

Rektor's Report – Second Quarter 2016

Student Matters

Since the last Board Meeting in late February, there have been some outstanding events both on and off campus: Ridderrennet, a Climate Eyewitness Workshop, Youth Teamwork and Leadership Day, Landmine Awareness Day, Global Concerns (Migration), the Las Americas bazaar and show, the Visual Arts exhibition, the RCN Literary Festival, goalball and basketball competitions, the colour-fuelled Holi celebrations, Campus Clean-Up, Earth Weekend, the spring Fjord & Fjell – and much, much more!

On March 12th, UWC Red Cross Nordic hosted its first TEDx event and the first one in Sogn og Fjordane. The organizing committee involved 11 students, making it the first TEDx event to be organized by youth in Norway. The theme was “One Step Forward”. A total of 14 speakers (8 guests and 6 from RCN) shared a variety of stories and ideas involving areas such as gender identity, world conflicts, Parkinson’s Disease, climate change – and chess.

The students have had the opportunity to interact with a series of interesting visitors to our campus including: Lauge Schøler (communication workshop leader), Steinar Bryn (Nansen Dialogue Centre), Liz Rondinelli (visiting researcher) as well as our TEDx guests – plus Council and Board members and guests for the April Council Meeting on campus.

Many students stayed on campus for the Easter Weekend – using the time to rest, recharge batteries and prepare for exams. The Rektor is delighted to report that activities were put on by staff over Easter – including walks in the local area and the annual Easter egg hunt around campus – as part of our ongoing support of students on campus during these holiday periods.

The weather has been kind this springtime and certainly helped with the spirit on campus. Second years have recently stepped into exam mode and the RCN community is currently supporting them during this period. Their results are released in early July, and we sincerely hope that the focus on both pastoral and academic infrastructures at the College over the past year have made an impact on each student’s overall experience and their performance in the IB exams at the end of the RCN programme. We have been working on supporting to a greater degree the deliberately diverse profile of RCN students across nationalities, languages, socio-economic and prior education contexts.

Our students have been in the news having won or been shortlisted for academic prizes in Norwegian competitions:

Nikita (Belarus) came first in the Physics Olympiad 2016 in Norway. Nikita and Angela (China) and fourteen other finalists were invited to participate in the final round of the Norwegian Physics Olympiad at the University of Oslo in early April. 992 students from 105 schools across Norway took part in this year’s competition – this was the first time that RCN students have taken part in the competition. Nikita will now represent Norway at the next stage of the Olympiad.

Four students – Hazel, Muxuan, and Angela (China) and Nikita (Belarus) were invited to participate in the final round of the prestigious national Mathematics Abelkonkurransen.

Three students won prizes in this year's Proscientia Prize – Prisvinnere i Konkurransen Unge Forskere 2015: a first prize for Marta (Faroe Islands) and third prizes for Herman (Norway) and Alexis (Sweden) for their Extended Essay submissions.

Seven first year students participated in the 9th Chinese Bridge competition (Norwegian division) in Bergen. The competition was sponsored by the education section of the Embassy of China and organized by the Confucius Institute in Bergen. Mai (Vietnam) came joint first and will represent Norway when she participates in the final competition which will be held in Beijing in October 2016. Linnea (Sweden) and Yangzom (Tibet) tied for third place.

First year students, Johanne (Norway) and Sara-Estelle (Germany) recently travelled to Riga in Latvia, to take part in a Model European Parliament.

Two students have been selected to represent RCN on Semester at Sea (these two scholarships are underwritten by Shelby Davis): Katrine (Denmark) and Naty (Costa Rica).

Daphnie (Israel) and Maja (Swede) have been selected for the National Finals in UKM.

The University Office reports that all second years applying to university have received at least one offer.

In 2015, we decided to replace the usual timetable on May Day with a walk to the top of our local mountain, Jarstadheia. It was a very special occasion with inclusion at the heart of the adventure with all our first years making it the top including all the students on the Survivors of Conflict Programme. This year May Day / Labour fell on a Sunday and we developed the day into 'Til Topps: Jarstadheia' – RCN's own interpretation of the Til Topps run every June by the Norwegian Red Cross on Norway's highest mountain, Galdhøpiggen. For our event, we invited youth from local asylum centres to join us in our ascent of Jarstadheia. Over 90% of first years, some intrepid second years out for some fresh air on the eve of exam season, and lots of members of staff and their families joined in on the adventure – each House team of students enjoyed the spectacular views up the Dalsfjord, up Flekke valley and out towards the sea. Thor, a new member of our Outdoor Department, coordinated a series of challenges for participants on the ascent of the mountain.

In early May, RCN hosted the Student Climate Summit, with 150 students and teachers from colleges in Sogn og Fjordane coming to campus to learn more about how to meet climate change on individual and group levels. The conference was a cooperation between UWC, Fylkesmannen and Sogn og Fjordane County. Karen O'Brien and Linda Sygna from CChange / University of Oslo were the key note speakers.

We have been impressed by the approach and attitude of the first year cohort and perceive a real desire from them to support the next wave of RCN students. A month ago, the outgoing RCN Student invited the incoming Student Council to a handover / training weekend on the island of Værlandet. This has become an excellent tradition in recent years at RCN – at this time last year, a highly successful 'retreat' was held at Heggnes (on the side of the Dalsfjord). The following week, both Student Councils were then actively involved in hosting our UWC RCN Council members and attending and participating in various workshops on the College's strategic action plan. The Rektor would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Student Council for their invaluable contribution over the course of the last academic year and to welcome the incoming team.

Faith (USA) is our new Red Cross Student Rep and she has been making an invaluable contribution to the new version of the cooperation agreement with the Red Cross and the redesign of the Red Cross Diploma.

We are also pleased to report that we will be admitting two new students as part of our Survivors of Conflict Programme programme – one female student from Cambodia and a male student from Nepal. They will also be joined by a wheelchair-bound student from Iraq.

Management and Staffing

In early March, the College booked the Red Cross cabin at Langeland for a weekend for staff and their children. One staff member wrote to thank the College for this initiative: 'It was really good to have the chance to meet colleagues outside the College and spend some quality time with them... I hope it will be a nice tradition in the College!'

In early April, counsellors from the UWC family were invited and flown over to the College of Idaho as it one of the Davis Partner Schools. This opportunity enabled our Senior University Counsellor, Mark Chalkley, to experience this US college campus first hand. He interacted with faculty and staff, and met with UWC alumni currently studying there.

Leonie is currently not back full time as the Admissions Coordinator. Given the relationship between admissions (entry) and tertiary education (exit), Mark Chalkley has provided some invaluable support to Leonie's portfolio as she makes a recovery. There have been regular communications between RCN's admissions team and the International Office during this period to ensure that our College's admissions portfolio and relations with the NC network are in the position they should be.

It was a pleasure to host Sarina Tahitu from Leiden University for a month-long teaching placement in April. Sarina is currently on the university's World Teacher Programme and wrote to RCN asking if we would provide her with some teaching practice. During her internship, she co-taught lessons in Theory of Knowledge and Development Studies (Geography). Sarina was fully engaged in extra academic commitments, and on her final day delivered a TOK presentation.

Aslaug Eide (Norway) joined the UWC Connect team as Leirskule Assistant / Outdoor Instructor. She has a degree in Physical Education and Friluftsliv from Volda University College and has worked as an instructor at a Folkehøgskule in Molde. Thor Elvebakk has been appointed as Leirkule Teacher / Outdoor Instructor – he has many years of experience as a mountain guide and expedition leader and has recently been working for the Dale Oen Experience, a Bergen-based camp school.

We are currently in the midst of an interview process for a new IT Coordinator.

We are pleased to announce the following Education Staff appointments for the next academic year:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Ashok | Director of Residential Life / House Mentor of Denmark House |
| Dan (Sweden) | full-time teacher of Humanities (plus House Mentor) |
| Marloes (The Netherlands) | full-time teacher of Global Politics |
| Julius (Slovakia) | full-time teacher of Maths |
| Lisa (Finland / Canada) | full-time teacher of Humanities |
| Cristina (Spain) | part-time teacher of Spanish ab initio (three blocks) |
| Mariangela (Italy) | part-time teacher of Italian ab initio and TOK (three blocks) |
| Judit (Hungary) | part-time teacher of E Systems (one block) |
| Eszter (Hungary) | EVS Volunteer (Learning Support) |

This year, with a number of teachers going on leave of absence / retiring / leaving, it has been a complex jigsaw and the Rektor is extremely grateful to members of the EMT for their work in recruiting high calibre staff and ensuring smooth transition – and to the various Hiring Committees for their contributions to these processes.

The Hiring Committee strives to do its best in terms of disappointment management for shortlisted applicants. The Rektor received an email last week from an applicant who had gone onto win a teaching position at our sister College, UWC RBC: 'I would not have been able to achieve this without the continued support given by Alistair and UWC RCN following my application for Global Politics... I am hand-writing [Alistair] a letter expressing my sincere gratitude for his support, encouragement and endorsement of my application'.

As part of the end of term events, departing staff will be invited to a special barbecue – they will each be given a picture (signed by staff) as a gift on behalf of the College. There will be a special surprise cultural performance, coordinated by the first years, to thank them for their enormous contribution to RCN.

Each member of staff has a medarbeidersamtale 2016 reviewer allocated within the framework of RCN's organizational chart. For those who had a medarbeidersamtale last year, the reviewer will focus on agreed action points and, as appropriate, consider action points for the forthcoming year. Our system is designed for discussion and conversation on present commitment, contribution and experiences in the RCN workplace – and to explore opportunities for professional development. We shall also be working with Stamina Helse this summer on health checks and first aid training for Support Staff – and a questionnaire on the work environment for all staff.

Following on from a meeting with the Norwegian Red Cross in Oslo, our Red Cross Board Rep (Liv Ronglan) kindly agreed to coordinate a trainer to visit the College to run the full 'Street Mediation Instructors' Course' at some point in the second part of the academic year. A number of staff said that they found the course in Staff Introduction Week both enjoyable and stimulating and would be interested in taking the instructor course given its use in our professional context of a residential school. Marlene Lauridsen, the instructor, is here in weeks 18 and 20 to deliver this Red Cross training – and she will be working with ca. 12-15 members of the Education Staff. Two experienced members of staff wrote: 'the course was/is fantastic!' and 'the course is very good indeed'.

The forthcoming Staff Introduction Week in August is currently being designed to include professional development and team building for both Education and Support Staff.

Both Education and Support Staff continue to work hard at RCN – and it is very pleasing to observe Ola, our new Chief Operating Officer, leading the Support Staff team in such a professional manner.

Final Remarks

It was very exciting for the College to host in late February its own Board for a quarterly meeting as well as the UWC International Board and other guests (including representatives of other schools and colleges who were seeking approval for UWC membership – and the respective Task Forces charged with the role of evaluating these applications). Part of the challenge was for these guests to come and visit our College in mid-winter and we were delighted to receive visitors here on campus from all across the world – from Mexico to Hong Kong, from Brazil to India – representing different key stakeholders in the UWC movement – from the International Office to national committees, from sister colleges and schools to alumni and other supporters of UWC. We designed the programme surrounding the International Board Meeting so that it provided our guests with opportunities – through presentations by students, lesson observations, guided tours and other events and adventures – to connect with the students and staff of our College and the spirit of the place.

The opening session took place in the auditorium – with an opening address by the Rektor, a slideshow of the academic year set to music, and an introduction to the members of the International Board (followed by a Q & A session). Our aim was to introduce guests to the distinctive ingredients of this UWC campus – and we received some extremely positive feedback from those who were here.

The feedback from the Council Meeting in April was also highly positive: from informal engagements to the workshops on careers offered by the Council members, from the quality of the discussions in the main meeting to the dinner (with the theme, ‘Snow in Springtime’) and student performance in the Høegh in the evening.

The UWC RCN Annual Report 2016 – a printed encapsulation of our work and reflection on the year gone by – and the Survivors of Conflict Annual Report (for the Norwegian MFA) were both released to coincide with the annual Council meeting.

As part of the programme, we set up some Action Plan Focus Groups (Academic, Extra-Academic, Pastoral, Management, Stewardship and Impact) – these workshops were open to Council members, Education and Support Staff and both the outgoing and the newly elected Student Councils – for discussion of certain areas identified by the Board.

During the course of the Council Meeting, we were also able to confirm the election of new members of both the College’s Council and Board.

The Rektor attended the Heads’ biannual meeting in Southern Africa and also met in London with Patrick Smulders of the Horizon Foundation and Hannah Tumpel (the new Head of Communications at the International Office).

We received the news that the IKEA Foundation had decided not to enter into a partnership with UWC / RCN. We are, of course, disappointed but we appreciated the detailed, thoughtful and reflective letter outlining the rationale behind the decision. The Rektor has written to thank Per Heggenes, the CEO, for his interest and support of our work. We appreciated his meaningful engagement with our students and staff last year - and his commitment to staying in touch with us.

It was with deep sadness that we were informed that Marín Rós Tumadóttir, a 2001 graduate from RCN, had passed away in Reykjavik in late March.

Graduation takes place this weekend and we have decided to invite Marianne Andresen as our guest of honour. We have been working, in tandem with a student team, on improving the quality of the event in Flekke on the eve of Graduation and the welcome / reception for families during their stay on campus.

The Rektor's, Chief Operating Officer's and Director of Development's focus over the summer will be on the June / July programme here at RCN and also on developing the action plan. RCN will be sending a delegation to the Pastoral Care Conference at Pearson College in June and we are currently planning on forming a delegation for the UWC Congress planned in Trieste for October.

We are making steady progress in the evaluation process of the Red Cross Cooperation. We have taken all the feedback received so far - from the SoF and national Red Cross, our staff, Student Council, Board and Council – and we have built it into proposed new drafts of the cooperation agreement and the Red Cross diploma. In terms of timeline, our hope is that we are in a position to launch the revised diploma towards the beginning of the next academic year for incoming first years.

As mentioned above, we received many emails from members of the International Board. Jill Longson (Vice Chair) wrote:

'We can't thank you enough for such a truly remarkable and memorable weekend! It was probably the most enjoyable and inspiring visits to a UWC school or college I have ever had, full of meaning, great fun and great spirit. The wonderfully positive and supportive atmosphere at the college was evident; the warm welcome that we received was much appreciated and our individual and collective contact with all the college community at different times was simply brilliant. There is no doubt UWC RCN is a remarkable and very special place.

That had to be simply the best Board weekend we've ever had! All thanks to your fabulous team for giving us such varied, poignant and fun range of experiences. The UWC RCN spirit is high and it felt very special to be within such a warm, welcoming and inclusive community.'

An encouraging reminder that we are fulfilling our educational mission here at RCN.

Richard D A Lamont
Rektor
3rd May 2016