



## THE COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

**“Our long-term aim is that any learner, anywhere in the Commonwealth, shall be able to study any distance teaching programme.”**

from “Towards A Commonwealth of Learning,” 1987

### **Distance Education Is The Answer**

Access to education means access to a better future. It's the difference between one person's hope and another's hopelessness—the difference between a prosperous nation and a dependent nation. Education lays the groundwork for grass-roots change and renewal, but it's of no use if those who need it can't get it.

Distance education brings all the necessary tools into the home and into the community, no matter how remote and no matter how many want to learn. Evolving from correspondence courses developed decades earlier, it's a strategy that successfully merged with new technologies beginning in the 1960s. This approach is proving to be increasingly effective in overcoming the problems of isolation and restricted access throughout the Commonwealth.

Today, with modern communications technology, distance education will reach far more people in remote areas as well as in cities, providing opportunities

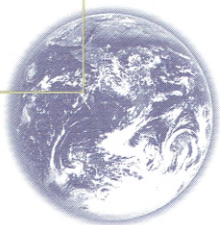
for those who are unable to study in a formal setting due to personal or other circumstances.

It is both a distinct alternative and an obvious complement to traditional educational methods.

Distance education allows more students to learn at the location, time, and pace of their choice—for far less money and with far greater results: that's the mandate of The Commonwealth of Learning.

### **A Mandate To Educate**

One of every four persons on the planet lives in a Commonwealth country; COL's goal is to make education available to every one of them. Such an ambitious ideal is supported by voluntary contributions from Commonwealth countries and accelerated by advances in communications technology. Founded in 1987, COL has moved from gradual steps to progress in leaps and bou



# strategic

**Around the Commonwealth, in all areas of its mandate, COL is bringing education to those who will benefit the most. Here are some examples:**

### **Innovative Technologies**

For isolated people living on the scattered atolls of the Maldives, English language training is now available through cost-effective video presentations. A COL needs-assessment determined that combining the Ministry of Education's existing computers with desk-top technology offers unlimited opportunities far less expensive than traditional video production methods.

### **Training Distance Educators**

Through a pilot project operating in 15 developing countries, educators are earning their Master's degrees in Distance Education—without leaving home. The Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme is a COL initiative offered through the Indira Gandhi National Open University. With this cost-effective programme, students are immediately able to apply newly acquired skills in their communities.

### **Cost-effective Programming**

Expensive overseas education has previously been the means of upgrading senior public administrator skills throughout the Commonwealth. COL's legislative drafting project takes advantage of the Commonwealth-wide "common law" framework to create a distance education programme which trains practitioners within their own jurisdictions. This pilot project is showing great success at a fraction of the cost of traditional training methods.

### **Teleconferencing Networks**

The immediacy and inter-activity available to learners through teleconferencing networks makes this technology particularly attractive to a variety of current COL projects. For example, the successful Malaysian Medical Education Network relies on an audio conferencing system to provide learner support in hospitals throughout the country. Eager to expand the network, UKM, the National University of Malaysia, accessed COL's expertise, technical assistance and buying power to purchase equipment for 40 additional sites. As a result of this effective partnership with COL, UKM is examining a wider range of distance education opportunities with several faculties.

### **Teacher Training**

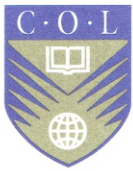
A 1990 COL planning conference in Hong Kong determined the need for improved training and upgrading systems for technical and vocational instructors throughout the Commonwealth. Today, a pilot project in the Caribbean, devised through strong recipient participation, has improved instruction methods and made training opportunities available to more people. The programme is highly transferable and negotiations are underway to adapt it for implementation in Papua New Guinea, the wider Pacific region, and beyond.

### **Shared Expertise**

COL was the co-ordinating body that enabled a Sri Lankan computer awareness programme to be implemented in the copperbelt of northern Zambia. The result is perhaps the most up-to-date computer training centre in the entire country and the pride of Zambia's National Correspondence College. After overcoming significant obstacles, the centre now trains students in computer skills, has attracted industry and Government contracts, and is a hub of entrepreneurial activity.

### **Electronic Media**

Modern information and communication technologies are a cost-effective and efficient means of widening access to education and training. COL initiated the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) to promote the collaboration and co-operation of educational institutions and media organisations. CEMCA now has a database of over 7,000 radio and television programmes, publishes a newsletter, and conducts training workshops. CEMCA also contributed to COL's Educational Technology 2000, a conference held in Singapore in August 1996 to explore the application of emerging technologies.



# Models for Success

## Skills Training for Employment

### The Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP)

- Unique pilot programme, funded by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, offers essential training to three Caribbean countries
- Extends the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme for undergraduate studies "at a distance" in three important skill areas
- Partners Canadian and Caribbean institutions, governments and COL
- Capitalises on subject and distance education expertise that has been developed at Canadian post-secondary institutions

Under a grant agreement with Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), COL is carrying out a five-year pilot programme which will provide undergraduate scholarships for Caribbean students to study "at a distance" through Canadian post-secondary institutions.

### Unique features include the advantages of distance learning

The new CCDESP continues the important academic strengths and ideals of the long-standing Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme (CSFP), but also provides an exciting new dimension to the CSFP by launching scholarships onto the "information highway". The CCDESP takes advantage of COL's and Canadian leadership and expertise in distance education and advances in technology to enhance access to and availability of scholarships and post-secondary education.

While a unique departure from the traditional CSFP, the new COL programme will maintain the CSFP's concept of facilitating a "multilateral trade in ideas," but will be delivered chiefly through the use of new technologies with only a short on-campus component. The programme will allow for a greater number of students at a lower cost and will minimise the disruptions to the personal lives of the students. The programme also responds to the Commonwealth Education Ministers' desire for a more flexible CSFP and for undergraduate scholarships for small states.

### Three countries — three important skill areas

Consultations with Caribbean advisors and partners indicate a desire to use the opportunity to apply the available scholarships in vocational areas that will provide immediate benefit by responding to identified skill shortages. Pending final arrangements with COL's partners, the new programme will see Caribbean scholarship recipients from three countries participate in three specific fields of study:

- **Dominica** .....Teacher education
- **Jamaica** .....Information technology
- **St. Vincent & the Grenadines**.....Hospitality (Tourism) management

The first group of students will commence studies in September 1998.



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### **Partnerships in Canada and in the Caribbean**

While COL will be responsible for the overall programme, it will work closely with Canadian and Caribbean institutions and governments.

**COL** will design, arrange and manage the programme; negotiate with Canadian institutions on fee structures, selection procedures, programme format, courses, delivery systems, assessment and credential protocols; assist host Governments with student selection procedures, student recruitment strategies, study centre facilities and locations and recruitment of tutorial staff; and identify and recruit tutors and provide training in conjunction with Caribbean and Canadian partners.

**Canadian partner institutions** will design the curriculum, create learning materials and deliver the materials using the most appropriate technologies; prepare assessment systems, conduct the assessments, award credits and credentials on successful completion of the programme; arrange for students to spend (where necessary) a short on-campus period of study; assist in the recruitment of tutors and their training; and, in conjunction with COL and the host Governments, determine the infrastructure needed for local learning centres.

**Host Governments** will work out protocols necessary to implement the pilot; assure, through their national authorities that full recognition is granted to the qualifications obtained through this programme; help select local and regional partner institutions; identify appropriate study centres and assist in their management; assist in the recruitment of candidates; assist in the recruitment of tutors and their training; and assist in managing and monitoring the project.

COL anticipates facilitating co-operative working relationships between Canadian and Caribbean educational institutions and study centres that will serve as hosts for the students. Unlike most other study-abroad schemes, this one will ensure that local institutions are partners in arrangements, providing them with opportunities for growth.

### **COL's professional services at work**

This programme is an example of the professional services that COL can provide in partnership with other agencies. In furthering its mandate and its assistance to developing Commonwealth countries, COL offers a range of services that can help in the creation and management of distance education programmes, the application of technologies to such programmes, and the training of distance education administrative and course development staff.

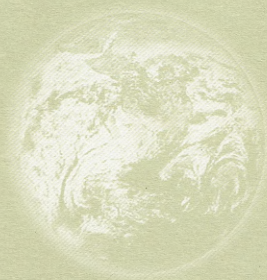
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### **February 1998**

COL is an international organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education resources and technologies.

Information appearing above may be reproduced with acknowledgement to The Commonwealth of Learning. Further details may be obtained by contacting COL's Public Affairs Office, or visiting our World Wide Web site.





**“ The Commonwealth of  
Learning has forged an  
important and unique role  
in the international education  
sector and has established  
itself as a cost-effective  
implementation agency.”**

The Honourable Alexander Downer,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Australia (1996)







**COL's MANDATE** is to provide quality distance education to as many people as possible while keeping costs down. The strategy is to design and implement programmes that:

### Learning Materials

Despite the rapid increase in the use of communications technologies, COL recognises that print-based materials and study guides continue to be fundamental components of distance education. Under favourable financial arrangements, COL actively develops or acquires the rights for materials that are applicable in a wide variety of settings. In one Pakistani institution alone, over 2,000 students are using computer application materials acquired through COL.

### Advocacy

In recent years, every major Commonwealth forum, as well as international bodies such as the World Bank and UNESCO, has recognised the role of distance education in supporting human resource development. Distance education is also now regarded as perhaps the strongest and most practical means to address women in development, literacy, the environment, and other universal concerns. COL takes pride in having helped bring about this change of perception. Now COL can call upon the experience of diverse international organisations and promote collaborative efforts. Recently, for example, the Asian Development Bank has invited COL to deliver a training programme on its behalf.

**SUPPORT** and improve the institutions already engaged in distance learning;

**CREATE** better systems for distance educators to communicate and share information;

**FORGE** new partnerships between Commonwealth countries and distance educators.

## A FUTURE OF COMMON WEALTH

Human resources develop through education. With its commitment to affordable and effective distance education, COL is a building block for social transformation on a global scale. Commonwealth-wide systems for educational broadcasting, credit transfer, quality assurance and accreditation of institutions and commercial partnerships are all under development in the work of COL.

The goals are ambitious. The job is enormous. Funding is critical.

The explosion of communications technology has created a golden opportunity to expand on past successes and establish education for everyone into the next century. The Commonwealth of Learning is a unique international body poised and committed to make that happen.

## COL EXPANDS ITS MANDATE

### COL Consultation and Professional Services

COL now provides fee-for-service consultation to external agencies and institutions determined to meet their objectives through cost-effective, knowledge-based strategies.

As the only intergovernmental organisation concerned exclusively with the promotion and development of open and distance learning, COL offers clients the benefits of contacts, resources, and knowledge generated through the direct management of nearly 300 varied programmes world-wide.

COL's range of services includes the creation and management of distance education programmes, the application of technologies to such programmes, and the training of distance education administrative and course development staff.

COL has established the international experience and infrastructure to expand beyond the design and implementation of programmes funded publicly or through private benefactors.

Either as the sole deliverer or in conjunction with internationally recognised consultants, COL is now available to support the goals of other governmental and non-governmental agencies while fulfilling its own mandate to enrich our human resources through open learning and distance education.

*The Asian Development Bank has contracted COL to work with UNESCO's Bangkok office, bringing COL's experience to the organisation's "Education For All" initiative which concentrates on the earth's most populous nations. The focus is to build the capacity for primary teacher training in five Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the People's Republic of China. COL's roles in this project include the development and presentation of research papers and training materials, as well as the delivery of workshops for those who will be leading national training programmes in their own countries.*

**"We value greatly the work being performed by The Commonwealth of Learning which has already made a significant impact on the educational needs of small developing countries like Jamaica."**

The Honourable P.J. Patterson,  
Prime Minister of Jamaica (1995)

**"Canada is pleased to be the host and a significant contributor to The Commonwealth of Learning. This unique institution is at the cutting edge in terms of its capability to help developing countries improve access to quality education through the use of distance education. It is an important example of the ways in which knowledge can be harnessed for development."**

The Honourable Don Boudria,  
Minister for International Cooperation,  
Canada (1997)

**"Britain endorses the valuable work of The Commonwealth of Learning in expanding access to education. The demand for distance learning in developing countries is increasing and COL is well placed to provide much needed educational opportunities."**

The Honourable Baroness Chalker,  
Overseas Development Minister,  
United Kingdom (1996)

**"Ghana attaches great importance to the work entrusted to The Commonwealth of Learning and the dedication and professionalism with which the mandate is being pursued."**

His Excellency Annan A. Cato,  
High Commissioner for Ghana in  
Canada (1996)

**"Your co-operation and sheer willingness at assisting is a demonstration of the inculcating standards and values you set. You are indeed instrumental in helping us to realise our commitment to excellence, to not only our nation's children and all other recipients of educational programmes but to our educators as well."**

Mr. Kenrick Seepersad, Chief Education  
Officer, Trinidad and Tobago (1996)

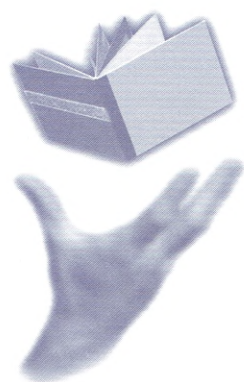
## Leadership and Direction

The President and Chief Executive Officer, Dato' Dr. Gajaraj Dhanarajan, brings to COL an international reputation for successful advocacy of open learning and distance education. His leadership and experience in Malaysia and Hong Kong complement a professional staff of educational specialists from throughout the Commonwealth.

COL is governed by a 14-member Board, chaired by Dr. H. Ian Macdonald of York University in Canada.



**Gajaraj Dhanarajan**



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