equity. Using Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to enhance access to larger numbers of teachers and to ensure equity for marginalised groups will continue to be a key priority.
- (ii) Resource-sharing and collaboration. This calls for collaboration in materials design and development, joint offering/certification of courses and pooling of resources.

- (iii) Open Education Resources (OERs). COL has always recognised the importance of OERs for teacher development and the need to develop OERs on English language teaching, Mathematics and Science at the secondary school level.

Open Schools

- (i) Appropriate technologies. The Open Schools initiative will use radio to foster North-South collaboration with the BBC and countries in the South and assist with the integration of mobile telephony in the teaching-learning transaction.
- (ii) Diversify the Curriculum. There is an opportunity to assist countries to transform their curriculums and introduce more technical and vocational courses.
- (iii) Professional development. Build the capacity of practitioners by investing in professional development in ODL and technology.

Higher Education

- (i) Professional development. Through various certificate and degree programmes, and workshops, COL is supporting the continuing professional development of practitioners and policymakers. But as the demand is great, there is a need to focus on the training of trainers, thus creating a multiplier effect.
- (ii) Access to HE. Increasing demand for HE will compel the creation of more open universities and COL will need to provide technical advice on the planning and management of these institutions. In addition, COL can help these institutions to construct programmes that further the national development agenda.
- (iii) Quality HE. Institutional audits and providing support to quality assurance units will continue to demand our attention and action.

eLearning for Education Sector Development

- (i) Communities of practice. A thriving OER community is developing around the WikiEducator project. A shift from individual collaboration to institutional and/or national OER collaborations seemed to be emerging.
- (ii) OERs. OER capacity building through the Learning4Content (L4C) project provides a scalable model that can be adapted to different contexts.
- (iii) Quality Assurance. The two priorities could be: Interoperability of OER content and mechanisms to support and promote quality assurance and review frameworks.

3.2 Learning for Livelihoods Sector

Four broad areas for intervention were recommended under the Livelihoods stream. These include: (i) developing ODL policies for effective outreach programs; (ii) developing

public-private-community partnerships; (iii) creating awareness of quality ODL content and involving target communities in developing such content; and (iv) mobilising communities to build their social learning capital.

Rural and Peri-Urban Community Development

- (i) Partnerships. COL will need to work with community-based organisations to encourage and facilitate the development of COL Country Networks (e.g. COL-Kenya Network for Livelihoods, etc.) and global consortiums.
- (ii) Research. Action research for agriculture and the development of OERs. Very few users contribute to OER development and this needs to be addressed.
- (iii) New areas. These include (a) scaling up successful programmes like L3F by creating Knowledge Infomediaries (KIs); (b) developing Quality Performance Indicators for informal learning; and (c) developing collaborative programmes for Sub-Saharan Africa.

Learning and Skills for Livelihoods

- (i) Standardisation. Ensure that there is consistency in the development of TVET courses to facilitate sharing among institutions and countries.
- (ii) Scalability. Scale up successful pilot projects.
- (iii) Sustainability. Maintain continuity after the pilot and experimental phases.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

Copyright. With the often-conflicting interpretation of clauses, COL is trying to determine and communicate rights and liabilities with the main contracts. The exchange of OERs in future will depend on authors and users understanding how to mix materials with different open licenses.

- (i) Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF). The TQF is moving forward from concept to designing the implementation with the TQF Management Committee now actively engaged in the drafting of descriptions and procedures.
- (ii) OERs. Searches are being conducted for additional materials that could be amended and used for VUSSC countries.

3.3 Human Environment

Educational use of Mass Media and Health and Community Development

- (i) Health. Use traditional and new technologies to reach health workers in the community and simple and easily understandable activities, for example, learning about AIDS at the community level.
- (ii) Media. Within the rubric of community media, COL needs to sharpen its focus on the specific learning potentials and requirements of these media.

- (iii) Networking. Link community-based facilities to national education and information providers.

Good Governance & Gender

- (i) Conflict mitigation. Work with institutions to explore how training materials may be adapted and developed for civil society.
- (ii) Cultural Contexts. One of the most important yet difficult challenges is to ensure governance initiatives are embedded within specific cultural frameworks.
- (iii) Partnerships. Develop and sustain relationships with regional and international bodies.
- (iv) Gender. The focus was on the broader theme of 'inclusivity' which includes both men and women.

We shall take account of these issues and recommendations in developing COL's Plan for 2009-2012.

4. Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5)

As noted above, from all reports, PCF5 was a success.

COL's biennial Pan-Commonwealth Forum has grown to become one of the world's leading international conferences on learning and global development. This year's was by far the largest. The theme of PCF5 was "Access to Learning for Development" and the unique contributions that ODL can make towards achieving international development goals.

PCF5 was held in London, from 13-17 July 2008, on the University of London's Bloomsbury campus, attended by more than 700 delegates from 70 countries. The eight countries with the highest attendance were, in order: India (with exactly 100 delegates); the UK; Nigeria; Canada (that's excluding non-Canadian COL staff); Uganda; South Africa; Kenya and Malaysia.

PCF5 was hosted by COL in partnership with the University of London, forming a part of the University's celebration of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of its External Programme. Our University of London partners were a delight to work with and our Communications Manager, Dave Wilson, coordinated COL's input most effectively.

Planning began over two years ago before our Fourth PCF took place in Jamaica. Outcomes from PCF4 and the structure of COL's new Three-Year Plan, 2006-2009, were then fed into the design of the programme for PCF5. In turn, we are working on continuity from PCF5 into the 17th triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers and parallel fora (17CCEM, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 2009) and PCF6 – which, as

IGNOU Pro Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Latha Pillai, and I announced at the London Forum, will be held in late November 2010, in Kochi (Kerala, Cochin), in partnership with IGNOU.

PCF5 included more than 320 papers, workshops and discussions around the forum's four main action themes:

- (i) Children and young people;
- (ii) Governance, conflict and social justice;
- (iii) Health; and
- (iv) Livelihoods.

Three cross-cutting issues – appropriate learning technologies, institutions and learner support – helped to inform the discussions. Over four days, delegates discussed best practices, shared their experiences and were inspired by keynotes from leaders in ODL.

The challenges facing women in ODL were the focus of the introductory session on gender at PCF5 (over 40% of delegates attending PCF5 were female). It was organised by our Vice President & Programme Director, Professor Asha Kanwar, around the question, *Women, gender and distance education: Where have all the flowers gone?* and featured three presentations by leaders in the field of gender and ODL.

The wide and rich participation was made possible through the generosity of our sponsors. Major sponsorship support for delegate participation from developing countries was provided by COL, the UK Open University, the UK Department for International Development, the University of London External Programme, Nexus Strategic Partnerships and AusAID – the Australian Government's overseas aid programme. Each contributed approximately £25,000, which allowed us to subsidise the participation of over 200 people from throughout the Commonwealth with priority given to those who had not been sponsored by COL in the past (all sponsored delegates had prepared papers which had been accepted for inclusion in the Forum).

In my closing keynote and Forum summary, I stated, "Remember that PCF5 is not over when you leave London, Now is when you start working to sustain the networks that you have developed here. For our part, the Commonwealth of Learning will reflect deeply on the conclusions and recommendations arising from your discussion as we prepare our next Three-Year Plan for the period 2009-2012."

We received numerous unsolicited commendations from participants of all types (sponsored delegates, registrants, workshop presenters, and keynote speakers), including these high-level ones:

"I was delighted to take part in PCF5 and to feel all of its energy. The task of ensuring that education reaches all...is enormous, and you are convening huge goodwill and expertise in making it happen."

Kamalesh Sharma
Commonwealth Secretary-General

"I wish to congratulate you on having been able to steer such a big conference which all the participants said was a complete success."

The Honourable Gabriel Opio
Minister of State for Higher Education
Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda

"The conference was a resounding success. At UNISA's Management Committee today, all members who attended spoke admiringly about how well it was organized and structured, and what a wonderful setting it was in. Aside from the many good presentations, and the outstanding keynotes, it was a wonderful opportunity to get a feel for what leading-edge thinking is in the field of ODL ... and advances in technology and OERs, the latter of which we will be giving serious attention to in order to develop a clear UNISA position on it. The networking experience was of course a highlight – it is always wonderful to reconnect with colleagues from all over the world.

"We all took away tremendous value from the conference, and have agreed that PCF is a really valuable conference for UNISA to attend. We also agreed that in future, we will be sending many more UNISA staff.

"... It is interesting to observe a growing African voice that is re-asserting the role and relevance of education on our Continent and one can but hope that will realise in some much needed concrete progress and development."

Professor Narend Bajjnath
Vice Principal: Strategy, Planning and Partnerships
and
Professor Barney Pityana
Vice-Chancellor
UNISA, South Africa

"With the PCF5 being in London I felt that I should take the opportunity to attend. I am so pleased that I did. It was a great experience – stimulating, challenging and the opportunity to meet so many inspiring people!

"For someone who immediately valued the cotton bag, but took time to appreciate the memory stick, you can appreciate my level of hands on IT, although I have long urged solar computers for Africa. The Conference was an amazing eye opener to some of the potential new ways of learning for people of all ages who have unjustly been denied education. I was not the only CEC member at the Forum, so I'm sure that PCF5 will influence the way in which our Council operates in future but, more importantly, will also influence our objectives. Congratulations on a valuable Conference, With all good wishes as you work towards PCF6."

Valerie Davey
Executive Chair
Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC)

In responding to the formal evaluation questionnaire, many people expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to meet and interact with others and described how they had forged new international relationships and new directions for their work. The (live) tabulation of evaluation responses is available at <http://tinyurl.com/3tqman>.

Papers and reports from sessions are available online in the Forum 'wiki' and 'blog' at www.wikieducator.org/pcf5 and <http://pcf5.wordpress.com>. Keynote presentations and the four theme reports (conclusions and ways forward) are available at www.col.org/speeches. My closing keynote, entitled "My Tip of the Iceberg", is at www.col.org/colweb/site/pid/5359. The forum website is www.col.org/pcf5.

COL and the University of London are in the process of finalising their accounts for PCF5 with the financial report to be available next quarter.

5. Excellence in Distance Education Awards (EDEA)

COL also presented its Excellence in Distance Education Awards at PCF5 in London. Many people commented on how inspiring the ceremonies were. It is always a special moment for COL staff.

Eight new Honorary Fellows of COL were named:

Professor Tan Sri Anuwar Ali, Vice Chancellor, Open University Malaysia and former Vice Chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Professor Uma Coomaraswamy, Programme Accreditation Analyst, Distance Education Modernization Project, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka and former Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka.

Professor Brenda Gourley, Vice Chancellor, U.K Open University and former Vice Chancellor and University Principal, University of Natal, South Africa.

Ms. Myra Harrison, Education Advisor, Advisory and Evaluation Group, New Zealand Agency for International Development and former member of COL's Board of Governors.

Mr. Abdul W. Khan, Assistant Deputy General for Communication & Information Sector, UNESCO and former Director, Development and Training at COL and Vice Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University, India.

Mr. M.C. Pant, Chairman, National Institute of Open Schooling and former Director of Education, Uttaranchal State, India.

Professor Barney Pityana, Vice-Chancellor, University of South Africa and former Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission.

Mrs. Esi Sutherland-Addy, Research Fellow, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana and former member of COL's Board of Governors.

Institutional Achievement awards were presented to:

Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL).

University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG Open College).

Awards for distance education materials went to:

Master of Arts in Teacher Education (International Programme), Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka – for print or other “low-end” media materials, and

OpenLearn website, UK Open University – for interactive, electronically delivered materials

And two students were honoured for their achievements:

Mr. Kelly Yapa, Accountant, Public Accounts Division, Department of Finance, Papua New Guinea – Degree programme.

Mr. David Benthun Nthengwe, Public Information Officer, Division of External Relations, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Democratic Republic of the Congo – eLearning experience in difficult circumstances.

Full award citations, photos and further details are available at www.col.org/edeia/2008. COL's Vice-President & Programme Director, Professor Asha Kanwar, was emcee for the presentations. Her remarks are available at www.col.org/speeches.

6. Stakeholder Relations

6.1 Member Government Support

During the Financial Year 2007-2008, COL received contributions from 41 Member States totalling \$7.9 million, up by three countries and \$100,000 from 2006-2007. Robust systems for sustaining funding levels from member governments are in place with regular follow-up.

Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Mauritius, Samoa, South Africa, Tanzania, and Trinidad and Tobago have already sent in contributions for FY 2008-2009.

6.2 Focal Points Update

The third and final meeting of the Focal Points, which is for the Asia and Pacific regions, is scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur on October 29-30, 2008. This meeting will be co-hosted by the government of Malaysia and inaugurated by Y.B. Dato' Seri Mohamed Khaled bin Nordin, the Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Malaysia.

Three new Focal Points have been nominated. They are:

- (i) Malaysia – Dato' Professor Ir. Dr. Radin Umar bin Radin Sohadi, Director General, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education.

- (ii) Kenya – Mr. Omido Ongonga, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology.
- (iii) Kiribati – Mrs. Maria-Teretia Kaiboia, Acting Director, Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports.

7. Finances

7.1 Revenues

COL estimates that member states' voluntary contributions will be at the same level in this financial year as in 2007-2008 – approximately \$7.9 million before taking account of Nigeria's arrears for the two previous years and their contribution for 2008-2009. COL remains reasonably assured that Nigeria, based on its assurances, will fulfil its pledges.

Eleven member states contributed \$1,553,217 in the first quarter: Antigua & Barbuda - \$4,971; Belize - \$31,632; Guyana - \$11,304; India - \$943,818; Jamaica - \$47,610; Malaysia - \$49,358; Mauritius - \$60,000; Samoa - \$61,800; South Africa - \$250,000; Tanzania - \$13,374; and Trinidad and Tobago - \$79,350.

COL set a target of \$3 million in additional contributions for 2008-2009 from grants and special projects and fee-based contract services. Deferred revenues at June 30, 2008 of \$270,000 from grants and special projects and \$170,000 from contract services for eLearning will be recognised in the year. Agreements are in place with: Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation for two more years of a four-year grant for VUSSC - £550,000 remaining; The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation - US\$750,000 over two years to expand open educational resources and teacher development; UNICEF - \$1.8 million over two years to advance work on Child Friendly Schools (CFS); and three new service contracts totalling US\$140,000 for COL's eLearning programme.

7.2 Cash Flow

COL began the new fiscal year on July 1, 2008 with cash of \$8.8 million (inclusive of cash held in foreign currencies). Of this sum, \$1.2 million is committed for current liabilities and \$1.6 million is restricted in accordance with the cash reserve policy. The balance of \$6 million will maintain a positive cash flow while current year funding is being received, fund a portion of the approved budget for 2008-2009 and cover any shortfalls in member government contributions that might occur against forecasted levels.

COL realises revenue, incurs expenditures and holds financial instruments denominated in various currencies including UK Pound Sterling, US Dollars and India Rupees. COL is exposed to the risk of loss depending on the relative movement of these currencies against the Canadian dollar. At June 30, 2008, net assets in other currencies were £910,952, US\$2,498,052 and India Rs.5,743,883.

7.3 Expenditures

The annual budget for 2008-2009 was approved at a level of \$11.9 million. At September 30, approximately \$2 million is estimated to have been spent (September figures in progress) as follows: \$1.1 million for the programme and additional contributions; \$700,000 for human resources; \$200,000 for organisational and site and office costs. Commitments in the magnitude of \$500,000 stemming from contracts for programme services entered into during the first quarter (and carried over from the previous financial year) have not been expensed as the work has not been completed.

8. Human Resources

8.1 Staff Changes

8.1.1 Arrivals and Movements

Ms. Pema Eden Samdup joined CEMCA in July 2008 as Programme Officer from IGNOU.

Dr. Abdurrahman Umar joined COL as Education Specialist – Teacher Education in August 2008 from the National Teachers' Institute in Nigeria where he served as Director of Academic Services.

Ms. Anna Lee was appointed Information Technology Manager in July 2008 where she previously held the post of Programme Assistant at COL.

Ms. Amy Monaghan was appointed Information Resource Centre Manager in September 2008. She previously held the post of part-time Database Coordinator at COL.

8.1.2 Recruitment

Mr. John Lesperance, currently Director of Further Education with the Ministry of Education, Seychelles, will join COL in January 2009 as Education Specialist – VUSSC.

Dr. K. Balasubramanian, currently an independent consultant to international agencies, will join COL in January 2009 as Education Specialist – Food Security and Environment.

Recruitments are underway in COL for the following positions: Course Coordinator, Database Coordinator and Learner Support Assistant.

8.1.3 Departures

Ms. Claire Carigi and Ms. Georgina Dowsett, Course Coordinators (job share) departed COL during August and September respectively to pursue other interests. Ms. Haizley Trevor-Smith's term as temporary part-time Course Coordinator during Ms. Dowsett maternity leave also ended in August 2008.

9. Publications/Resources

"Structural Framework for Higher Education Open and Distance Learning in Papua New Guinea", consultant's study and report prepared by Dominique A.M.X. Abrioux, President Emeritus, Athabasca University, Canada (www.col.org/colweb/site/pid/5412).

Manual for the Tutors of Learning Centres in Open Schools, by Dr. Sushmita Mitra (www.col.org/colweb/site/pid/5317).

Handbook on In-house Style for Course Development, developed by Professor Santosh Panda; published by COL and the National Open School of Trinidad & Tobago (www.col.org/colweb/site/pid/5286).

10. Information Technology & Knowledge Management

Having run a particular technology for its intranet and website for a number of years, COL has now embarked on the staged implementation of a new collaboration and content management system that is expected to support COL's expanding online needs over the next five years. The system will support a new website, extranet and intranet, including knowledge management and document management systems.

COL has begun to use external services where possible, which helps to reduce the growth in the use of bandwidth. We have now also embarked on a virtualisation project for internal servers. In future, physical servers will be added to a virtual server farm, and the farm of physical servers will, in turn support the creation and hosting of virtual servers as needed. This methodology supports the needs to create servers without having to always buy equipment. It also more effectively supports backup techniques and business continuity needs.

Spam emails have been steadily increasing internationally with the volume of spam accounting for typically 95% of emails in circulation. COL has been affected by this continuous rise in spam and has had to contend with about 60,000 spam emails arriving each day. Most Internet users are unaware of the extent of the problem because web-mail and internet service providers filter out about 90% of emails which are classed as "definitely spam"; about 5% of emails might be placed in a spam folder; and legitimate emails, which comprise about 5% of total volume, are placed in users' in-boxes.

COL's email filtering system is now filtering out about 91% of emails, which qualify as spam and are never seen by users. A further 4% are placed into spam folders. This operation now takes place offsite for COL so that these spam messages never enter the premises or reach our email server. Approximately 5% of emails, which are deemed to be legitimate, are transferred to users' in-boxes. By doing this, the spam does not consume bandwidth into the organisation and those that carry viruses (about 2%), do not usually pose a threat. Internal programmes constantly monitor for viruses that might get through the filter barriers or that are inadvertently brought into the organisations on USB memory sticks, CDs, etc.

11. Visitors and Visits

We welcomed a delegation of senior Australian academics to COL on August 13. COL Fellow, Professor Ram Takwale visited COL for the week of September 8 and made a presentation to staff. A delegation of ECOWAS officials led by Dr. Monisoye Sola Afolabi, Director, Community Computer Centre and Professor Abdoulaye Maga, Director, Education, Culture Science and Technology at the ECOWAS Commission, Abuja visited COL during the last week of August. The newly-appointed Nigerian High Commissioner to Canada, His Excellency Professor Iyorwuese Hagher, and officials from the High Commission visited COL on September 10. COL's former Acting President Richard Simpson (Industry Canada) came to see us on September 12 to talk about links between COL and the *Commonwealth Connects* programme.

The Team Leaders for the next VUSSC course development workshop (focussing on the construction industry and to be held in the Bahamas, October 27 to November 13) met for training at COL's offices in the week of September 15.

The Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education visited COL in the week of September 22-26 represented by Mr. S.A. Sufi, Permanent Secretary, Dr. (Mrs.) P.U. Ekoh Project Manager, Project Coordinating Unit, Skills Training and Vocational Education and Mrs. Mabel M. Ozumba, Director, Basic and Secondary Education. They were joined by Mr. A.G. Edeche, Head of Chancery of the Nigerian High Commission in Ottawa. COL facilitated visits for them to educational institutions in British Columbia.

The Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, the Honourable Steven L. Point, visited COL's office on September 24 and met senior staff.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Sir John Daniel
President & Chief Executive Officer
September 30, 2008*