32ND MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING
JUNE 20, 2015 AT 9:30 A.M. (THE BAHAMAS)

SUMMARY OF MINUTES

Page 1 of 18

PRESENT

Members:
- Dr. Linda Sissons, CNZM (Chair)
- Ms. Janet L. Ecker, ICD.D (Canada, Deputy Chair)
- Mr. Deodat Maharaj (representing the Commonwealth Secretary-General)
- His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir Lockwood Smith, KNZM (New Zealand)
- Her Excellency Mrs. Mariam Katagum (Nigeria)
- Professor Narend Baijnath (South Africa)
- Mr. Martin Niblett (representing Dr. Chris Berry, United Kingdom)
- The Honourable Danny Faure (Africa)
- Professor Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, FRS (Asia)
- His Excellency Hubert Charles (Caribbean)
- Letuimanu’asina Dr. Emma Kruse Vaai (Pacific)
- Mr. Martin Bean (Secretary-General’s appointee)
- Professor Asha Kanwar (Ex Officio; President & C.E.O.)

Advisor to the Board:
- Professor John Wood, Association of Commonwealth Universities

Advisor to a Board Member:
- Ms. Lisa Moreau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), Advisor to the Canadian Member

Other COL Staff:
- Ms. Doris McEachern, Director–Finance, Administration & Human Resources (FAHR) (Meeting recorder)
- Dr. Venkataraman Balaji, Director–Technology & Knowledge Management

Observer:
- Ms. Lisa Thomas, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom

Regrets:
- Mr. Vinay Sheel Oberoi, India
- Dr. Chris Berry, United Kingdom

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, June 20, 2015, Eastern Daylight Time.

I. OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed members, advisors, COL staff and the observer to The Bahamas and extended a warm greeting to the newest member representing the Caribbean
region who was attending his first face-to-face meeting of the board. She remarked on what a momentous year it had been for COL which had had its challenges but that these had been overcome. The organisation and board had shown commitment and energy to COL’s work; the three-year plan cycle was completed; a new six-year plan had been developed; and the COL MOU had been amended to enable up to nine major donors which would prove useful for COL in its future funding. The Chair also acknowledged the support of the Board and colleagues who had come together to activate their networks and draw on their friendships during difficult funding times to ensure COL would continue to survive and thrive. She added a special thanks to the President and her team for their role as well as for their tireless work which resulted in a very successful year. This meeting taking place before the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) provided another opportunity for the board to present COL’s work to a wider constituency.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA COL/BD/32/1

The agenda was approved as presented.


A. Approval of the Minutes COL/BD/31/MIN/2

The minutes of the June 13, 2014 meeting were approved (Ecker/Atta-ur-Rahman).

B. Matters Arising from the Minutes

1. Review of Action Items from the 31st Board of Governors Meeting COL/BD/32/3

The President reviewed the action items arising from the minutes and reported that all items had been completed as follows:

i. Modifications to the risk management matrix concerning risk ratings that were approved in June 2014 had been made and were reflected in subsequent updates to the matrix;

ii. An initial pay analysis was completed and would be discussed later in the agenda (COL/BD/32 – 12);

iii. A communications strategy and action plan had been developed and was provided for discussion in the agenda (COL/BD/32 – 24);

iv. The ‘stakeholder map’ concept was embedded into the new website design;
v. The programme achievement report was aligned at the outcome level as suggested (COL/BD/32 – 14);

vi. The requests for updates to the Governance Manual concerning the review of expenses of the President were incorporated; and

vii. The Audit Committee had received a cost comparison on holding the board meeting in the Bahamas as compared to Vancouver and showing costs to be similar in both locations.

Members agreed that this report represented an accurate and complete record of the action items.

IV. SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD

A. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board

Members approved the minutes from the Special Meeting of the Board held on February 24, 2015 by teleconference (Faure/Baijnath).

V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

A. Minutes of the 37th Executive Committee Meeting (December 4, 2014) and Minutes of the 38th Executive Committee Meeting (February 24, 2015)

Members noted the minutes of the 37th and 38th Executive Committee meetings.

B. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Comparison of the two evaluation reports and management response (COL/BD/32 – 18 and – 22)

Members noted that the comparison of the evaluation reports would be discussed later in the agenda as referenced.

VI. AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

A. Minutes of the 30th Audit Committee Meeting (November 6, 2014), Minutes of the 31st Audit Committee Meeting (February 5, 2015) and Oral Report from the 32nd Audit Committee Meeting held on June 19, 2015
B. Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Chair of the Audit Committee provided a verbal report of the Audit Committee meeting held on June 19, 2015, including an update on the status of action items from previous meetings. The main items were:

i. The minutes of the previous meeting on February 5, 2015 were approved.

ii. The report from the firm of KPMG on the independent review of the internal control processes over key financial reporting was discussed. No areas of concern were reported and COL had confirmed that the three deficiencies outlined would be addressed very soon.

iii. The next phase of the internal control review process should involve more detailed testing of controls. The committee recommended that the appointed auditor’s engagement be expanded to include this component of work and that it be carried out over a three-year period to reduce the implications on the audit fees.

iv. The strategy to increase the reserve to 12 months of operating costs from six months was fully supported. This would happen over a three-year period beginning at the end of this financial year on the assurances that it would not impact the programme or staff compensation going forward. Clear communications around the amount of reserve held would be needed.

v. The change proposed in the Governance Manual regarding holding board meetings outside of the location of Headquarters was supported.

vi. The third quarter results, which reflected healthy levels of revenues, were noted.

vii. The budget was recommended for approval as presented.

viii. The audit plan from Deloitte was approved subject to the approval by the board of an amendment to include additional work on the testing of internal controls.

ix. The report on risk management was noted.

x. Members completed a self-assessment form with the results to be discussed at the next Audit Committee meeting.

Members noted the minutes and report on the meetings held during the year.

MEMBERS REQUESTED COL TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE AND PAPER ON THE FUND-RAISING PROCESS AT THE NEXT MEETING.
C. Ratification of the Audited Consolidated Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2014

The President provided a brief summary of the financial statements noting that 96% of the budget had been spent and higher revenues over forecast were received resulting in an excess of revenues over expenditures of $806,250. The statements were reviewed and approved by the Audit Committee on November 6, 2014, and were made available on COL’s website.

Members ratified the audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2014 (Bean/Faure).

VII. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

A report from the President was tabled (referenced as COL/BD/32/8).

The President outlined some of the activities which had taken place during the year. These included two evaluations, both of which were positive; two focal points meetings held; COL and CEMCA relocated to new premises; the six-year strategic plan titled ‘Learning for Sustainable Development’ developed after wide consultations; COL’s new strategic plan is placed within the context of the emerging global consensus around Goal 4 of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which focuses on ‘ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030’. This was the subject of discussion at the World Education Forum (WEF) at Incheon, Korea where COL had been invited to speak.

She referred to the following priorities for education that had emerged at WEF: access, quality, skills for lifelong learning, the critical role of teachers, and the harnessing of appropriate technologies. All these elements were integrated in COL’s new plan. COL was in step with the international development community and must remain alert to the reality that there would be increasing claims on shrinking resources. COL would need to demonstrate results and value for money, have a robust communications strategy, manage resources prudently, diversify funding sources, maintain a healthy reserve, and nurture high-level contacts.

The President also outlined the niche COL had developed for itself in MOOCs for Development (MOOCs4D) which are cost effective, e.g. teacher training offered in partnership with the African Virtual University and Mobiles for Development (M4D) with Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur. The Aptus or ‘classroom without walls’ device was used in small states – 22 Aptus devices with content preloaded were deployed in Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam. COL was distributing an Aptus device to each country delegation at 19CCEM as a demonstration piece. This had been made possible by the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. COL had organised a ministerial roundtable on MOOCs later in the week with Mr. Martin
Bean, Professor Daphne Kohler and Dr. V Balaji, as speakers. A policy brief on MOOCs was also developed for circulation at the CCEM.

The Chair thanked the President for the report and members for the useful discussion.

VIII. FINANCIAL MATTERS

A. Interim Consolidated Financial Statements (to March 31, 2015) COL/BD/32/9

The President outlined the results to the end of the third quarter:

i. 35 countries had paid their contributions to March 31 representing 97% of the revenue forecast and that seven more countries had contributed to date.

ii. Subsequent to March 31, a new funding agreement with Australia was signed and funds received along with an additional AUD500,000 for a project in 2016.

iii. COL expected to exceed the revenue forecast, in part due to the settlement of arrears.

iv. $1 million in additional contributions was received against a forecast of $1.5 million.

v. Interest revenue of $117,740 was generated.

vi. 58% of the budget was spent with a 91% spend projected by year end. A number of initiatives would reach the 95% target with some below this level. Programme services, organisational management and office costs would be within the target range set of 95% to 105%.

vii. Underspends occurred in the healthy communities initiative (85% spent) where the Education Specialist responsible left COL in December 2014 and, as the initiative would not proceed in the new plan, only commitments were completed; three new Education Specialists had joined during the year, which historically has caused a slow-down in the first three to six months of taking up the post.

viii. A surplus of revenues over expenditure was projected of approximately $2.2 million, in part due to the receipt of arrears of $800,000 from member governments and the balance from revenues exceeding projections coupled with some underspends.

ix. The surplus would contribute to increasing the reserve, if the proposal was approved by the board.

Members noted the underspends in teacher education and higher education and expressed concerns given country needs.

The member for Africa expressed thanks to the ministers and major donors for their continuous contributions as member states and for the developments on future funding. He noted that the participation was good even with internal constraints. He was pleased to see the major role that Nigeria and
South Africa were playing as funders and the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) grant from Canada was highly appreciated as Africa needed this type of work.

The member for Nigeria reported that Nigeria had cleared its arrears this year and asked for patience with Nigeria as the funding would come slowly but steadily with declining oil prices affecting the country’s budget.

The Chair noted the interim financial statements and informed members that the annual audited statements for the year ended June 30, 2015 would be presented to the Audit Committee for approval in November 2015. She thanked COL staff for the financial report.

B. Internally Restricted Cash Reserve

The Chair invited members to consider the recommendation of an increase in the internally restricted reserve which was endorsed by the Audit Committee.

The President acknowledged the Audit Committee in its wisdom for recognising the high-risk environment in which COL operates and suggesting an increase to the reserve of twelve months from six months of operating costs. She requested this level of increase be approved which would enable COL to honour its commitment made to countries in its six-year plan and to enable the organisation to deal with any ‘black swan’ events that might arise. The increase would be funded over three years – $3 million this year from existing unrestricted cash reserves and $650,000 for each of the next two years through effective budgeting and resource management.

The Secretary General’s appointee supported the increase which would provide a solid base of insurance to withstand sudden changes in funding. He emphasised the importance of good communications around the increase so stakeholders would know the value of COL and that an increased reserve would not reduce the need for value for money in the programme spend. The increase would provide for a contingency to flex the budget for COL’s viability and affect a consistent sustained communications strategy for stakeholders.

MEMBERS ADOPTED THE PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE RESERVE TO TWELVE MONTHS FROM SIX MONTHS OF OPERATING COSTS. (Baijnath/Faure).

C. Internal Control Review
The President presented the report noting that the firm of KPMG had completed the ‘health check’ on financial controls in May 2015. Overall the firm had not identified any significant control design gaps. The firm reported that COL had fairly extensive documented policies and procedures in place to manage and govern internal controls over financial reporting. It also noted that formal processes were in place to address exceptions to a policy, if required, and that this contributed to reinforcing a culture of high ethics, awareness of the importance on these controls and set a positive tone at the top. Three deficiencies were reported: 1) the Director–FAHR should be made the super user on the accounting software to provide for more segregation of duties; 2) tighten up the password policy through practice and policy; and 3) review contracts regularly as part of COL’s senior management meeting. COL was committed to addressing these findings in a timely manner.

The member for New Zealand congratulated the President and her team on the control mechanisms and sound audit procedures. In his view, such reviews were not needed every year as the cost was not justifiable.

The Chair added that as a small organisation COL has robust policies in place and the fact that staff knew about the policies was a real testament to the management. She summarised the decision of the members that the appointed auditor would test some of the controls each year to give a good level of comfort in the systems and to keep a close check on various policies when needed.

The Secretary-General’s appointee added to the closing remarks of the Chair that a further review would not be needed any sooner than at the end of the new strategic plan.

IX. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Pay Comparison

The President reported on the pay comparison data which provided a preliminary comparison of the salaries component of pay for both the international and locally engaged staff. A full human resource (HR) review was planned for 2015-2016. COMSEC and UN had been used as comparators for the international staff where the data showed that COL’s salary levels were below both organisations. COL recommended that COMSEC be retained as the main comparator for this group. For locally engaged staff, a not-for-profit pay study was used. The data showed COL salaries were more or less in line with pay levels provided but a more complete benching exercise would be required to address each job. COL recommended that the comparators for this group continue to be the not-for-profit or public sector
within BC/Canada, as appropriate. The HR review would include a complete review of all aspects of compensation.

The Chair indicated the work undertaken to date was informative and looked forward to the results of the full review in June 2016.

B. Human Resource Matters

The President provided a report on human resource matters:

i. COL was on track to complete staff performance reviews by early July – to this end, a provision had been requested in the budget to meet any changes.

ii. Cost of living adjustments were requested based on current statistics.

iii. Training and development was ongoing – in-house workshops continued to be a key mechanism for training staff at low cost.

iv. Three positions were filled during the year – all with a good number of applicants.

v. Core staffing profile for next year would be 41 staff with additional staff to be hired based on additional contributions, as received.

Members supported the performance pay and cost of living adjustments based on the provisions as requested.

X. PROGRAMME REPORT


The update to the Programme Achievement Report covering the period April to May 2015 was tabled.

The President outlined the results reported using the 5 ‘R’s’ approach:

1) Relevance – the evidence was clear from the field that the results were achieved, e.g., the evaluations, the CCEM and CHOGM communiqués. COL tailor its programme to meet the needs of its stakeholders.

2) Results – the outcome evaluation report stated that COL ‘achieved and exceeded most targets by March 31, 2015, but was not ambitious enough in setting its targets’ while the internal assessment showed 30% exceeded, 60% achieved and 10% partially achieved with impact level given higher weightage in the internal assessment. Overall, fairly successful results.

3) Regions – COL had increased its work in the Pacific as shown in the expenditure level with a regional center established at University of South Pacific which would need to get up to speed.
4) Resources – travel was kept to a single digit and technology was used, e.g. videos, to engage when feasible; most resources were allocated to capacity building. COL supplements the gap by ministries and going forward, there would be more focus on policy and model building.

5) Relationships – COL would expand its circle of partners both multi- and bi-laterally as well as internationally, e.g., UNWOMEN

The President stated that COL was moving towards achieving outcomes and impact but there was an uneven development across various initiatives. Change management processes would take time as staff move to an outcomes approach. The approval of the increase in restricted reserves was gratefully acknowledged. High-level policy interventions were needed going forward to assist the ministers. COL had been successful to date but must cross the threshold of scale. COL would replicate models and scale up the training of teachers through MOOC platforms. Open and distance learning (ODL) still needed a lot of advocacy as it was often thought of as a second class option. COL would promote ODL as a mainstream option to accelerate progress towards the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Members discussed the report, noted the progress made and extended their congratulations to COL on the implementation of the three-year plan.

B. Gender Update

The President reinforced the importance of gender in COL’s work and summarised the progress made: the performance indicators were achieved, the capacity of partners was increased, training for women provided empowerment, more resources had been developed including a book on gender, and a policy on TVET for gender was developed so that more women could enter TVET skills training. Gender disaggregated data was needed as was more work for boys and men’s under achievement. COL must expand its partnerships in this area going forward.

The member for New Zealand congratulated COL on the achievements. He expressed a need for more work specific to the regions where women and girls are systematically excluded but noted it was a different issue for men and boys as it did not relate to access but to outcomes and performance. Different issues required different treatments.

The member for Africa commented that in the next 10-15 years, men may become even more disadvantaged.

The Secretary-General’s representative supported this viewpoint referred to an ongoing programme at ComSec in this area.
The Advisor to the Board expressed a real need for more work in gender. He referred to the revamping of the gender programme at the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and suggested that COL might work in conjunction with ACU to maximise impact. He noted that the work undertaken to date by ACU hadn’t made a big difference even though a lot had been done.

The member for South Africa said that in his country there is 60% enrolment of women in higher education and that men’s participation was becoming a real issue. He talked about the barriers to education, male succession, the university environment and negative male culture as some of the problems. COL could look at and study the patterns in the Commonwealth and the implications for policy.

The member for Canada said the problem was not just one of smaller nations; in Canada boys were also not doing so well. It could be that the curriculum may not be responding to the needs of boys. The historical progress made by COL in this area was commendable.

The President agreed that more studies on the underperformance of boys and men were called for.

Members noted the gender report and commended the progress made.

XI. APPROVAL OF BUDGET FOR 2015-2016

The President presented the budget and requested approval for a budget for 2015-2016 at a level of $10.68 million, slightly above the previous year’s level. The key points were:

i. Criteria for assessing the programme budget were value for money, gender considerations and achievement of expected outcomes.

ii. The budget included the provision for cost of living and performance pay discussed and approved earlier.

iii. A balanced budget approach, keeping in mind the inherent difficulties in doing so for a voluntary funded organisation and the need to raise additional contributions had been given high priority.

iv. Revenues of $9.5 million were projected from member governments with $1.2 million in grants, $700,000 in fee for service, and $100,000 in interest income.

v. Reserves are maintained in line with requirements. Any surpluses generated during the year would support the increase in the reserve proposed.
Members considered and approved the budget with full support noting the zero percent nominal growth in the budget which echoed Canada’s and UK’s approach for nominal increases going forward.

XII. RISK MANAGEMENT

The President outlined the risk management process through the risk matrix and mentioned the changes approved last year to increase two risk ratings from ‘Low’ to ‘Moderate’. A new matrix would be developed to support the six-year plan and be updated at regular intervals to keep the Board and its Committee informed.

Members noted the risk management matrix and looked forward to the new template based on the new plan.

XIII. EVALUATION

A. Impact Evaluation

1. Draft Final Report

The President expressed her gratitude for DFID-UK’s financial support to conduct the Impact Evaluation which assessed the impact of COL’s work over three triennial plans: 2006-09; 2009-12; and 2012-15. The final report would be made available on COL’s website after a light copy-edit was completed.

Some headlines in the report included:

- COL has had a major impact on individuals in non-formal learning.
- COL has had some limited impact on formal institutions – in some cases substantial, in others modest.
- COL should transition to a social impact organisation.
- COL should focus more on policy while balancing depth with spread.
- COL should better align itself with national goals.
- COL should move to scale.
- COL should maintain its thought-leadership role in ICTs for education.

The member for New Zealand congratulated COL on not taking up the recommendation of becoming a social impact organisation given the pitfalls involved. He questioned whether the outcome for teacher education was sufficient given the issues around quality of teaching where the report showed that a ‘quarter to a half of youth who have graduated from primary school cannot read a single sentence’ (pg. 7). He asked
whether children achieving better learning outcomes could be assessed against increased training of teachers. He suggested that the COL Logic Model should be updated within the next six years as some outcomes were still output oriented.

The member for the Caribbean inquired whether COL had the capacity to use technology in support of teaching and empowering teachers.

The member for Africa referred to the issue of policy where each education system in a country would set its own targets. The role of COL was to provide the technical advice and assist in materials development in support of national systems.

The member for South Africa had difficulty with that approach. Unless your interventions were systemic from the beginning, impact across the board at the systemic level would be hard to measure to be able say you had an impact at the state level.

The member for Canada asked whether how well the teachers did in COL’s programme could be assessed while recognising COL does not monitor the student and considered an independent evaluation on teacher training worthwhile.

The representative for the United Kingdom welcomed the alignment of the new strategic plan with the MDGs and COL’s commitment to deliver outcomes and impact. The logic model as presented was still focussed on outputs rather than outcomes and the inclusion of timelines would be helpful.

The President responded that COL always reinvents itself to serve its member states. She referred to the shift from outputs to outcomes and provided the example of the Open Resources for English Language Training (ORELT) programme which trains master trainers who in turn trained more teacher trainers. This model had shown improved teacher training and better learning outcomes among students. She explained that four to six countries would be taken up within each initiative for in depth work to balance depth and spread for a systematic and coordinated approach in each country with most of the countries covered.

Members noted the Impact Evaluation Report.

2. Management Response

COL/BD/32/19
Members noted management’s response to the Impact Evaluation and requested that progress be monitored and reported on at the next meeting.

B. Outcome-based Evaluation

1. Draft Final Report

The President summarised the main recommendations from the outcome evaluation over the period 2012-15:
   - Most targets had been met or exceeded but that these targets could be more ambitious going forward;
   - Initiative plans should include exit criteria when not working;
   - More integrated teams might enhance synergies among staff and various initiatives;
   - Strategic goals should continue to be used as the overarching framework;
   - Clear monitoring and evaluation plan with partners should be included from project design;
   - Monitor innovations closely where it might add most value and/or leverage in its endeavours;
   - Consider appointing a business pursuit manager for non-traditional funding sources.

Members noted the Outcome-based Evaluation Report.

2. Management Response

Members noted management’s response on the Outcome Evaluation and requested that progress be monitored and reported at the next meeting.

C. Comparison of the Evaluations

The Chair acknowledged the comprehensive comparison of the evaluations provided and, based on the feedback provided on the evaluations during the meeting, noted the report on behalf of members with their consent.

XIV. STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2021

A. Ratification

The Chair referred to the living nature of the Strategic Plan which would continue to be refined and evolve as necessary over the six-year period.
The President said that staff had tried to incorporate all the suggestions received over the consultation process. After three years, the ministers would meet again where a three-year mid-term evaluation will be presented followed by a final evaluation and a new plan presented in six years. The plan would serve as both a communications and a management tool. At the internal level, log frames by initiative would be prepared on a yearly basis. This was the dynamic element underlying the plan where course correction, if required, would be reported.

The member for Canada complimented COL on the new plan and queried why the longer time frame had been used given the level of changes that could occur even in a short time frame.

The President replied that for a small organisation, developing three-year plans through extensive consultations was too resource intensive and time-consuming, hence the decision to invest in a six-year plan. However, if any changes were required, these could be incorporated and reported.

The member for Africa expressed his happiness with the progress made towards agreeing on the post-2015 SDGs where many organisations, including COL, had contributed to their development. He was pleased that the Board was approving a new plan that aligns with the international direction and outlines the comparative advantage for COL. COL belongs to the ministries of education and has positioned itself for a key and leading role in education. He said ‘It is a good plan, it is bold, and it is historical.’ He hoped that the necessary resources would be forthcoming and partners like DFID-UK would continue to be supportive.

Members approved the Strategic Plan 2015-2021 and extended their congratulations to COL for the work undertaken in finalising this plan.

B. Communication Strategy

The President outlined COL’s core message and the three strategic goals identified to support its communications work. These were: 1) engage all relevant ministries and development partners; 2) strengthen branding and scale up communications, and 3) nurture a lively communications culture at COL and with partners. Each and every staff member must carry the right message as well as our partners must be engaged to provide COL with an enhanced presence enabling Commonwealth cooperation. COL relies on voluntary funding for its work.

The Secretary General’s representative said that the strategy articulated by the President sounded impressive but was not reflected in the communications document provided by COL. He advised that COL needed to: disaggregate
who COL is; list the critical constituencies, e.g., foundations, donors as well as those not focussed on; mention the institutional work especially the extraordinary; tell who the champions are and how COL would get them; list a few priorities and how these will be achieved. COL was still vulnerable and the communications outreach needed to relate to the risk strategy.

The Secretary General’s appointee agreed that the three goals were important areas of focus but that the strategy would not have the impact required until COL got it right. COL needed to think ‘digital’ as it seemed stuck in the old paradigm. The paper had to come back after deep discussions and with the help of world leading marketing and communications experts, if needed.

The member for New Zealand agreed that the document lacked focus and priority and would need to be revamped. In his opinion, the new website was not representative of a world’s leading organisation on ODL and technology. He wanted to see a communications strategy that picked up the gems, used language that people understand, and contained more on resourcing.

The representative for the United Kingdom expressed the need for the stakeholder relations and mapping exercise to be taken up and for COL to prepare a revised communications strategy for COL constituents that included appropriate resourcing and reconceptualization in line with the strategic plan.

The member for South Africa found the document counter intuitive if COL wanted to foster a culture of communications as it was saturated with the mundane and ordinary. In order to stand out, COL needed to be selective in its communications with carefully crafted vignettes to raise the bar. He cautioned that everyone could be involved in disseminating messages but that one wouldn’t want wrong or competing messages to be released, therefore some control would be required.

The member for Canada recommended that COL utilise professional advice if needed and focus on the branding. She added that COL had great stories to tell but that this plan did not capture them.

The member for Nigeria agreed that the communications strategy needed to come back and that it should serve as a transparent portal of how COL was utilising the resources, the status of the budget, and how the programme is progressing. It could have controlled access and be part of the branding and outreach.

After a discussion on the strategy, Members requested the President to come back with a revised communications strategy and action plan in June 2016 that would address the matters raised and to keep the Executive Committee informed of progress.
XV. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

A. Annual Review of Governance Manual

Members considered the proposed change to the Governance Manual where the member for Canada supported the wording changes around the holding of board meetings outside of Vancouver area when: strategic reasons exist, it is cost effective and it has been captured as a formal process.

Members considered the proposed wording to the Governance Manual and approved the change to read as follows:

“The MOU (Clause 7 (f) states: ‘The Board will meet at least once in each calendar year’. The Chair will appoint the times and places for meetings of the Board. It is envisaged meetings will be held annually whenever feasible for a minimum of one full day in June in Metro Vancouver. The Chair may appoint a place outside of Metro Vancouver to take advantage of strategic opportunities that may arise and provided it is financially viable to do so.”

B. Update on Orientation for new Members to the Board of Governors

The Chair provided a brief update on the orientation session held for the new Caribbean Member. The member added that it was a useful one-hour, absolutely effective and highly recommended for future new members.

C. Terms of Office and Appointment for Board of Governors and Committee Membership

The Chair called for nominations from members for the role of Deputy Chair. Following the nomination and secondment by two members for Ms. Ecker from Canada to continue for another year, Members approved the nomination.

Members noted the membership terms of the members.

XVI. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was noted.

XVII. NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD

Members agreed to consider the date options proposed of June 9 and 10, 2016 or June 16 and 17, 2016, in Burnaby, BC.
XVIII. IN-CAMERA SESSION

A. Approval of the In-Camera Minutes  

B. Matters Arising from the Minutes  

C. Report of the Performance Committee  

The Board members and Advisor to the Board met in-camera for the session with minutes prepared separately.  

The meeting concluded at 4:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time following the in-camera session.