

Rektor's Quarterly Report – September 2016

Summer News

Wenche Andreassen, Haakon and Knut Gresvig visited the College on 3rd June. This provided us with an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and plans for Tom's legacy.

The last weekend of the academic year saw a group of students and two teachers travelling with the Sogn og Fjordane Red Cross to Lom for the annual Norwegian Red Cross event, Til Topps. The hike (with circa 1400 participants) to the top of Galdhøpiggen provided a stunning view from the top of the mountain and the perfect opportunity to interact with local Norwegians and with immigrants who had recently moved to Norway.

On the same weekend, the College in tandem with the Norwegian Red Cross ran the annual På Flukt ('On the Run') simulation for first year students. There had been much preparation in the build up to this event (marking the end of the first year RCN experience) including a Global Concerns Day on migration, a visit from Mina Moghadam earlier in the week (UWC AC alumna, Norwegian National Committee member and former political vice president of the Norwegian Red Cross Youth – and currently Children/Youth Care Coordinator at Mysebu Transittmottak), and many interactions with local mottaks. Avis (RCN's Red Cross Coordinator) and Andreas (the team leader from the Norwegian Red Cross) – with support from a selection of Red Cross Youth Volunteers and RCN Education Staff – put together a simulation which saw students imagining themselves migrating from Somalia to Norway. The weather was absolutely stunning over the weekend – clear blue skies and up to 30°C – which made for challenging conditions for the students as they tackled the 24 hour simulation.

På Flukt is an integral part of the RCN Red Cross Diploma and aims to encourage students to look through the lens of others. At the final session in the auditorium, an RCN student who had been a refugee was given the final word – he explained to all gathered that no simulation can possibly recreate the uncertainty that comes with being a refugee but that he appreciated that the Red Cross and the College ran an event which challenged students based here in Norway to develop their perspectives, compassion and understanding of the refugee situation in the world today.

In mid-June, a UWC Pastoral Care Conference was held at Pearson College, Canada, over five days. It was designed to bring together residential staff from all UWCs in the spirit of connectivity and collaboration. We were delighted that there were representatives from all the UWC schools and colleges, including the two prospective campuses in Thailand and Japan. All the teams present at the conference are committed to providing a strong, supportive and responsive pastoral programme on each of our campuses. The RCN Delegation consisted of Larry (Rektor), Alistair (Deputy Rektor), Judit (House Mentor), Lena (nurse) and Arne (Director of Development).

Laurence Nodder and Larry Lamont, Rektors of UWC RBC and UWC RCN respectively, were the Heads present and responsible for the conference.

The residential teams present at the conference came together having listened to feedback on respective campuses from residential staff and having brought many student ‘voices’ (experiences, struggles, mental health issues, and personal UWC challenges) in their backpacks. The programme consisted of presentations, workshops and discussion groups on many pastoral subjects including: health and wellness, safety and security, supporting students of concern, gender and sexuality issues, mindfulness and social and emotional learning, dealing with trauma, promoting regular sleep patterns, and much more.

The main objective of the conference was for participants to share experiences and learning and then to take back what we learnt to our respective schools and colleges. In essence, this was a conference designed to provide professional development, a springboard for ongoing collaboration and support, for the benefit for the students on our campuses.

The Annual UWC Admissions Meeting was organized to coincide with the Pastoral Care Conference – and we spent one day with a shared agenda. Sarah Hamilton, Director of Boarding at Atlantic College, captured the spirit of the conference in the final plenary session: ‘I have worked at AC for over 20 years and this conference has helped me feel part of a global UWC community for the very first time. Thank you.’

Over the summer, the College has been very busy with Red Cross Summer camps for underprivileged families and youth from the region alongside a series of other activities. A Lion’s Camp for the Disabled was also part of this summer’s programme. The Rektor expressed his thanks, in a series of addresses at the start of the academic year, to the Support, Administrative and UWC Connect staff on campus for their work and commitment over the course of June and July. The results continue to suggest that the college-wide focus on improving residential, pastoral and learning support systems has made an impact on each student’s overall experience and provided a sound platform for academic success at the end of the RCN programme.

The Summer Course students, teachers and volunteers arrived on campus in late July for a three week prologue to the launch of the academic year with the emphasis on language acquisition and confidence building for a smaller cohort. Pete Wilson, the Summer Course Coordinator, was responsible for the overview of an insightful and committed delivery of a revised programme - and was assisted by a team of teachers and volunteers who made important and supportive contributions throughout. The teaching was led by Lis and Paco (Sweden / Portugal) and they were supported by the following volunteers: Nina, Sharanya and Farhiya (three RCN alumni) and Max.

The summer course students spent each morning in class practising English, working on group projects and learning more about RCN as well as about each other. Outside the classroom, the students took part in a variety of activities, such as kayaking, hiking, archery,

and low ropes, - and, at the weekends, went on various excursions (including the Red Cross cabin at Langeland).

The Summer Course group also included our three new members of the Survivors of Conflict programme: Sreythai (Cambodia), Sarah (Iraq) and Hari (Nepal).

There were a number of students on / off campus during the summer break for various reasons. We set up a one month placement at a residential school in the UK for Elias (Argentina – SOS) in June and he received a glowing report from his hosts as an ambassador for RCN.

We also over the summer received a letter from the Course Leader, Errol Ertugruloğlu, of the World Teacher Programme at Leiden University: ‘Please extend our thanks and appreciation to the entire UWC Red Cross Nordic team for the wonderful internship experience you so generously provided to Sarina.’ Sarina came on a teacher placement over the Easter period as part of an ongoing cooperation between Leiden University and RCN.

The Maintenance Team worked hard throughout the summer. Some major work has been done (the painting of teachers’ village houses, Iceland House Flat, the House Mentor residences for Denmark and Sweden Houses, developments in Uncle Tom’s Cabin, a bathroom in Denmark House, tarmac disabled access to Finland House, the redesign of the front of Norway House, the installing of conversation tables around the campus and much more). These developments were flagged up at beginning of term events for staff and students.

Other areas of focus for the team on campus over the summer included: the design of a telephone policy, an update of our hiring processes, the preparation of the first wave of paperwork for CIS accreditation, salary adjustments following central negotiation, and website development amongst other work.

In the last fortnight of term, Evi (from Stamina Helse) conducted a Work Environment Survey at RCN and provided the analysis: 55 responses submitted; significant improvement from 2011 (moving from ‘decent’ to ‘good’ work environment); ‘The result from 2016 is altogether a very good result with positive improvements’; more support available from the member of staff responsible for the medarbeidersamtale; appreciation of a job well done; lower level of conflict; better communication; clearer goals; experiencing higher level of positive challenges; and the relationships towards both colleagues and team leaders are better. The next Work Environment Survey is scheduled for May 2018. With the feedback in mind, we designed the final draft of Staff Introduction Week.

Staff Introduction Week

We welcomed the following members of staff at the start of this term:

Name	Position	Nationality
Marloes Vrolijk	Global Politics Teacher	Dutch
Julius Krajnak	Mathematics Teacher	Slovakian
Lisa Jokivirta	Humanities Teacher	Finnish / Canadian
Cristina Pinazo	Spanish ab initio	Spanish
Alexandra Mackay	EVS Learning Support	English
Joshua Macfarlane	EVS Red Cross	English
Liusaidh Brown	Trainee	Scottish

Ellen also returned from maternity leave and re-joined the Admin staff. The following staff members have taken on new responsibilities: Dan (Sweden) has taken on the role of House Mentor of Sweden House; Mariangela (Italy) has taken on TOK and Italian ab initio; and Judit (Hungary) has taken on a class of E Systems. Lena, the College Nurse, has requested to reduce her position to 80% for the coming year and we have made an arrangement for Care Centre support from the nursing team at RKHR. Ashok Pratap Singh has taken on the role of Director of Residential Life (and House Mentor of Denmark House) and has already made a positive and impressive start as a member of the Education Management Team.

Following helpful feedback from new staff this time last year, we continued to improve the induction programme with emphasis on welcome and support (both professional and personal) to make the transition as smooth and straightforward as possible for new staff. The introduction of the new College Personnel Handbook has made a huge difference.

Staff Introduction Week provided an opportunity for staff to learn about the activities that have been happening on campus over the course of June and July, for Support and Education Staff to reconnect after the summer break, and for professional development / training and for preparation for the beginning of the academic year. This year's Staff Introduction Week has featured a 'pot luck' dinner, induction for new staff, meetings, presentations, discussions and collaborative projects. Professional development included training offered by a team of staff on communication (based on Red Cross Street Mediation) and intercultural understanding.

This year, we were joined by Tove Veierød – the Chair of our Board. This visit provided her with an opportunity to gain a flavour of professional development we offer staff, the induction we run for new staff and how we launch the academic year.

On the Thursday of Staff Introduction Week, we had our professional development and team building away day. Education and Support Staff were able to choose from three options based on the College's three pillars: a course on traditional Norwegian baking, an introduction to the German occupation of Norway during the Second World War, and an expedition to

Alden, a mountain island at the entrance to the Dalsfjord. The day finished with a staff barbecue at the Høegh. Staff Introduction Week focuses on working together and community building – how best to support each other as we, in turn, seek to support the students in our care.

Student Introduction Week

The second years returned on Saturday 20th August - after a highly successful Bergen Day - with the first years arriving at intervals during the first half of the following week.

On the first Monday, Pellegrino Riccardi was invited to the College on the recommendation of Hilde Genberg (RCN's Survivors of Conflict Programme Coordinator and formerly the College coordinator of the Fredskorps Partnership) – Hilde had previously heard Pellegrino speak at the annual FK summer camp on inter-cultural understanding.

We put together a programme for Pellegrino so that he could run a seminar for our second years (with the intention of helping them to prepare for and reflect on the arrival of the incoming first years) and so that he could run a training session for our Education Staff (with an open invitation to Support Staff) on intercultural communication and understanding given our deliberately diverse student and staff bodies. The training was insightful, humorous and thought-provoking – and we certainly hope to invite Pellegrino back to our campus for further training. The training for staff also complemented the training delivered in our Staff Introduction Week on the three pillars (Nordic, Humanitarian and Environmental), communication skills and a (re)introduction to inter-cultural understanding.

Madhulika Singh coordinated a first rate Student Introduction Week with the support of staff and second years – special praise must also go to the two members of the Student Council (Magnea and Bernard) on the Extra Academic Committee. The session 'Mandela 67' was a particular highlight – for the third year, in recognition of Mandela's humanitarian legacy and contribution as Honorary President of UWC, students gave presentations on humanitarian projects supported by RCN over the summer across the world.

Student Introduction Week culminated in another superb inter house football tournament on the ball rink – the staff team was eliminated in the opening stage.

It is pleasing to report that the majority of second years have generously welcomed and supported the first years in the opening weeks of term. When asked as to whether they feel that they have created a supportive and inclusive atmosphere for first years (and are proud of it), Student Council members reported that they felt that they have succeeded on the whole in comparison to what they experienced as first years.

The first full weekend of term saw a group of students attend Ridderdagene, the sister event to Ridderrrennet. For the past four years, RCN has been invited to take part in Ridderdagene – an annual event where people come together for a weekend at Storedal in South-Eastern

Norway to prove that everybody can participate in, and enjoy outdoor activities and sports regardless of ability.

Developments

There has been a great deal of preparation and activity over the months of July and August in preparation for UWC Day planned in September. The Nordic Ambassadors to Norway have agreed to come to the campus and we are looking forward to putting a programme together which will include a symposium on Nordic cooperation in a global context with special emphasis on education and migration. The final part of the day will be the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture: Axel Wernhoff (Swedish Ambassador to Norway and formerly Swedish Consul General based in Jerusalem): “Can the Middle East be Fixed?”

On Monday 12th September, our Standing Committees met for the first time – all were asked to consider how to improve the provisional programme for RCN Life Skills, how to revise their pages on the College’s website and how to revise the relevant areas of the College’s Action Plan.

We have been working with our colleagues at Dale Vgs to improve the current system of providing places at RCN to local Sogn og Fjordane students.

Elisabet Bøe, Daily Leader of UWC Connect, invited Board members and the members of the UWC Connect team to an overnight off campus strategy meeting in early September.

We have been invited to send representatives for the opening ceremonies of the new UWC College in Thailand: Tove Veierød and the Rektor (and a member of the Task Force) shall be attending the ceremony at UWC Thailand in early October.

The UWC International Office requests that each College delegation to the UWC Congress includes the following: Head; Chair; Advancement representative; Education representative and two students. Tess (the Netherlands and our Student Board Rep) and Mohammed (Iraq) will be part of the RCN delegation attending the UWC Congress in Trieste in late October. They will be joining Alistair and Daniel for a day at UWCAD with fellow students and educators – and they will then contribute to different elements of the Congress’ programme including delivering a workshop on ‘Living Deliberate Diversity: Inclusion’ in tandem with UWC Waterford Kamhlaba. The Rektor is the Head in charge of the design and implementation of the Education Stream at the Congress. Alistair will be one of two members of staff in charge of the conference at UWCAD.

Richard D A Lamont
Rektor

10th September 2016