



**Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan** - former President and Chief Executive Officer, [\*Commonwealth of Learning\*](#), Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

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***Professor Dhanarajan retired from COL on 31 May 2004 and has returned to Penang, Malaysia.***

Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan ("Raj") joined COL as its second President on 1 September 1995.

Dr. Dhanarajan has been involved in distance education and open learning for over 25 years. He participated in establishing a number of distance education systems in South and Southeast Asia and, between 1982 and 1985, organised a successful network of distance education research in Asia with support from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Starting his career as a research officer and lecturer with the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Science Malaysia, Dr. Dhanarajan became increasingly involved in distance education. He later served as Associate Professor in Distance Education and Deputy Director of the university's Centre for Off-Campus Studies. He joined the newly established Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong (now the Open University of Hong Kong) in 1989 as Associate Director (Academic), and served as Director from 1991 - 1995. In 1992, the Institute honoured Dr. Dhanarajan by conferring on him the title of Professor, and then Professor Emeritus in 1995.

In 1994, he was conferred with an Order of Chivalry (which conveys the title of Dato') by the State of Penang, Malaysia. He has also received honorary degrees from the University of

Maryland University College, USA (Doctorate in Humane Letters, 1992); the British Open University (Doctor of the University, 1995); Kota Open University, Rajasthan, India (Doctor of Letters, 1996); the University of Abertay Dundee, Scotland (Doctor of Education, 1996); [Charles Sturt University, Australia](#) (Doctor of the University, 1998); [Athabasca University](#), Canada (Doctor of Letters, 1999); Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan (Doctor of Philosophy, 1999); [the Open University of Hong Kong](#) (Doctor of Social Science, 1999); and the Open University of Sri Lanka (Doctor of Letters, 2000).

In 1996, The College of Preceptors, London, awarded him an Honorary Fellowship and in 1997, [he received the first Asian Association of Open Universities Meritorious Service Award to the Cause of Distance Education in Asia](#). In 2004, he was named a Fellow of the Teachers' Institute, by the National Teachers' Institute, Nigeria.

Dr. Dhanarajan has also been Secretary General of the Asian Association of Open Universities, a member of the Executive Board of the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), educational advisor to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and has served on several international consultancy bodies.

He is a Malaysian citizen and holds B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees from the University of Madras, a D.I.C. and an M.Sc. from the Imperial College of the University of London and a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Aston in Birmingham. He is married to Sue Yee Ah-Fong.

[<News release, April 1995>](#)

[<News release, September 1998>](#)

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Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Commonwealth of Learning, 2001.  
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