



## PRESIDENTS REPORT – 2024/2025

### ***To the Annual General Meeting of the Maritzburg College Old Boys' Association (MCOBA) being held at 17:30 on Tuesday the 17th of June 2025***

I hereby present the annual report of the President to the Members of the Maritzburg College Old Boys' Association, as required by clause 17.6 (a) of the MCOBA constitution.

#### **1- Overview**

In this, the 127th year of the Association, we have experienced significant changes. Mr Andrew Clayton's term as President ended at the last AGM, and shortly thereafter, Dr Melba Nzimande, our past Operations Manager, resigned.

Despite these changes, the MCOBA has continued to deliver on its mandated objectives, gaining momentum throughout Q3 and Q4 of 2024 and ultimately delivering a satisfactory set of results.

This past year has been one of consolidation, renewed engagement, and strategic growth. The Association continues to strengthen its role as a vital support to the school—building bonds of brotherhood and uniting Old Collegians across generations, continents, and countries.

#### **2- Governance and Administration**

Our Executive Committee has functioned with diligence and purpose, meeting regularly and working collaboratively to ensure good governance and operational oversight. I extend my sincerest thanks to each committee member for their service and dedication to our Association.

Miss Jaclyn Ponsford was appointed MCOBA Operations Manager in September 2024 and has settled well into her role, delivering, among other events, an exceptional 2024 Induction Ceremony for our matric leavers, and an even more successful 2025 Reunion Weekend. MCOBA made history by hosting two full golf days and two dinner events—an innovative approach that made the weekend more accessible and inclusive. This drew a record number of Old Collegians back to Maritzburg College—a testament to our Bonds of Brotherhood

Thandekile Mthalane, who worked as an intern in the MCOBA office, resigned in August 2024 and has not been replaced. Last year's AGM mandated the Executive to consider cost-cutting mechanisms. Miss Ponsford has shown the capacity of an entire rugby team, and further focus has been placed on leveraging internal back-office resources through the school and college Business to achieve our objectives as mandated by our constitution and members.

Sue Buchanan-Clarke, as the College Connect Community Manager, has continued to drive our College Connect strategy. This platform has grown into a strategic stakeholder for the College community and Old Collegians. Sue has also expertly managed the Xero accounting system for MCOBA and continues to be an asset to MCOBA, College Connect, and the College Business

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Team. The integration of this platform within the wider College community is underway and promises to enhance its impact.

Bruce Lesur was appointed as College Ambassador and has added significant value to the Association. With declining engagement and two consecutive years of deficit performance, this strategic move has proven correct, as revenues and engagement levels have risen.

Grant Hooper assumed the role of Vice President in April 2025. Grant—Head Boy in 1993 and Executive member since 2022—has a proven pedigree in leadership. His son will join the College family in 2026, and I have no doubt that, as President-Elect, he will lead the Association capably into the future.

The role of Treasurer remains vacant. However, with operations digitally serviced and supported by OMNE Accounting and Tax, there has been no operational gap. Sue Buchanan-Clarke and Jaclyn Ponsford have adequately managed the accounting function. Wayne Evans processed approved payments until his departure, after which Rodney Klute (Executive Member, Strategy) maintained continuity. Governance protocols were upheld throughout, and I thank Rodney for his support. Standard procedures will resume once our new Commercial Director is appointed.

Mr Rory Bremner has joined the Executive Committee under Section 9.5 of our constitution as the school representative, following Mr Matthew Marwick's departure. I extend formal thanks to Mr Marwick for his years of dedicated service and welcome Mr Bremner, who brings great promise for the future.

Mr Kevin Smith continues to serve on the Executive as Director of College Business (Section 9 of the constitution). His team is stable, productive, highly capable, and doing College proud. The working relationship between MCOBA and College Business is healthy and was evident during the 2025 Reunion. The team has evolved from a central services unit into a fully-fledged events company. My sincerest thanks to Kevin and his team for their invaluable support.

Membership continued to grow into 2024 achieving our set targets, and MCOBA's value proposition remains strong. Historically, there was hesitancy in requesting subscriptions from members. Like any professional organisation, we cannot operate sustainably on goodwill alone. We have adopted a fair, incentivised approach to subscriptions and the collection thereof.

For 2025, the Executive approved membership fees before the start of the financial year, adding a category for Old Collegians who matriculated 5–10 years ago—strategically encouraging earlier engagement.

### **2025 Membership Fees:**

- **R500 – Standard Membership**
- **R200 – Pensioners (Over 65)**
- **R250 – Young OCs (Class of 2015–2019)**

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- **R150 – Maritzburg College Staff**
- **R20,000 – Life Membership**

**Updated fees available at:** <https://www.collegeoldboys.com/pay-your-subs>

#### **Membership stats by year:**

#### **Year & Number**

**2010 746**

**2011 1064**

**2012 1239**

**2013 1430**

**2014 1258**

**2015 1134**

**2016 1380**

**2017 1674**

**2018 1283**

**2019 961**

**2020 739**

**2021 897**

**2022 902**

**2023 1211**

**2024 1539**

#### **3- Financial Performance**

MCOBA remains financially stable. While 2024 brought economic challenges, prudent management and member support ensured positive cash flow and delivery on commitments.

#### **2024 Key Highlights:**

1. **Membership Growth:** 27% increase in subscription payments (1,211 to 1,539)
2. **Trading Income Surge:** 57.6% growth driven by Life Membership and Scholar Subscriptions
3. **Cost Efficiency:** 16.3% reduction in operating costs
4. **Financial Turnaround:** Surplus of R197,213 (2024) vs. loss of R421,726 (2023)
5. **Strong Income Growth:**
  - a. Maize fundraising programme: R45K (2023) to R97K (2024)
  - b. College Connect income: R20K (2023) to R188K (2024)
6. **Successful Events:** Additional R363K revenue from events management
7. **Prudent Cost Management:** Careful administration cost control

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The Audited financial statements, which will be presented separately, reflect our commitment to accountability and fiscal responsibility.

The Maritzburg College Old Boys Memorial Trust report is also tabled, confirming its healthy state under Mr Sven Jager's chairmanship. Mr Jager has continued to serve as chairperson for the trust along with a capable team of trustees as appointed in Sec 5 of the amended trust deed of 2016. MCOBA interests are represented by Mr Jager and Mr Rodseth, both of whom will need to be re-appointed at this AGM. Both representatives have been nominated and are prepared to continue for another term through this transitional period of trustees in the way of Headmaster and senior Vice -Principle of Maritzburg College. I Thank them both for their continued support and commitment to both the Association and Maritzburg College.

#### **4- Membership Engagement**

Engagement continues to grow steadily through branch functions, digital platforms, College, and strong marketing. In September 2024, the Executive realigned strategy—focusing on quality over quantity (Back to Basics) and prioritising constitutional objectives.

This engagement happened at a centralised level and each Branch chairman serve as network custodians without administrative burdens – it is an effective way of canvassing the area and providing insight to relevant stakeholders. All the branch chairmen are invited to all executive meetings.

The 2025 Reunion was a resounding success, shifting toward a participation model rather than a traditional one for long-term sustainability. Finding this balance is key and helps strengthens our bonds to brotherhood.

Since the last AGM, we have hosted numerous events nationwide and internationally, with a substantial budget allocated to support and revitalise these functions:

##### **Recent Events (domestic and international):**

- North Coast, Tugela, Cape Town, Kokstad, Johannesburg, Pretoria
- Stellenbosch Student Function, UK Branch Function
- OC Recruitment Event (Vic Hall & Virtual)
- Underberg Function, Induction, Reunion 2025

##### **Branches needing support:**

Zululand, South Coast, Harding, Northern Natal (Newcastle & Vryheid)

#### **5- College Connect**

Operational since 2022, College Connect saw member growth plateau in 2024, prompting its expansion to the broader College community. Integration into the College Business team is underway under the College Business Director Mr Kevin Smith.

Although College Connect was projected to be self-sufficient by 2024, direct revenue targets have not been fully met despite achieving performance forecasts. This is partly because the

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platform serves multiple college sectors, making direct revenue attribution challenging. With our contract with Graduway ending mid-2026, we are exploring alternative platform providers that offer better functionality, value, and cost-effectiveness. College Connect remains a vital strategic unit, delivering value to Old Collegians and upholding the 'Five Years for Life' mission.

Recently, College Connect's business-to-business facilitation strategy encountered a setback when a mediated transaction failed to reach a resolution, resulting in commercial litigation between the parties involved. College Connect is fundamentally an introductory platform, and it is unrealistic to hold it accountable for transaction failures. In response, we have implemented a strategic shift, refocusing College Connect on its core purpose as an introductory service. While transaction insights are valuable, our new direction prioritises this core function. I would like to commend Sue Buchan Clarke for her dedication and efforts to resolve the recent transaction issue, going above and beyond despite the challenging circumstances.

	2023	Move	2024	Move	2025 YTD
Registered Users	1245	504	1749	498	2247
Returning Users	81%	13%	94%	-9%	85%
Users Left	12	19	31	-18	13
Users Willing to help	76%	-7%	69%	-1%	68%
Messages between users	125	-36	89	12	101
Old Boys	92%	-4%	88%	-3%	85%
Parents (Former & Current)	5%	5%	10%	2%	12%
College Staff	1%	1%	2%	-1%	1%
Recruiter	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Service Provider to College	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Events Posted	7	13	20	-7	13
Event Registrations	18	29	47	749	796
Feed Posts	32	20	52	-19	33
Jobs Posted	87	315	402	-369	33
Job Applications Sent	18	59	77	-70	7
Likes	66	110	176	-125	51
Comments	18	14	32	-19	13
Resource Interaction	4	39	43	14	57

## 6- Support to Maritzburg College

MCOBA remains committed to supporting the school through bursaries, infrastructure, mentoring, coaching, resources, and mediation at times.

The Executive has worked diligently to strengthen alignment with the School Board, SGB, MARC, The Foundation, Club 1863, and School Exco. We are committed to deepening our partnership with Headmaster Mr. Alan Redfern, 16th Headmaster of Maritzburg College, and the college leadership, ensuring our efforts support the school's long-term vision and drive excellence across all areas. Our goal is to foster a lasting sense of pride and passion for Maritzburg College among Old Collegians and future generations.

## 7- Looking ahead

As we look to the rest of 2025 and beyond, the association is committed to.

- Continue to enhance all digital communication and information sharing.

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- Broaden our support and offering to our younger OC community.
- Supporting the transition to the 16th Headmaster.
- Integrating College Connect into the broader college community.
- Continue to drive out the objectives of the association outlined in Section 5 of our constitution.

## 8- Acknowledgment's

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to Our Past Patron and Headmaster Dr Luman for so generously hosting Old Collegians on Campus and embracing all things "College." You have served college and the MCOBA with distinction for the last 13 years. We were proud to honour his legacy with the 15th Headmaster's portrait to Maritzburg College. We extend our best wishes to Dr. Luman for success and fulfilment in his new endeavours.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the 2024/2025 Executive, our Branch Chairmen, and Class Convenors – thank you for your tireless efforts and dedication in serving Old Collegians and supporting me throughout the year. The success of MCOBA is vital to our school's future, and I am grateful for the Executive team's exceptional dedication and hard work over the last year. I can confirm that the MCOBA is in a good place and is truly relevant in an era where society is looking for: "community," "purpose" and "a sense of belonging."

In challenging times, family and friends matter most. College friendships, especially those formed in our early years, continue to offer support when needed most. More Old Collegians are turning to their year groups for care, encouragement, and even financial help, proving once more that College is truly "Five Years for Life."

I am grateful to the College Community for the support and friendships I have gained over the past year and confirm my availability to stand for another year, this being my last.

Lastly, to you—the members of the Maritzburg College Old Boys' Association—thank you for your unwavering loyalty. Your pride keeps our Association strong, relevant, and rooted in purpose.

With honour and humility, I submit this report.

Yours sincerely,

*Jonathan Hoatson*



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