Melissa Kwee, Chair of the Halogen Foundation for Leadership, a non-profit organisation which aims to make a difference in young people's lives and inspire them with leadership skills, has pursued a life-long goal of promoting understanding between people.

After graduating from the IB programme at UWCSEA, Melissa went on to obtain her Bachelor’s degree in Social Anthropology at Harvard University, where she received the John Harvard Scholarship for Highest Academic Distinction and the Harvard Foundation Award for Inter-cultural and Race Relations.

Upon her return to Singapore, Melissa began to seek out leadership positions in community organisations, and began spearheading a series of youth leadership programmes. One of her earlier initiatives, founded in 1996, was Project Access, a leadership education programme for girls which sought to ‘broaden the realm of the possible,’ through leaders willing to share their stories, and mentor. Melissa worked with local schools, community organisations and government institutions over the next five years to create a network of leadership resource partnerships across Singapore to provide mentors and role models for youths.

From 2002 to 2006, as President of the Singapore National Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Melissa led projects including the Stop Demand for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children campaign and Financial Education for Migrant Women Workers which subsequently developed into an organisation called AIDHA. In 2006, she founded Beautiful People, a programme aimed at connecting female professionals with teenage girls who otherwise lacked social and family support.

Melissa regularly speaks at youth events and has addressed many public gatherings such as the State of the World Forum in 1997, the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations in 2001, the BP-CISCO Corporate Social Responsibility Forum in 2002 and the Singapore Supreme Court staff in 2006.

Melissa received the Youth Award for Community and Youth Services from the National Youth Council of Singapore, in June 2007.