



Presidents message April 2025

I have been proud to serve once again as President of COBSS this past year, alongside a dedicated and capable team of volunteers. It is a privilege to work with people so committed to supporting students in our community. Today, I am pleased to share some reflections on the past year—highlighting key achievements, opportunities we’ve embraced, challenges we’ve navigated, and improvements we’ve made. I’ll also offer a glimpse into our vision for the year ahead, as COBSS continues to evolve and strengthen its impact in our community.

2024-25 has been a productive year as we continue to build and grow the COBSS organization. One of our key areas of focus this year has been continuing improvement of the online application and allocation system. With the ongoing IT expertise and support of David Teale, we’ve made significant strides. This year’s updates included the integration of student transcripts and reference letters directly into the dashboard—providing allocators and donors with more comprehensive information to guide their decisions.

A key achievement this year was *The Mingler*, our event designed to bring together donors, volunteers, and community members in a relaxed and welcoming setting. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect face-to-face, share stories, and celebrate the collective impact of our work. The positive energy in the room reminded us of the strength and value of community—and we look forward to building on this momentum in the years ahead. Special thanks to John Logel and his committee for pulling it all together so beautifully. Next year we plan to host the Appreciation Tea.

KLO Middle School provided COBSS the space and equipment for this year’s donor days. 4 full days of relationship building. The feedback from all who participated was overwhelmingly positive. I feel affirmed that this was the right move at the right time, and our adaptability to take this process to any site, is a testament to our team. Thanks again to John, Heather and Bev.

This year, we welcomed new volunteer, Danielle Lalonde, to our team. We were also pleased to welcome Heather Oishi as our new Administrative Assistant. Alongside Bev Bourbonnais, Heather has helped keep us organized, on track, and moving forward. Their behind-the-scenes support is essential to everything we do, and we are grateful for their contributions.

One of the ongoing challenges this year has been the displacement from our home base at the Hollywood Road Education Centre. While we look forward to returning in September 2025, we've adapted by making the most of the resources and relationships available to us.

I believe our goal is to take time to reconnect with our core mandate: supporting students in their pursuit of post-secondary education through financial assistance. To do this we must keep pace with our growing community. This means maintain excellent relationships in the community, expanding our awards base, strengthening our community partnerships, and continuing to host an annual event that raises both our profile and our connection to the community. I'm especially proud of the strong governance and transparency that define COBSS—these values have guided us well in the past and remain central to our vision for the future.

Finally, I want to extend a special thank you to Past President Anne Pistawka for her continued support and wisdom, and again to Bev Bourbonnais for the thousand unseen tasks she so capably manages behind the scenes.

COBSS is in good shape. I've just had a conversation with a non-profit on the west side who is folding due to the lack of volunteers. They are sending their remaining funds of \$13K our way to distribute to students. They have confidence in our nearly 55-year-old organization. We are making a meaningful impact in our community—our growth is a testament to that. This year \$588,000.00 in awards for students. Let's aim to tip \$600,000 mark for next year.

I thank you for being a part of this important work.

Respectfully,

Lorraine Miller