

Dear staff & students of Lasalle Secondary School,

My name is Brian Zubert and I am a proud Lancer. Having graduated from Lasalle Secondary School in 2000 and then from the University of Waterloo in 2005, I've since enjoyed tremendous success in my career, most notably at BlackBerry. To all this success I owe two things: 1) The amazing co-op program at the University of Waterloo and 2) the strong foundation I earned at Lasalle. And it's important to note that the former would not have happened without the latter.

When I reflect on years past, I've come to realize that my life as it is today really all hinged on a single defining moment: the Descartes Mathematics Contest. It's strange for me to admit that, since I didn't pay much interest in the contest at the time. But I should have. That contest also ended up being the unofficial entrance exam for the University of Waterloo: if you didn't achieve their minimum score, you weren't even considered for acceptance to the school. Despite my indifference to the contest, thankfully teachers like Mr. Brimner, Mr. Turcotte, and Mr. Sherman all took tremendous interest in their students and committed themselves to preparing them for the challenges that lay ahead. While I probably didn't do their advice justice, at least I listened enough to achieve the needed grade, for it was not until just recently that I was able to comprehend the implications of that one, seemingly insignificant, achievement.

Admittance to the University of Waterloo was only the beginning. The benefits of the strong math foundations I received at Lasalle continued to pay dividends throughout my first semester. First year algebra and calculus courses are mandatory for Computer Science programs at UW, and I was joined in those classes by students from all across the country. But there was a difference between us: they were struggling and I was excelling. For the first month and more, the topics being presented were completely foreign concepts to most, but for me, it was almost a review. Getting a one month lead was huge – it allowed me to get adjusted to university life, get ahead in my studies, and not just survive, but thrive during that all important first year. And again, I owe that advantage to those wonderful teachers at Lasalle and the commitment they had to both their students and their profession.

Since then, I've continued to press every advantage afforded to me and have been very fortunate as a result. At the beginning of this letter, I mentioned that I'm a very proud Lancer. What I didn't mention is that I was also a recipient of the Best Boy award for my graduating class, which has since been renamed to Most Outstanding Male. And like many students, graduation wasn't just a time of celebration, it was also a time to look to the future. For me, the near future meant staring down the barrel of what was going to be over \$50,000 in post-secondary education costs. I was filled with fear and doubt about the debt load I was about to take on. I had personally saved up enough money to cover most of my first year's tuition and living expenses, and my parents were able to pay for my books, but after that, I was on my own. Still, I considered myself lucky – there were others who faced far greater challenges.

What I like most about the Most Outstanding Male and Most Outstanding Female awards is that they are not a pure recognition of academics. Yes, scholastic achievement plays a part, but these awards also reward involvement, attitude, and leadership. These are the qualities that I have tried to embody throughout my life. I've never been top of the academic leaderboards, I've never been an athletic record

holder, and I've never been atop of any social ladder. But I've always been fiercely competitive and stubbornly determined, all while maintaining life balance and always, always remembering the people and principles that matter most to me. In my view, that well roundedness, that desire to do it all, that drive for success in all aspects of one's life is what separates the achievers from the over-achievers.

Today it brings me great pleasure to reward those over-achievers, with a \$1000 donation to Lasalle Secondary School: \$500 for the Most Outstanding Male and \$500 to the Most Outstanding Female. My goal is to be able to continue honouring these top performers year over year. But like a stack of dominoes, the only way to make the next domino fall is to start by knocking over that first domino. This year is that first year: if I've stacked my dominoes right, I should be able to provide the annual recognition these students so rightly deserve.

Thank you for knocking over my first domino.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Zubert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Brian Zubert
Director, Developer Relations
BlackBerry