

Presidents Report 2023

I am very proud to serve as President of the Central Okanagan Bursary and Scholarship Society this past year. To me, this organization embodies the values of education, community partnerships, and supporting student achievement. For those involved in COBSS whether as a volunteer member, school counselor or administration, we all share a belief in the transformative potential of post-secondary education for our community's youth. Together we proudly invest our time and energies helping young people build successful lives for the future.

As we all know, the task of administering over 500 awards annually takes an incredible amount of dedication and commitment on the part of COBSS members. And that is just in 'normal' times. The COVID pandemic has added extraordinary challenges for our organization, pushing us to use ingenuity and creativity to fulfill our commitments to donors, partners, and students. We owe special thanks to John Logel (Past President) and Lorraine Miller (Vice President), whose leadership during these difficult times guided us to successful online allocation systems and ensured our ability to meet our obligations. Today, as we resume in-person activities, we continue to integrate the lessons we have learned and apply hybrid processes to allocation and meetings. This has only added flexibility and efficiencies to our systems.

During allocation this past two weeks, I have seen firsthand how our volunteer members work together as a team to thoughtfully consider all decisions involved in allocating awards to students. Members have worked hard observing our guidelines, ensuring fairness and transparency at every step of the way. Although it is early in the allocation process, we anticipate that 602 awards will be allocated with a dollar value totalling over \$570,000. I am reminded that the strength of this organization clearly lies with its people and am thankful to all of our members for their ongoing commitment. This year, we have welcomed new members Marilyn Green, Maureen Sharko, Barbara Rigg, Pat Hayden, Mike Dornian, & Carol Davidson and said good bye to others, Peggy Gaspari, Karen Parker, Ashley Brain, Dorrie Fasick, & Janet White. Thank you all for your service to COBSS.

I want to acknowledge the dedication of Bev Bourbonnais, who demonstrates respect and professionalism in all her duties as administrative assistant. Her attention to detail and steadfast desire to continually improve our systems has benefitted COBSS in countless ways. She has been a rock for us all during a very tumultuous time. Sadly, she is resigning her post this year but happily, her passion for helping students continues, as she will be resoundingly welcomed as a volunteer member of COBSS moving forward. We welcome our new administrative assistant, Lisa Mayne, to the COBSS family and look forward to working with her, over what we hope is a more stable time. Adding to this administrative dream team is Debbie da Silva of KPMG. Her expertise and thoughtful objectivity, as our accountant over many years, have guided our executive to make sound decisions that keep COBSS a strong and sustainable organization.

In addition, the tireless work of Mary Lou Inaba and her energetic tea committee is much appreciated as they plan our upcoming Donor Appreciation Event on May 1. This important event is a tradition for COBSS and gives us the opportunity to foster the relationships we have with current donors and partners, to promote new COBSS donors and awards in the community, and to celebrate students and the gift of giving.

Over the past year, we have resumed in-person annual meetings with our COBSS partners, such as the Central Okanagan Foundation, and Michael Zuk of RBC Securities, who manages COBSS monies in trust. Our members have also attended meetings of community groups such as various Rotary Clubs to spread the word of COBSS and encourage new donors to create awards. Last May, COBSS volunteer members participated in the Knox Hill Mountain Climb fundraiser and raised \$1000 for a new student award. We have been asked once again to be a benefactor of the event and thanks to the volunteerism of our members, we anticipate that our participation will bring in further funds for more awards. As we spread our wings in the community it is important to have a strong media presence moving forwards. Thank you to Dawne Thalheimer and Melanie Wolczuk, who have taken leadership roles in updating our banners, website, Facebook and newsletter. We are also proud of the new video 'The Story of Blandon Sisters' produced this year which adds to our promotional materials and will help us engage other community partners to join us in our mission to support graduating students. We thank Gorman Brothers for their generous donation last year that has funded this project.

As we move forward, we are dedicated to improving our application process by going to a paperless, fully online format. Students will be able to securely submit their application online, referees will have easy access to online submission, and there will be less administrative burden on counsellors. We thank the Public Schools of Central Okanagan and our Independent member schools who are partnering with us in this endeavor.

Lastly, I want to thank the COBSS executive whose dedication and guidance throughout this past year has been invaluable to me and allowed us to make strong collaborative decisions. To the members, counsellors, and administration team, thank you for your ongoing support and commitment. Together, as stewards of COBSS at the 50+year mark, I think we can all be proud of how we are carefully and responsibly managing the organization.

I am pleased to serve as President for the upcoming year and look forward to working with all of you again.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Pistawka

April 12, 2023