

Rektor's Report – Second Quarter 2017

Student Matters

Since the last Board Meeting in early March, there have been some outstanding events both on and off campus: Gender Week, Ridderrennet, Youth Teamwork and Leadership Day, Landmine Awareness Day, Global Concerns (Nordic – Arctic focus), the AfriCaribbean bazaar and show, the Visual Arts exhibition, the inaugural International Romani Day, Leirskule training week, Campus Clean-Up, Earth Weekend, a Music for Sustainability Concert, the spring Fjord & Fjell, a performance of 'One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest', a film directed and produced by staff with two students delivering superb interpretation of Pinter's play 'Ashes to Ashes' – and much, much more!

On Sunday March 12th, UWC Red Cross Nordic hosted its second TEDx event and the second one ever held in Sogn og Fjordane. The organizing committee involved 12 students, with technical support coming from students on the 'Media and Communications' course at Hafstad vidaregåande skule. The programme was divided into four sections: 'Politically Speaking', 'The Future', 'Lived Experiences', 'Perspectives'. A total of twelve speakers (seven guests and five from the campus) shared a variety of stories and ideas – including travel on earth and in space, non-violent communication and the concept of 'Slow TV' here in Norway. There were musical performances as part of the programme and two student groups, LEAF and SOS, provided refreshments in some of the breaks.

Maria (Colombia) and Ghada (Palestinian in Lebanon) were both invited to represent RCN at a conference in London put on by the Tutu UK Foundation – Maria later the same week was a panellist representing UWC at the Skoll Forum for Social Entrepreneurship - held in Oxford. Both proved to be exceptional ambassadors for RCN.

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 – especially during the exam season. 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 and learning support at the College over the past couple of years have made an impact on each student's overall experience and their performance in the IB exams at the end of the RCN programme.

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 2017 in Norway (he also won this prize in 2016). Nikita will now represent Norway at the next stage of the Olympiad.

Two students won prizes in this year's Norwegian Contest for Young Scientists (with 123 participants and 21 finalists): a second prize for Amanda (Åland) and third prizes for Nikita (Belarus) for their project submissions

A group of four students was invited to participate in the final of Wharton School of Business' Global Investment Competition for High Schools – the RCN group was placed third overall with more than 600 teams competing across the world. A tremendous initiative / achievement.

Two students have been selected to represent RCN on Semester at Sea (these two scholarships are underwritten by Shelby Davis): Amanda (Åland) and Emma (Denmark).

Four RCN teams won seed funding from GoMad for their community service projects back in their home countries.

We are in the process of developing a partnership with Bergen University which promises to be very exciting.

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

We received the excellent news that Emma Du Marchie Sarvaas (based in Tanzania for a gap year), who decided to postpone some of her IB exams, has won a place to read medicine in the Netherlands with the help of a special reference from the College.

We have also run a review process – started in January 2016 and revisited between January and April 2017 - for the RCN calendar. Our main priority has been to examine and change if necessary the structure of the RCN academic year, given our specific context, to improve health & wellbeing of both students (& staff). The feedback received from both Education Staff, Support Staff and members of the UWC Connect team – and the Student Council - has been extremely helpful to improve the proposal(s) during the course of this consultation process. Special credit should go to Alistair who has been in charge of this calendar review process – listening and responding to feedback in meetings / by email / in person, considering solutions, responding to ideas about protecting and developing quality teaching contact hours, identifying priorities, and applying critical scrutiny to the designs under consideration.

We shall run a pilot year and see how we can improve the calendar for the following year. It is hoped that the new calendar will have a significant impact on the student (and staff) experience.

Some colleagues have been working on developing the RCN Safety Net – and current piloting a course on health and wellbeing with some first year students.

In 2015, we decided to replace the usual timetable on May Day with a walk to the top of our local mountain, Jarstadheia. This continues to be a very special occasion. Nearly all first years, one intrepid Finnish second year (straight out of an exam), 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 as we walked along the ridge from Rakneberg back to campus.

This year we did not have teenagers from our local mottaks with us for 'Til Topps Jarstadheia' - next year we will look to develop our partnership with Bergum Mottak. The Daily Leader wrote recently: 'The students have been a great support of the residents and mottak in many past years. The UWC visits have been strength for us in many ways'.

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 at the Red Cross cabin at Langeland. This has become an excellent tradition in recent years at RCN.

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 key focus areas. 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.

Vicky (Greece) is our new Red Cross Student Rep and she and her team put much time and effort into delivering an excellent set of event to raise awareness of the International Red Cross Day on 8th May.

The time between the end of classes / exams and graduation is invariably a challenging time – at the time of writing, the spirit in the second year camp is positive with plans being implemented for the final phase and graduation.

We are in the process of planning an exciting final phase of term with first years – an overnight trip to Svanøy, the Science Group 4 project, some subject-specific field days and På Flukt.

We are also pleased to report that we will be admitting two new students as part of our Survivors of Conflict Programme programme – one male student from Cambodia and a male student from Liberia.

Four House Day Rooms have been renovated during the course of this term with a planned extension for Denmark House in the summer. The Maintenance Team, House Mentors and other key staff deserve special praise for their work towards improving the student experience in the Houses.

The following students have been put forward as Davis-Mahindra scholars: Flor (Argentina), Johanne (Norway), Nikita (Belarus), and Ravi (India).

Management and Staffing

In early March, the College booked the Red Cross cabin at Langeland for a weekend for staff and their children.

There have been significant developments in the establishing of the Admissions Development Team. We ran a process for admission of Sof IB places and had over 20 interested applicants via VIGO with two candidates selected. The team has been working on how to improve the timeline with set and well communicated deadlines for each stage of the process.

We had an intern, Loredana Stroe (Romania / Italy), here for over a month working with the Foundation Year students as she considers a career in teaching. She wrote at the end of her stay at RCN: ‘I just want to thank you again for this great opportunity. I’ve met amazing new people and had a fantastic time. And it was wonderful to experience teaching in such a challenging and stimulating environment’.

It was a pleasure to host Annelieke Wognum from Leiden University for a month-long teaching placement in April. Annelieke 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, History and Global Politics – and contributed to the Foundation Year Programme. Annelieke was fully engaged in extra academic commitments. We have written to the Course Coordinator saying that we would be open to applications not just from Social Science interns.

We continue to be keen to support those embarking on teaching careers and looking for a work experience in chosen subjects. We have a number of interns pencilled in for next year.

This year, the staffing has been a complex jigsaw with the announcement post Easter of the resignation of a member of staff and another appointee withdrawing a month after writing to accept a position. This has had significant ramifications in finalising staffing, the timetable and housing allocation. The Rektor is extremely grateful to members of the EMT for their work in recruiting high calibre staff and ensuring as smooth a transition as possible – and to the various Hiring Committees for their contributions to these processes.

We are currently in the midst of an interview process for a new art teacher (60%) and are looking, given the time scale and quality of applications, to make an appointment locally in the first instance. Reidun made the decision after Easter to retire at the end of this academic year after 22 years of extraordinary association and contribution to the College as an Art Teacher, Advisor, House Mentor, and Senior House Mentor.

We are also working in tandem with the Askvoll and Fjaler kommunes and RKHR re the appointment of a psychologist – this will, in effect, provide RCN with a psychologist on campus for two days per week in term time.

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

Jimmy	English B, English Lang & Lit, Learning Support
Libby	One term appointment – Theatre Arts / TOK and former Dean of Students at UWC Pearson College

We are currently in the process of finalising the house mentor and advisor teams – and the allocation of accommodation.

There will be various events at the end of term to thank outgoing staff (and those going on leaves of absence) for their enormous contribution to RCN.

It was with great sadness that we learnt on the morning of Saturday 29th April that Else Antonisen had passed away following a period of illness. Else had worked in the Kantine team at UWC Red Cross Nordic since 1995 and was a much valued, warm-hearted and utterly committed colleague and friend. As part of her work, she would be responsible for hosting our patron, HM Queen Sonja, at Bekker House on her biennial trips – and she hosted the royal team with pride and distinction. During her retirement, Else remained committed to RCN - popping in on a regular basis and she kindly offered to help Barbara run a sewing EAC in PBL week in October 2016. Representatives of the College attended her funeral and laid a wreath with a special note on behalf of the staff and the students of UWC RCN. The reception for family and friends was held in RCN's kantine – it was a special send off in a deeply appropriate place and special thanks must go to our hosting team who delivered this reception.

In this last quarter, the Education and Support Staff Reps have not reported any concerns by email or in person to members of the management teams. The AMU team has been working on a challenging personnel issue with the assistance of Stamina Helse. The Teaching Union Rep passed on a concern about the timeframe

for the allocation of subjects for the timetable for next term – and, following discussion, he understands that the Deputy Rektor and other members of the EMT are working hard to design the timetable at the same time as taking into consideration new staffing appointments at this late stage of term, student subject choices etc.

Each member of staff has a *medarbeidersamtale* 2017 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.

The forthcoming Staff Introduction Week in August is currently being designed to include professional development and team building for both Education and Support Staff. We shall also be working with Stamina Helse this summer on delivering some workshops during Staff Introduction Week on promoting the Norwegian Work Environment – including communications, email etiquette, and protocols for handling conflict.

Our Staff Room has also been renovated and we have introduced a subscription of publications. This renovation has been undertaken to provide a better space for the benefit of staff in their workplace. It has been favourably received by staff and visitors.

A staff koseleg event is planned for this Friday evening – a member of staff will be presenting on his experiences as a Buddhist monk.

Two members of staff stepped onwards to new projects and positions. Please find below extracts from letters / emails they sent on the eve of departure:

Luo Dan, our Chinese teacher associated with the Confucius Institute, wrote to the College on departure: 'Thank you for your patience and all your help. Without your help, [I] would not complete successfully the teaching at UWC RCN. It's an honour for me to work with you and so many excellent teachers here.'

Elisabet, the outgoing Daily Leader of UWC Connect, wrote: 'I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you for a great time and true learning experience here at UWC. I can honestly say that I had the pleasure of working with some inspiring and competent people'.

These are endorsements of the collegial environment we strive to build and maintain at RCN.

Final Remarks

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, 'Earth day') and student performance in the Høegh in the evening. The evening concluded with a speech for Tove Veierød in tribute to her commitment to our College as Chair of the RCN Board. She was given a watercolour of the fjord and College from the Council, Board, staff and students to thank her for her extraordinary commitment to the College.

As part of the programme, we set up some Focus Groups (Environmental, Humanitarian and Nordic Pillars, Fee Strategy, Fundraising, UWC Nordic Short Course) – 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 Central Management Team and the Chairs of the RCN Council and 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 including Kristin Vinje as Chair of the Board.

Trine Skie Grande, Head of Venstre in Norway, also visited the campus on the day of the Council Meeting. She kindly ran a workshop for students and attracted some significant attention from the local press.

Hannah Tümpel, UWC Director of Communications and Engagement, attended our Council meeting on behalf of the International Office. She wrote a summary of her experiences in the introduction to the April monthly newsletter from the IO, highlighting in particular one of our College Meetings.

The UWC RCN Annual Report 2017 – a printed encapsulation of our work and reflection on the year gone by – was released to coincide with the annual Council meeting. The Survivors of Conflict Annual Report (for the Norwegian MFA) was published in early May.

The Rektor attended the Heads’ biannual meeting in Costa Rica and the 10th anniversary event held by our sister College, UWC Costa Rica. He also flew, as the Head of the UWC Task Force, in early May to visit UWC Thailand and to write a progress report for the UWC International Board.

Anna Lord, Chair of UWCSEA’s Board of Governors, visited the College in late April.

Graduation takes place next weekend and we have decided to invite Hans Von Sponeck (Former Assistant UN Secretary General to Iraq) 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.

In the period post examination, RCN will be hosting Monica Greeley here for a two day visit as the next stage of achieving membership status of CIS (the Council of International Schools). The Education Management Team members – led in this project by Pete Wilson - have working towards an online platform with RCN’s policies, commentaries and self-evaluation. This has been an important process for the team. Over the past five years, we have been reviewing, revising and creating new policies to underpin the operational side of UWC Red Cross Nordic. Some have required considerable amount of work from many contributors - from the Staff Personnel Handbook to the Accommodation Handbook, from the Student Handbook to UWC RCN Strategy 2020. This on-line process has, in preparation for the membership visit, served to:

- Remind us of the progress we have made in recent years;
- Include other members of the Education and Central Management Teams in the preparation phase for the visit and in reviewing the policies currently in place;
- Helped us to measure our College against a set of standards;
- Guided us to areas we need to focus our energies on through self-reflection and evaluation.

We have also consulted the Board members of the College and have briefed the staff members in a series of general staff meetings as to the rationale behind the accreditation process - and the progress made so far. We see this as an opportunity to develop our college for the benefit of both our students and staff.

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.

The Director of Development and Rektor shall be visiting Stockholm, Åland and Helsinki in week 26 – refreshing old and forging new partnerships.

Angie Toppan, our Learning Support Coordinator, will be representing RCN at a conference (focused on learning support) in June at Atlantic College for staff from all campuses of UWC.

I would, however, like to highlight two email correspondences – one from a teacher and one from a parent - which uplift the soul and remind us, that for many, we strive to do the very best by our students and staff:

A teacher in her first year at RCN: 'I feel continuously supported being a teacher here at RCN and realise that this is truly special. Due to the support and dedication to the College, the mentoring, the students' willingness to work and learn, and the sharing of this daily adventure with many of the other members of our community. I have never felt regret for the decision to move here for two years'.

We also received a letter from a parent of a Danish first year student:

'First of all, thank you for the fantastic school that the staff are creating every day for the students of UWC Red Cross Nordic'.

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

Richard D A Lamont
Rektor
10th May 2017