

**Message to Support and Education Staff delivered on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2016**

**By Tove Veierød, Chair of RCN's Board**

On behalf of the Board I wish all of you welcome to a new school year at RCN - and a special welcome to you who are new members of the staff. I do hope that you will find your time here at RCN interesting and inspiring - and that you will enjoy being part of this exceptional institution - and enjoy life here in the Fjords!

I think it is a great privilege to be here for the Staff Introduction Week to observe how it is being organized - to get new and useful information - and to meet with all of you as part of these days.

I am truly proud and think it is a great privilege to have the position as Chair of the RCN Board.

Warm thanks to all of you - Administrative Staff, Support and Education Staff for your engagement and for the great job you all do to make RCN a unique school within the UWC movement - developing the potential of our students and fostering their intellectual skills, emotional intelligence, responsibility and service to others.

I will just mention two recent examples to prove that this is an exceptional school in so many ways. HM Queen Sonja - who we are fortunate to have as Patron of our school, and who also visits it regularly - after having watched the show at the end of an active and interesting day of our Jubilee last September, was truly moved when she ended her speech by saying "Every time I come here it is even better". It is easy to agree with her!

The other example I will mention is the response from the UWC International Board that had its meeting here at RCN at the end of February this year. I happen to be Chair of the Chairs of the 16 other UWC schools and colleges, and in that capacity I am a member of the International Board. I invited the International Board to Flekke in mid-winter to give the members an insight into what makes this school special – and it was a great success! The program the college designed made it possible for the Board members to meet with the students, attend classes, speak with teachers, watch a very good cultural show by the students, and they even participated in Folkedans - and many also used the opportunity to try skiing.

The response was overwhelming - and in addition to warm thanks from the Board members- stressing the hospitality and the uniqueness of this school, they said that it would be most difficult to be the next host of the International Board meeting after the experience they had at RCN in February! My compliments and thanks go to all of you who contributed to the success!

RCN is fortunate to have an engaged and engaging Administrative, Support and Education Staff - all vitally important to make these two years formative for our students, and supporting them in reaching the aim of UWC: "Making education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future" - ensuring that the students gain the skills to also become agents of positive change. Last year the RCN Board adopted the strategic plan for RCN. It is an ambitious plan that we will follow up with an action plan.

A new strategic plan is also on the agenda of the International Board, and will be discussed at Council and Congress in Trieste in October - and finally at the Board meeting in February 2017. This is also an ambitious plan for the UWC movement. The new UWC strategy beyond 2016 focuses on three core functions: Education, National committees and Engagement / Outreach, while the RCN strategic plan also focuses on Nordic, Humanitarian and Environmental values.

We are also in the process of signing a new agreement with the Red Cross - and I want to underline the great importance of our cooperation with the Red Cross - both locally and nationally - which has developed in a very positive way in recent few years. Sven Mollekleiv - President of the Red Cross in Norway – has been invited to be a key note speaker at the UWC Congress in Trieste.

I will end this speech by quoting from the Final Word of the RCN Strategic Plan 2020, because I think it describes and sums up the ambitions we have as college and Board for RCN. I will start by quoting part of a letter from a student graduating in 2015 - which in a very positive way describes the current strength of RCN. We do hope and wish this to be the experience of all our students!

'Here is where we have students who are truly interesting and interested, staff who are really inspiring and inspired, and together we create an engaged and engaging community that actively cares and supports each other's ambitions, for ourselves and for the world'

And finally I draw our attention to the final paragraph of RCN's strategic plan:

'Our task ahead is to develop further our relevance within society and to help shape the ethical leaders of tomorrow. With a clear set of objectives and collaborative effort, we can provide a clear path to UWC Red Cross Nordic's future. This should certainly stand at the heart of UWCRCN's Strategy 2020.'

Best wishes to all of you for some interesting and inspiring days!

Tove Veierød  
Chair of RCN's Board