

EXCELLENCE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION AWARDS

COL announces Award winners

CITATIONS

1 August 2002

Conferment Citation

Honorary Fellows of COL Award

Dominique A.M.X. Abrioux

President, Athabasca University, Canada

Dr. Dominique Abrioux is one of those rare individuals who has built and sustained a career at one academic institution: Athabasca University, based in Alberta, Canada. Having joined that university as a Lecturer in 1979, he has served in a number of academic and senior administrative positions rising to become the President in 1995, a post that he continues to occupy with distinction. Dr. Abrioux was a pioneer in the development of distance education courses in French, one of Canada's two official languages. His pioneering and innovative spirit was further demonstrated by his conception and launch in 2000 of the Canadian Virtual University, an organisation over which he continues to preside as founding President. A partnership of 12 universities across Canada, the virtual university is committed to delivering university-level distance learning programmes capable of being completed from anywhere in the world.

Time Magazine, in its November 12, 2002 issue, singled out Dominique and Athabasca University for leadership in "wired education". This recognition speaks volumes about the international credibility earned for Athabasca University under Dominique's guiding hand. Commitment to the internationalisation of Athabasca University has marked his presidency, and the Commonwealth Caribbean has been one of the beneficiaries as Dr. Abrioux committed his institution to offer its computer science degree under COL's auspices in Jamaica, through a programme sponsored by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Under his leadership, Athabasca University's student enrolments have doubled including resident individual learners from 65 countries.

Mr. Chairman, for taking a once fractious university and transforming it into one of Canada's leading open universities with a solid international reputation, I request you to confer upon Dr. Dominique Abrioux, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Clifford D. Blake

Former Vice-Chancellor of Charles Sturt University, Australia, and former member of the Board of Governors of The Commonwealth of Learning

Professor Clifford Blake is a doer, he does things and he accomplishes. Although he constantly tells us what he plans to do in his retirement, when impending retirement actually appears, he is thrust with even bigger responsibilities.

Cliff has been a pioneer in the use of distance education. His first job in educational management was as founding Principal of the Riverina College of Advanced Education at which he began to transform the educational landscape as the college became a leading provider of distance education in Australia. He also had an outstanding career as founding Vice-Chancellor of Charles Sturt University in which he created the largest distance education provider in Australia. He recently retired from that position but then accepted a call to take up a short-term appointment at the University of Adelaide.

Cliff has received many honours and awards for his work in education. He was named an Officer in the Order of Australia for his services to tertiary education and his University was named “University of the Year” for best exemplifying the role of universities in encouraging people from groups historically under-represented in universities to enter and succeed in higher education. Charles Sturt specialises and succeeds in the difficult task of giving people from distant places and unpromising pasts – from poor families and the wrong side of the tracks, country towns and from ‘back o’ Bourke, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders – an opportunity to experience a university education and to become a graduate.

In 1992, Cliff was appointed to the Commonwealth of Learning Board of Governors, representing Australia as a major donor, and he has made several valuable contributions in this capacity until his retirement in 2000. He holds the record as COL’s longest serving Board member!

Mr. Chairman, for his contribution to the development and progress of distance education in Australia and to Charles Sturt University, in particular, as well as for his contributions to the Commonwealth of Learning, I request you to confer upon Professor Clifford Blake, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Asa Briggs

Founding Chairman of The Commonwealth of Learning

Asa Briggs, or Lord Briggs, has had a remarkable influence in many fields. Born at Keighley in Yorkshire in the UK in 1921, he has brought a Yorkshire man's unstuffy, un-pompous and practical approach to his work. Lord Briggs took his first degrees in history and economics and has had a distinguished career as a historian, holding professorial chairs in history at the Universities of Leeds and Sussex. He has written extensively on the social and cultural history of the 19th and 20th centuries, and has become the most influential historian of British broadcasting and an advocate for the BBC.

But it is not for his life as an academic and a historian that we honour him tonight; although the values underpinning his work on Victorian England (which echo in his recent biography of the late Lord Young) resonate through his other lives – lives dedicated to the practical implementation of social and educational reform.

Lord Briggs has worked passionately to transform and widen access to education. “Drawing new maps of learning”, he called it. Towards this end he has been President of the Workers Educational Association, Vice Chancellor of the University of Sussex, Chancellor of the UK Open University and Chair of the International Broadcasting Institute. He brought these experiences and his expertise together in his report, “Towards a Commonwealth of Learning”, which outlined the findings of a Commonwealth group of experts meeting that he chaired. Published in 1987, this report informed the creation of COL.

In his foreword of the report, the then Commonwealth Secretary-General, Shridath Ramphal, wrote: “It is not often that ideas emerge which stir the imagination and beckon people to work for their fulfillment. This report contains such an idea.” A true tribute to the group of experts and, in particular, to its Chair. Lord Briggs became the first Chairman of the COL Board of Governors, serving in this role from 1988 to 1993.

Mr. Chairman, for his contribution to the development and progress of distance education, generally, and the UK Open University and the Commonwealth of Learning, particularly, I request you to confer upon Lord Briggs, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Shona E. Butterfield

Chief Executive, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, and member of the Board of Governors of The Commonwealth of Learning

There are few people who have made such a significant contribution to the development and use of open and distance learning, particularly in the area of technical and vocational education as Ms. Shona Butterfield.

With an outstanding background in Nursing and Nurse Education, she was appointed Chief Executive of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand in 1989. In 1989, The Open Polytechnic was a correspondence trade school, being run as part of the Department of Education. Under her leadership, The Open Polytechnic has become one of the country's largest tertiary institutions with more than 62,000 annual course enrolments by over 30,000 students all studying through distance education. Today, it is a distinct institution guiding its own destiny, which is a model not just for New Zealand but for the world.

Shona is also an extraordinarily active contributor to the community. She was a member of the Prime Minister's Enterprise Council, the Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Employment and a member of the Advisory Committee on External Aid and Development. She is a past President of the Distance Education Association of New Zealand, has chaired the New Zealand Polytechnic Chief Executive Officers' Forum and has been involved with a range of professional groups. She was awarded the Queen's Service Order in 1994.

Ms. Butterfield has served the COL Board of Governors with thoughtful enthusiasm since 1998. She has been particularly supportive of COL's programmes in the South Pacific region in many ways. Through her, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand has been very involved in the development of open and distance learning in the Commonwealth Member States of the Pacific.

Mr. Chairman, for her contribution to the development and progress of distance education in the area of technical and vocational education, generally, and to The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, particularly, I request you to confer upon Ms. Shona Butterfield, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



John S. Daniel

Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO, and former Vice-Chancellor, UK Open University, and founding member of the Board of Governors of The Commonwealth of Learning

One can use many words to describe Sir John. Charming, charismatic, brilliant, articulate and many others. But, we like advocate, for he has been and continues to be a great advocate for distance education. Currently, the Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, Sir John was knighted by the Queen in 1994 for his services to higher education. This honour recognised the leading role he has played internationally over three decades in the development of distance learning in universities.

Born in England and educated at the Universities of Oxford and Paris, he began his teaching career in Canada. In 1972, he completed an internship at the UK Open University, where he had a "conversion experience", and was determined to be part of the revolutionary movement of supported distance education.

After working to establish open, distance and technology-mediated learning at universities throughout Canada in the 1970's and 80's, during which time he played a major role in the creation and mandate of the Commonwealth of Learning, Sir John accepted the invitation to become the third Vice-Chancellor of the Open University. His book, *Mega-Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education*, published in 1996, established his reputation as a leading thinker about the role of technology in academic communities.

Since moving to UNESCO in 2001, he has been charged with the task of helping countries and international agencies deliver the targets of the Education for All agenda that were adopted at the Dakar World Education Forum in April 2000.

This is not the first time that COL has recognised Sir John's pre-eminence in the field of open and distance learning. In 1995, he was the recipient of a joint COL/ICDE Award of Excellence.

Mr. Chairman, for his contribution to the development of open and distance education worldwide, I request you to confer upon Sir John Daniel, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.

Postscript: John Daniel was appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth of Learning in 2004. www.col.org/jdaniel



Glen M. Farrell

Senior Consultant, The Commonwealth of Learning, and founding President of the Open Learning Agency of British Columbia, Canada

Those who have read Glen Farrell's two reports for COL on virtual education will recognise in him the mark of an individual with feet firmly planted on the ground but with eyes clearly discerning developments on the distant horizon. Perhaps, this is the mark of a person raised on the Canadian prairie: a place where the economy is tied intimately to the land, where the horizons are endless, and where everyone's livelihood is determined by the unpredictable weather patterns. Not surprisingly, Glen began his studies in agriculture but pursued further studies in adult education. His professional life transited university education and extension departments through to the position of founding President of British Columbia's Open Learning Agency. The OLA is a comprehensive distance education organisation utilising a full array of information and communications technologies to extend access to education and training, and it includes the Province's educational television channel, the Knowledge Network. He retired in 1998, after 10 years of service in shaping this agency.

Glen's knowledge of distance education has been drawn upon, not only by the Commonwealth of Learning, but also by a number of Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth institutions and government agencies. He has authored numerous papers and shared his knowledge at many conferences around the world. He has also contributed to both professional and public service

organisations. His most recent work on behalf of COL is the report on the potential establishment of a virtual university to serve the needs of the small states of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Chairman, for his contribution to the vision and to the practice of open and distance learning, I request you to confer upon Dr. Glen Farrell, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Jennifer Anne Glennie

Director, South African Institute for Distance Education, South Africa

Ms. Jenny Glennie has this extraordinary ability to balance the two passions in her life – her people and her family. We recognise her this evening for the determined and dignified way she has gone about supporting the cause of her people and her country.

Jenny is well known within the distance education circles in South and Southern Africa and, indeed, internationally. She has pursued her obligation to the people of South Africa with immense commitment, energy and intellect. This is evident in her work experience and through her involvement with various anti-apartheid organisations. From the early days as a student leader to working for the SACHED Trust, her work with national and provincial departments of education and her current Executive Directorship of the South African Institute for Distance Education, her determination to assist the people of South Africa was always apparent. She is the founding President of NADEOSA, is currently serving on the Council of the University of South Africa, the Council on Higher Education and the Steering Committee of the International Research Foundation for Open Learning.

Jenny not only played an extensive role in the anti-apartheid struggles of South Africa but also a vital role in its reconstruction and development after the 1994 democratic elections. Her commitment to people has also gone beyond the borders of South Africa. Increasingly, she has played an important role in distance education developments within various African countries and has contributed to international developments in open and distance learning.

The confidence that many people have in Jenny Glennie, and the high esteem in which she is held, is unmistakable.

Mr. Chairman, for her contribution to the development and progress of distance education in Southern and South Africa, and for her unwavering commitment to the learners and people of South Africa, I request you to confer upon Ms. Jennifer Glennie, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Dennis H. Irvine

Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Guyana, former senior staff member, The Commonwealth of Learning, and former Regional Adviser (Caribbean) to the President of COL, Jamaica

Dr. Irvine passed away on 27 November 2005.

The Caribbean is home to a remarkable people. It is also home to great leaders who have contributed much to Commonwealth development. One of them is Dr. Dennis Irvine, educator “extraordinaire”. Most of Dennis’ adult working life has been in education, tertiary education in Commonwealth countries. Dennis started his career at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and worked there, first as a lecturer and then as a Professor of Chemistry. He was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana for 13 years and then UNESCO’s Science Adviser to the Caribbean and Education Consultant to the Jamaican Government during the 1980’s, prior to joining COL as Director of Caribbean Programmes as well as Materials Acquisition and Development.

Dr. Irvine was one of the first staff members to be hired at the Commonwealth of Learning when it became operational in 1989. He served at COL’s Vancouver headquarters until he retired in 1994, and was then appointed as Co-ordinator of COL’s Programmes in the Caribbean for two years. Following that service, Dennis agreed to continue to serve COL as the Regional Adviser to the President of COL for the Caribbean, which he did until 2000. In that position, he provided us with invaluable insights and intelligence regarding the role of open and distance learning in the Caribbean. Today, he remains a faithful ally and a strong supporter of COL, in addition to being an important source of information and advice for COL colleagues and on our activities in the region.

For his contribution to higher education, the Joint Committee on Tertiary Education for Jamaica named Dr. Irvine the Outstanding Educator for the year 1997/98. In 2001, for his enormous efforts founding the University of Guyana and in recognition of his contribution, especially to adult and continuing education in Guyana, that university inaugurated the Dennis Irvine Distinguished Lecture Series.

Mr. Chairman, for his dedication to the advancement of open and distance education, especially in the Caribbean, and for his significant role in the development of the Commonwealth of Learning, I request you to confer upon Dr. Dennis H. Irvine the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.

Postscript: Upon returning to Jamaica from South Africa in August 2002, Dr. Dennis Irvine received the Jamaican national honour, Commander of Distinction (CD).



S. Langi Kavaliku

Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Civil Aviation and Works, Tonga and former member of the Board of Governors of The Commonwealth of Learning

Dr. Kavaliku passed away on 3 December 2008.

Dr. Langi Kavaliku carries a giant-sized torch for two passions. The first is his enormous love of and for humanity and the second is the education of the people of the South Pacific, particularly. Who, but this gentle person with such a big heart – and his wife – would readily give their love and affection to their family of 38 children, 26 of them adopted.

As the Minister of Education of the Royal Kingdom of Tonga for 30 years, and Deputy Prime Minister for much of that time, he not only shaped the educational services of his country, but also helped influence the educational policies of the 11 other Commonwealth nations in the region with about six million people and hundreds of cultural and linguistic groups. Widely considered to be the most knowledgeable and respected person on matters of education, Langi Kavaliku's voice resonated throughout the South Pacific. Through his involvement with UNESCO, Commonwealth and other international fora, he brought the world's attention to the South Pacific and tirelessly appealed for the preservation of its values: the gentleness of the people, their pride in the diversity of their culture, art, language, history, tradition, as well as a sense of their destiny.

Anyone involved in the delivery of education in the South Pacific cannot but be interested in the use of distance education. Dr. Kavaliku is no exception. Through the use of the early satellites floating over the Pacific in the early 1970s, the University of the South Pacific connected its faculty and curriculum to students on almost all of the island nations of the region. Dr. Kavaliku, along with his other ministerial colleagues, shaped the policies that governed and nurtured this innovative approach to embrace the new concepts of distance education. Langi became a natural choice as the representative of the South Pacific Commonwealth nations on COL's Board of Governors and served in that capacity for six years.. He was always a supportive, encouraging and at times a provocative and challenging board member. He continues to do so even today. Having retired from public service at the end of 2000, he now serves the region as Chancellor of the USP. Under his leadership, the University continues to break new ground.

Mr. Chairman, for his contribution to the welfare and education of the people of the South Pacific, and indeed the greater Commonwealth, and for his role in the development of COL, I request you to confer on Dr. Langi Kavaliku, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning*



Geoffrey R.V. Mmari

Vice-Chancellor, Open University of Tanzania and former Regional Adviser (Eastern Africa) to the President of COL

Professor Geoffrey Mmari, a renowned educator and visionary, has spent his professional life making important contributions to the educational sector in Tanzania. He started his career as a teacher of Mathematics at the secondary school level, and was appointed to the position of headmaster before moving on to the tertiary level in 1975.

From 1975 to 1984, Geoff held a number of positions at the University of Dar-es-Salaam: Professor of Mathematics, Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Chief Academic Officer. He then moved to Tanzania's Sokoine University of Agriculture where he served as Vice Chancellor, before returning to the University of Dar-es-Salaam to take up the position of Vice Chancellor at that institution.

Professor Mmari is the founding Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania. The OUT became operational very quickly in 1993 under Geoff's leadership through his collaboration with existing distance education institutions, and at the same time developing the capacity of his staff. The OUT has demonstrated its ability to move quickly and to stay in tune with the times, an example being its establishment of satellite reception facilities which enable it to partner with the African Virtual University. He remains in the post of Vice Chancellor today, and is leading the OUT in its very successful position at the forefront of open and distance learning in the region.

In 1996, Geoff Mmari agreed to serve as the Regional Adviser to the President of COL for Eastern Africa. I was very grateful that a person who is so devoted to improving the lot of education in his country would agree to take on the role as my adviser, as well as to give so generously of his time, expertise and advice to assist my colleagues and me to meet our responsibilities in the region.

Mr. Chairman, for his significant contributions to improving access to education in eastern Africa through open and distance learning, I request you to confer upon Professor Geoffrey Mmari, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Roslyn L. Morpeth

Executive Director, National Extension College, UK

It is rare for us to be able to honour a colleague and friend who, through her hard work and the manner in which she carries out her duties, so closely embraces the Commonwealth of Learning's values of co-operation and partnership.

Dr. Roslyn Morpeth is the Executive Director of the National Extension College, an educational trust in the UK, established in 1963 to pioneer distance learning for adults wishing to develop their education and qualifications. Under her leadership, the college has expanded in terms of learning programmes, outreach and reputation. She has fostered a culture for NEC, which promotes working in partnership with other organisations to improve and extend learning opportunities for adults.

Ros has a special commitment to opening up access for learners, as she herself was a mature student. After attending a Fresh Horizons evening course in her mid-20's, Ros read for a degree in Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and then went on to do research in Northern India. Her first job, on returning from India in 1976, was course editor at the National Extension College. She became its Director in 1987. Ros is also a Trustee of the International Extension College and Treasurer of the European Association of Distance Learning.

In the year of the millennium, the National Extension College acquired a new site in Cambridge, which was officially named the Michael Young Centre in honour of NEC's founder, the late Lord Young of Dartington. It was her vision to conceive the site as a centre of excellence for open and distance learning in Cambridge, the site also hosts the International Extension College and the International Research Foundation for Open Learning.

Mr. Chairman, for her dedicated contribution to the practical implementation of the values of open and distance learning, I request you to confer upon Dr. Roslyn Morpeth, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Hilary D. Perraton

Director, International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL), UK, and former Chief Project/Education Officer, Adult and Distance Education, Commonwealth Secretariat

We might not always like what Dr. Hilary Perraton says about distance or open learning, but what he does say *must* be heard for it always has enormous value and, not surprisingly to all those who know him, is more often heard than not. Hilary is that consummate critic on all those things which are not quite right about distance education, but he is also a committed advocate for distance education. It is the latter that got him appointed in 1984 by the Commonwealth Secretariat as the midwife to deliver the Commonwealth of Learning. We would not be celebrating Commonwealth achievements in distance education and open learning were it not for the tremendous efforts of Hilary Perraton to move the idea of a Commonwealth of Learning along those convoluted and, to outsiders, confusing passages of the Commonwealth's decision-making process.

Hilary has spent all of his adult life bringing to the attention of all those concerned with expanding access to learning that a major focus of theirs must be in making education work for the people who are sidelined, marginalized, ignored and forgotten. Most of his career has been devoted to this passion as well, moving through agencies such as the National Extension College,

the Botswana Extension College, the International Extension College and the University of the West Indies, squeezing a short stint at the Commonwealth Secretariat in between the rural quiet of Cambridge and the urban cacophony of Kingston, Jamaica. It was during that *interregnum* that the idea of COL emerged. The rest is history.

In recent years, Hilary's contribution to our knowledge of distance education has been through his work as Director of the International Research Foundation for Open Learning, and the many books and publications on the subject, which were done through IRFOL with support from contracts by many of the European and international development agencies, as well as the COL. The depth of his scholarship, his critical analysis of the issues; the clinical assessment of the efficiencies and effectiveness of open and distance learning and the logic of his arguments to make distance education perform better, all continue to aid practitioners to think objectively and dispassionately, the case for, and the practice of, distance education.

Mr. Chairman, for his contribution to our knowledge of distance and open learning and for his role in the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning, I request you to confer on Dr. Hilary Perraton, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Walter L.M. Perry

Founding Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University

Lord Perry passed away on 17 July 2003 (b. 1921): [Obituary, The Guardian](#)

Lord Perry of Walton, or Walter Perry as he is affectionately known to everyone with an interest in the history and development of open and distance learning, has become a legend in his own lifetime for his role as the founding Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University from 1969 to 1979. He was largely responsible for turning the British Labour Party's long cherished dream of a massive expansion of second-chance educational opportunity for all those people previously denied access to university education, into reality. When it was launched in 1971, the Open University was one of the most exciting educational innovations of the second half of the 20th century, mixing broadcasting, correspondence education and tutors with new material prepared by teams of academics recruited by Walter himself. What made it so remarkable was that he achieved it, by his own admission, with almost no precedents to guide him, and against the background of an academic establishment that was sceptical of the whole concept of distance education.

As the OU gained in respectability and many more open universities sprang up around the world, Lord Perry was frequently called upon to help other institutions develop their distance education programmes. I am sure there are many gathered here this evening who have benefited from the practical advice he has offered.

Walter Perry is comfortable among the people who run distance education programmes,

describing them as being, like himself, rebels against educational establishments. He has no patience with bureaucracy or with pretentious theorising, preferring the cut and thrust of informal discussion among academic peers to the formality of the conference podium. We hope he has found stimulation here in Durban, among a new generation of distance educators from around the Commonwealth.

Mr. Chairman, for his contribution to the establishment of higher education by distance learning in the United Kingdom and for his influence on the development and progress of distance education around the world, I request you to confer upon Lord Perry of Walton, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Ram G. Takwale

Former Vice-Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, and Regional Adviser (South East Asia) to the President of COL

Professor Ram Takwale may have emerged from humble, rural and agricultural origins but that did not stop him from going to the top of the academic world in his country. Along the way, he demonstrated how education with its focus on people can change poor, backward, marginalised and forgotten communities into productive, resourceful, healthy and vibrant societies.

Through hard work, dedication and sincerity of purpose, and a clear vision to reach his goals, Ram emerged as a leader in the field of education in his native state, Maharashtra, first and his country, India, later. Moving comfortably from quantum physics and classical mechanics to managing one of India's renowned universities in science education, Ram quickly realised the limitations of higher education in India to serve the masses. He therefore readily accepted the first opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to serve the disadvantaged communities when he was invited to be the founding Vice-Chancellor of Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, based in Nashik, India. That university took on the challenge of delivering much needed training in the field of agriculture and other related fields to poorly trained and under educated workers. He introduced many innovative distance-learning curricula to vocational and agricultural programmes, quickly making it India's only open university mainly focussed on the poor, marginalized and isolated populations. Success often leads to invitations to take on new challenges. In the case of Ram Takwale, the invitation came from the Central Government for him to lead the Indira Gandhi National Open University for a period of four years. His period at IGNOU saw the university move resolutely into the digital world, a world he still surfs with great delight finding ways to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural India. Besides leading three Indian universities, Ram has also been active in a large number of professional and civil society organisations in science, education and the newer technologies.

Mr. Chairman, for his dedication and service to the advancement of education for the Indian masses through open, distance and technology-mediated learning, I request you to confer upon Professor Ram Takwale, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



Hafiz S. Wali

Former Director, National Teachers' Institute, Nigeria, former senior staff member, The Commonwealth of Learning, and former member of the Board of Governors of The Commonwealth of Learning

Where he comes from, they call him *Malam*, which somewhat but not adequately translates to “teacher” in English. But Alhaji Hafiz is more than a teacher. He is a teacher of teachers and he is a teacher of innovations. Long before distance education became a fashionable buzz in West Africa, Malam Hafiz was engaged as the founding Director of the National Teachers' Institute in Kaduna, Nigeria, in establishing and developing a distance education programme on teacher training. Under his leadership, the NTI developed a distinct character and, to this day, it is the only dedicated single-mode teacher training institute delivering in-service teacher training at the first level to Nigerians. Its services have become even more critical today, as Nigeria, like the rest of Commonwealth Africa, is preparing to meet the targets of the *Education For All* forum set in Dakar.

Alhaji Hafiz Wali did not confine his influence to Nigeria. He was an active participant in the affairs of the Commonwealth of Learning. First, he was one of our founding Board member, and later became even more involved in a senior staff role guiding and shaping the agency's work in Africa. He sensitised the agency to the enormous challenges confronting the continent in terms of educational provisions and the important role for open and distance learning in the makeup of a variety of responses. In this, he was far ahead of his time in predicting the impending educational crisis in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Chairman, for his foresight and contribution to the development of open and distance education in Nigeria and globally through COL, I request you to confer upon Alhaji Hafiz Wali, the *Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning* award.



CITATION: Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials
2001 – 2002

The Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials is to honour the achievements of colleagues who have designed and developed exemplary study materials. The materials may cover courses or whole programmes of study, can utilise any technology and can be at any level of study across all sectors of education and training, from basic education to continuing professional development.

It was my privilege to chair the panel that had to develop the process and criteria upon which to short-list and then select the winners. My distinguished, hard working and thoroughly professional panel was: Professor Asha Kanwar (at the time of her appointment, a professor at IGNOU but currently the COL/UNESCO Co-ordinator for Education in Africa) and Associate Professor Som Naidu (Head of Research and Evaluation at the University of Melbourne). I wish to thank my panel for making what was a very tough assignment an immensely enjoyable experience.

The criteria the panel determined upon to judge submissions were: fitness for need and purpose, educational design, coherence and integration of media in the study materials and evidence of impacts and benefits derived from evaluation. In designing this criteria and the process of selection, we wanted to ensure that the recognition of excellence is not simply a function of resources. And that the awards reflect COL's wider mission to support the harnessing of distance education methodologies to widen access to education and training.

Applicants for the award were required to fill in a proforma demonstrating why their course or programme should be considered for the award under the awards criteria. Fifty (50) enquiries were received, 26 of which were correctly completed, and from this 11 applicants were short-listed and asked to send in all their study materials for detailed consideration by the panel. The panel met in Vancouver in May, and we locked ourselves up in a room and scrutinised the boxes of materials that had arrived.

From this selection process, there were two unanimous winners.

The first COL Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials goes to the Institute for Adult Basic Education and Training at UNISA for its ABET Practitioner Training Programme (Certificate and Diploma).

We recommend this programme for the Award because:

- of its appropriateness for identified learning needs;
- it reflects sound learning and instructional design;
- of its appropriate use and integration of media and method in the study materials; and
- of its high impact and ample evidence of benefits derived.

The educational design of the ABET study materials demonstrates careful articulation of learning outcomes and approaches to study. The study materials demonstrate powerful use of learning strategies. The assessment of learning outcomes is appropriately aligned with the intended learning objectives, with appropriate feedback provided. The choice and selection of learning technology (media) is carefully aligned with the context of learners and their specific needs. Although we were not presented with formal evaluation data derived from the programme, there was ample evidence from the materials provided of the impact of the ABET programme on the learners (tutors) and the national strategy for alleviating the legacy of neglect and lack of opportunities for the targeted population.

I call upon The Honourable Fiamé Naomi Mata'afa (Minister of Education for Samoa) to present Professor Veronica McKay with the COL Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials.

The second COL Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials goes jointly to the University of Technology, Sydney, University of Adelaide, University of Sydney and University of New England for the Mekong e-Sim Programme – An Internet-mediated roleplay-simulation.

We recommend this programme for the Award because:

- of its appropriate use of online learning technologies for the intended needs of a range of learning groups;
- of its use of sound learning and instructional design;
- of its appropriate integration of media and study methods; and
- of evidence of its impact on learners and tutors.

The Mekong e-Sim programme reflects the growing interest in open and distance learning practices in the use of online learning technologies to support learner centeredness and flexible access to learning opportunities. Its educational design comprises appropriate use of role play simulation in an asynchronous online educational context including ample opportunity for students to critically reflect on ensuing discussions and group learning processes. Within this context there is clear identification of learning outcomes, assessment procedures and opportunities for feedback for learners. There is evidence in this programme of very astute usage of delivery technology with optimum opportunities for learners to communicate from a distance – asynchronously as well as synchronously.

Although there was little evidence of data derived from formal evaluation of e-Sim, it was clear that the programme was found to be very useful to a large range of learners and the partner universities.

I call upon The Honourable Fiamé Naomi Mata'afa to present the University of Technology, Sydney and the University of Adelaide with the COL Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials.



CITATION: Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement
2001 – 2002

The Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement was established to provide a means of recognising and encouraging the rich diversity of good practice in open and distance learning institutions throughout the Commonwealth.

This year, in keeping with the theme of the conference – “Open Learning: Transforming Education for Development” – we wished to recognise significant achievement in the innovative and effective application of appropriate learning technologies to reach students who might otherwise not have participated in the learning or training experience.

It was my privilege to chair the adjudication panel whose task it was to select the winners of the 2002 awards in this category. My distinguished fellow panellists: Professor N.K. Ambasht (Chairman of the National Open School in New Delhi, India) and Professor S.W. Tam (President of the Open University of Hong Kong) were eminently well qualified by virtue of their status as the CEOs of two of the institutions that won the Award at the first Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Brunei in 1999. I was confident that they would both be well-versed in the indicators of institutional excellence and I was not disappointed. My own credentials derived from the work I have been engaged in at COL to develop quality benchmarks for ODL were useful.

We faced a daunting task. We received 39 applications from institutions in 18 Commonwealth states. The institutions ranged from very small to very large, from formal to informal, and were engaged in teaching everything from basic literacy to advanced skills for circuit judges in remote areas using open and distance learning techniques. The technology used ranged from print through audio and video to very sophisticated virtual networks. To choose only three from such a variety was difficult, particularly as all of the submissions without exception made a compelling case for having touched people otherwise unreachable by the education and training systems in their country because of social, geographical, technological or economic disadvantages. We therefore had to apply our criteria firmly, and look for those applications that combined: Significant achievement at institutional level (not the lone-rangers), and Innovative and effective use of appropriate technologies in successfully reaching out to new learners. We met as a panel in Delhi in February to refine our criteria and draw up a long short-list, and then retired to our respective corners of the globe to complete our scrutiny, communicating by telephone and e-mail to make our final decisions. We should make it clear that the Awards are not presented in order of merit. All three are equally worthy of the accolade.

The first Award goes to a young open university which operates in a very highly populated state of India. It registers 115,000 students annually and has a cumulative enrolment of over 600,000 learners.

What impressed the panel particularly was the institution's use of technology, not just to attract a wide range of learners but to provide sustained academic support to retain them in the system. To do this, the university did not adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. It used a variety of practices in line with students' needs, preferred learning styles and access to technology. These include the establishment of tutor guided self-help groups for farmers, Internet-based learning for computer and electronic engineering students and a regularly published house journal which provides a channel for feedback and resolution of difficulties, and binds all students in a sense of community. The low drop-out rates testify to the success of this student-centred approach to learner support.

Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to call upon Mr. S.P. Gaur (Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, India) to present the Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement to Dr. B.P. Sabale, Vice Chancellor of the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU), India, for its successful application of appropriate technology to support and retain diverse student groups across a huge geographical area.

The winner of the second Award is, in contrast, a venerable UK-based organisation which has been supporting open and distance learning for learners of English around the world for 60 years - the BBC World Service. Radio is the primary medium for this work, but in the last five years, the Internet has become a powerful tool to reach new learners and for them to talk back. What impressed the panel again was the learner-centred approach taken to the application of more advanced technology to maintain its accessibility as far as possible. The organisation's *Learning English* web-site (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish) is tailored for self-study learners who have unreliable Internet connections or who might have only shared access to a work station at their work place. Pages are designed for quick download and audio and video modules are short. To avoid the loneliness of the long-distance learner, opportunities are provided to use English with other learners throughout the world via an on-line message board and a moderated e-mail-based discussion group, which now has nearly 3000 members in 85 countries.

In a globalised world, we are all concerned about the preservation of local cultures and we were impressed by the way in which the organisation makes partnerships with local educational bodies and broadcasters around the world to produce materials which achieve a balance between global content, global content versioned for local use and highly targeted local content produced in association with other partners.

The testimonies of satisfied learners, attached to the submission, provided eloquent support for our unanimous decision that the second Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement should go to the BBC World Service for their contribution to learning English throughout the world. It gives me great pleasure to call upon Mr. Gaur to present the Award to Mr Andrew Thompson, Head of Americas Region, and formerly the Commissioning Editor, Education, of the BBC World Service.

The final awardee in this category is the Athabasca University. Since it was established in 1970, it has been at the forefront of the development of distance education in Canada. It has made technology its niche and, as new technologies become available, this open university has successfully integrated them to create flexible and more accessible programmes and services for its learners. The list of technologies it has successively applied to improve learning opportunities through the years provides a walk down memory lane for those of us engaged in open learning since the 1970's: telephone tutoring, electronic publishing, audio teleconferencing, video conferencing, broadcast television, computer conferencing, web-based delivery. Today, the university offers some 550 courses with a significant on-line component, and its web-site provides the learner with access to comprehensive on-line support services. It has experienced a 100% increase in enrolments in the last 5 years and today has 24,000 registered students. In common with many of the Canadian institutions that submitted compelling case studies of their innovative work with Canada's aboriginal population, the university has developed innovative practical programmes in Health Administration and Leadership targeted at First Nations communities as well as establishing a Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research. It has worked tirelessly to promote the cause and ideals of distance education around the world. I therefore call upon Mr. Gaur to present the final Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement to Professor Dominique Abrioux, Vice Chancellor of Athabasca University, in recognition of his institution's achievement in reaching out through technology, in his words, not just for access, but for success.



CITATION: Award Recognising Distance Learning Experience **2001 – 2002**

Introduction

The Commonwealth of Learning honours and fosters excellence in open and distance learning through recognition of outstanding achievements. COL's Learning Experience Award focuses on identifying learners who have benefited from a distance education experience and honours such learners for their efforts.

This citation for the Learning Experience Award will briefly outline how the adjudicators came to their decision, and why **Ms. Frances Johanna van Wyk-Mensah** of Namibia was chosen as the worthy recipient of this prestigious award.

Process

I was asked to co-ordinate the process to choose the recipient of the COL Learning Experience Award. Two others, viz., Mr. Jeff Zabudsky (Dean, Technology and Curriculum Innovation at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Canada) and Ms. Evelyn Nonyongo (Head,

Institute for Continuing Education at the University of South Africa) agreed to be part of the adjudication panel.

The adjudication panel developed a set of selection criteria to guide our decision-making process. The criteria focused on the value of the distance learning experience to the candidates own personal and professional development, how distance education impacted on developments within the institution and country, what was unique about the circumstances of their study, and what makes a candidate outstanding and different from the other candidates.

In applying the above criteria, the adjudication panel endeavoured to choose a candidate who has overcome difficulties to study via distance education, and in doing so has recognised the value to both the person and the country.

The panel was unanimous in recommending Ms. Frances Johanna van Wyk-Mensah (Namibia) as its choice to receive the COL Award Recognising Distance Learning Experience.

Why Ms. Frances Johanna Mensah?

In noting Ms. van Wyk-Mensah's application, there was a strong indication of immense personal and professional development by the candidate using distance education. She was able to indicate that her studies were completed while being able to undertake her professional duties as an educator, her personal tasks as a mother and her social responsibilities as an activist in her community.

Her application indicated a strong sense of how her distance education studies have enabled her to understand the needs of learners in Namibia and how the distance education system can address the social concerns of Namibia. Ms. van Wyk-Mensah's distance education studies (BEd) also provided her with management skills that she applied in setting up the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). Her experience as a distance education student was instrumental in helping her construct the systems within NAMCOL that were student centred. Her application also indicated a theme of strong and sincere social concern for the development of skilled people within Namibia and the SADC region.

The adjudication panel felt that Ms. van Wyk-Mensah is the worthy recipient of the prestigious COL Award Recognising Distance Learning Experience. We envisage other learners to be inspired by Ms. van Wyk-Mensah's experience studying through distance education, being successful in terms of her personal, professional and social development and using this experience to inform and shape distance learning in her country, Namibia.