

Your Majesty, it is both a great pleasure and a great honour to welcome you back to UWC Red Cross Nordic in your capacity as our patron.

You have been a supporter of the College since it started - and we hugely appreciate your ongoing commitment to this College and to the UWC Movement as a whole.

From what I have read in our archives, you were a supportive voice in your time as the Vice President of the Norwegian Red Cross from 1987 to 1990 about the possibility and potential of a partnership between the Norwegian Red Cross and UWC. I am pleased to report that the Red Cross remains an important part of our identity – with shared values and philosophy at the heart of our work.

I remember well when we first met in September 2012 in Oslo's City Hall at an event to celebrate 50 years since the founding of Atlantic College and the UWC movement. You turned to me at the opening of our planned introduction and kindly told me that I looked far too young to be the Rektor – triggering an uncontrollable blush from the newly appointed Rektor of RCN.

I have spent much of the past 20 months since our first meeting learning about the unique identity of this country and this College – as well as, I suspect, ageing significantly under **the 'rektorial' burden of responsibility.**

The 200th year of the Norwegian constitution is upon us and we look forward to our celebrations here at Haugland in partnership with the local community. My reading has helped me to understand the role of a constitutional monarchy within Norwegian society, first defined at the Eidsvoll Assembly on the 17th May 1814, and the moments in Norwegian history when members of the royal family have played a prominent and vital part in maintaining the Norwegian spirit – **from King Haakon's BBC World Service broadcasts to the nation from exile in London during German occupation of Norway to the Royal House's response to the tragic events both in Oslo and the island of Utøya on the 22nd July 2011.**

Your Majesty, we appreciate your strong sense of social engagement both abroad – from your work in support of the Norwegian Refugee Council to your visit in 2010 to one of the **world's largest refugee camps** on the border between Somalia and Kenya – and at home – with your concern with conditions for immigrant women in Norway and other vulnerable and sometimes voiceless constituencies within the population.

And we are deeply appreciative of your work as our patron - raising public awareness of Red Cross Nordic.

The landscape of education is changing here in Norway as the education ministry seeks to adapt to a changing population – **with Norway's immigrant population trebling to 14%** over the past decade. We feel that we have something to contribute to both the debate and the development of education in the country given our DNA of 200 students representing 95 countries alongside 30% selected from across the Nordic region.

Since your last visit to the College, we have developed a partnership with Bergum Mottak in Førde – with weekly visits from groups of our students to the mottak and regular invitations to join activities here on campus. For the second year in a row, we have invited a group of adults from the mottak to join our three day training course for a Red Cross First Aid Certificate – a stay this January which included an introduction to the world of Gammaldans, a session in our swimming pool at Haugland and the opportunity to be hosted for tea and cakes in the Student Village.

We received a kind and thoughtful letter from Kerrion from the Democratic Republic of Congo – **'On behalf of the Bergum Mottak, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the UWC students and staff for the love [we received] from the day we left the Mottak. The students made us feel very [] welcome and appreciated, something we don't often get here in Førde.**

What struck me was the love for one another the students had, colour-blind to where in the world one comes from, instead exchang[ing] ideas and cultures like brothers and **sisters of the same family...[with] respect for one's religion, opinion and privacy – in short we were in planet UWC, [and] we were thankful.'**

A group from our College has been invited by the Sogn og Fjordane Red Cross to join the annual Norwegian Red Cross ascent of Galdhøpiggen. 1000 people from over 60 countries take part in this activity which promotes integration in Norway under the Red Cross banner. We will be taking part in partnership with the Sogn og Fjordane Red Cross with residents from the Bergum Mottak invited to participate.

I am sure it is of interest to our students and staff that each year since 2006, there is an award in your name for a Norwegian school which has demonstrated excellence in its **promotion and celebration of 'inclusion and equality' as vital ingredients of education –** part of the prize includes the presentation of a woodcut entitled **'Inn i varmen' ('Into the warmth')**.

We too believe in the integrity of difference and seek to promote inclusion and equality with academic, social and cultural fellowship at the heart of our educational model – and shall continue to forge partnerships both in Norway and abroad to foster and to develop these principles.

In 2015, we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Norwegian Red Cross and the 20th anniversary of the College. 2015 will also herald the opening of a United World College in China – a project which has taken a long time to flourish but which represents an opportunity for educational partnership at both College, regional and national levels. Each **year, we continue to take a student from the Chinese Disabled People's Federation –** a partnership that you first suggested in the opening years of this College.

At last summer's end of academic year staff barbecue at Sperrastova, I noticed a carving on the architrave above the front door of Bekker House – a set of carved wooden hands caught in the moment of a handshake, an international symbol of connection, of friendship, of companionship, of partnership. There is a photograph of the carving on the inside cover of tonight's programme - and I take it as my metaphor today.



Christian Bekker, the owner of Bekker House and most of the land on which the Rehabilitation Centre and the College now stand, gave his whole estate to the Sogn og Fjordane Red Cross in his will of 1976 - **outlining that he wished it to be used for 'the encouragement, pleasure and inspiration for (other) young people with an urge and ability to contribute later in life'**.

Thor Heyerdahl, the Norwegian explorer, was invited to give the inaugural speech at the official opening of the College in 1995. In his address, he invited members of the RCN community to **hold out 'an open hand to fellow humans everywhere'**. This message has, I understand, been very much at the heart of our teaching for every generation of students.

Following in the footsteps of Christian Bekker, Thor Heyerdahl and those responsible for the founding of the College, we continue to encourage our students and our staff to contribute to society, both now and in the future, by reaching an open hand to fellow humans everywhere.

The students have designed an evening of entertainment for you – and we hope to reintroduce you to the diversity and the magic of our world here at Red Cross Nordic – or as Kerrion so perceptively calls it - **'planet UWC'**.

It is a privilege to welcome you and our other guests here this evening *Inn i varmen* - **'into the warmth'** - of our campus.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard D A Lamont'.

Richard D A Lamont
Rektor
UWC Red Cross Nordic