

Rektor's Quarterly Narrative Report

Student Matters

The last Board Meeting took place the day after UWC Day.

'Education in times of Turmoil' was the title for the symposium hosted for students and staff in celebration of UWC Day and Peace One Day on September 21st. The Ambassadors to Norway from all the other Nordic countries were on the panel for the event. There was a focus on how a whole generation in war-torn areas are now at the risk of missing out on education entirely. In the evening, Axel Wernhoff (Swedish Ambassador to Norway and formerly Swedish Consul General based in Jerusalem) gave the RCN Nelson Mandela Annual Humanitarian Pillar Lecture – on the title "Can the Middle East be Fixed?"

Ambassador Axel Wernhoff delivered a highly stimulating and thought-provoking lecture which, in turn, initiated a series of perceptive and thoughtful questions from students in the audience.

The RCN extra-academic programme continues to offer exciting and enriching opportunities both on and off campus. Highlights of this period since the last Board Meeting include: the university fair; an International Food Table (Internasjonalt Matbord) in the Høegh building; an introduction to fly fishing; the Asian Bazaar and Cultural Show; and much more.

The Director of Extra-Academics put together a superb programme of challenging and imaginative educational opportunities in PBL week which included a 'No Limits' outdoor adventure, wilderness walking, kayaking trips, surfing and rock-climbing, an Italian retreat on a local island, kung-fu, yoga, an A21 campaign – and many other activities on and off campus. Silje Vallestad, UWC alumna and Norwegian Female Entrepreneur of the Year in 2011 and European Ambassador for Female Entrepreneurship also visited in this period. This was the most diverse programme of activities the Rektor could remember in his time at the College.

PBL Week concluded with a Nordic Folk Music Concert in the auditorium on the evening of Saturday 15th October – an outstanding achievement to produce such a daring and inspiring programme in so many different Nordic languages. Students from 11 different countries came together to learn about Nordic Folk Music. The concert featured an extremely diverse programme, starting with Swedish Kulning (traditional animal herding calls) and ballads; an Icelandic chant; a recitation from the Finnish national epic Kalevala; a reindeer herding joik; the Finlandia hymn; some Danish instrumental and dance melodies; and a stirring rendition of a Jakob Sande favourite. The stage was decked in flags of all the Nordic countries and the performance added a new dimension to the college's Nordic Pillar. It was an inspiring performance which introduced the audience to the variety and beauty of Nordic folk music.

On Friday 21st October, UWC Red Cross Nordic hosted a special educational focus (as part of our Humanitarian Global Concerns Day) on TV Askjonen and the Red Cross' work towards innocent victims of war. The day was organised by the students themselves, with invited guest speakers. The countries held in focus for TV Aksjonen were Syria, South Sudan, Somalia,

Myanmar, and Central America. Students from these countries had stories to tell that they shared with their fellow students. Students from local schools and centres for asylum seekers (mottak) were invited to join in. The presentations were a direct encounter with what it is like to flee the terrors of armed conflict and also on how the Red Cross works in dramatic circumstances to reach those in need. The student-led workshops focused on the nature of conflict and gave a glimpse into how it is experienced. A team of students – including those representing the College’s Survivors of Conflict Programme – were part of the TV Aksjonen collection team visiting homes in Fjaler on Sunday 23rd October. As part of the fundraising “dugnad”, students and staff arranged a special auction in support of the Red Cross. We encouraged all other schools in Sogn og Fjordane to do the same.

Queen Sonja (our patron and former Vice President of the Norwegian Red Cross) and Crown Princess Mette-Marit were patrons for this year’s TV Aksjonen. The money raised will be used in helping refugees who have come to Norway. 130,502 NOK was collected in Fjaler and RCN will contribute a further 13,065 NOK to the Fjaler fund following an auction and bake sale.

We have also hosted a series of guest speakers and visitors in this period. The Minister of Health, Bent Høie, visited our campus at Haugland with a delegation from Fjaler and Sogn og Fjordane Høyre. He showed a real interest in the operation of both the Rehabilitation Centre and our College. Mr Høie fully endorsed the focus on the resourcefulness of every person as something that unites the two institutions within health and education. The Minister also was given an insight into our Survivors of Conflict programme - current participants Mean (Cambodia) and Sara (Iraq) spoke about their experiences to the Minister and also to local MP Bjørn Lødemel, who has been an active supporter of the project. Mean and Sara said that they find their classes rewarding and challenging, and told about how they are engaged in more informal learning situations.

RCN Life Skills (formerly known as ‘Nordic Life Skills’) continues to develop as a holistic approach to the RCN pillars and as a values-based programme which helps first year students with the transition to UWC RCN, introduces them to key components before they step into the second year and beyond, and supports and develops our commitment to the UWC educational model. This week, for example, some staff and students are leading workshops for the session on the theme of ‘Health and Wellness’ – a timely focus given the challenges of November.

The EMT created a programme for November Break - for approximately two thirds of our students who remained on campus in this period - which provided a greater level of staff support and a range of both on and off campus opportunities – from a Red Cross workshop on Disaster Preparedness to excursions off campus (including the PBL trip to Åsane), from an MUN trip to Sandefjord to an invitation to participate in World Children’s Day in Førde.

The members of the EMT (with helpful contributions from the Student Council) have also thought carefully about the design of November which historically is a difficult month to navigate given the onset of winter, academic deadlines, and a level of fatigue after three months in session. The period between November Break and the end of term Christmas events has been

designed to include: the biennial Asian Cultural Bazaar and Show, special contact time with advisors and House Mentors (a new initiative), a bonfire and Christmas lights afternoon and a Thanksgiving Dinner (run by our North American students). It is important to continue to lift flagging spirits in late November before we enter into the final phase of term with its focus on Christmas.

In November, twenty visitors from Sørbøvåg Mottak joined us for an afternoon of canoeing and hiking. Half the group canoed to Raudbua while the others trekked through glorious mud to reach their destination. After making a fire on the rocky shore, the leirskule staff, who organised the afternoon, made hot chocolate which helped to warm cold hands. On the return journey walkers and canoeists changed places and miraculously, nobody capsized! A group was invited to participate in the Asian Bazaar and Cultural Show – part RCN’s continued commitment to the project ‘Meeting Place for Diversity’.

As expressed above, the Student Council continues to make a significant contribution to life on campus – and the EMT is grateful for its thoughtful and collaborative contributions to making RCN what it is.

The College’s Facebook page, website and monthly newsletter provide a comprehensive insight into student-related activities.

Following on from the Binary Feedback Meeting and discussions with the Academic Support Team, the students concerned, their subject teachers and National Committees, we can confirm that five students have been accepted into the Foundation Year programme: Ploy (Thailand), Sara (Iraq), Sreythai (Cambodia), Hari (Nepal), and Ladiba (Western Sahara)

We have adapted the timetables for the students on the Foundation Year programme with immediate effect so that they can postpone their study of certain subjects and concentrate on English acquisition and subjects of their choice. They have all expressed their thanks for the time and support invested in them by RCN staff.

A considerable amount of work has gone into this year’s Winter Programme which will be run for circa 30 to 35 first year students who cannot afford to fly home at Christmas. We continue to offer second years on travel support the opportunity to fly home at a critical time in advance of the IB mock and real exams – this comes at some expense to the College but we continue to feel that this is an important investment given the intensity of this academic term. We have redesigned the programme for 2016 so that it includes: a visit to Oslo (hosted by our network alongside a series of museums trips - including the Nobel Peace Centre and Kon-Tiki Museum); a stay at the Red Cross cabin at Langeland with a focus on outdoor activities; and the opportunity to visit host families during the final phase of the programme. We have also needed to extend the membership of this group to include first and second year students (those of refugee status from Sudan, Tibet etc) whose passport documentation will not allow them to fly home.

A delegation of students attended the Rafto Prize on Saturday 19th November in Bergen – it was the 30th anniversary event with the prize given to Yanar Mohammed (Iraq).

Five students have been selected (plus one member of staff) to attend the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony – given that the award has been made to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos (for his resolute efforts to bring the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end) we have invited a Colombian second year to represent his country and this College at this event.

Our systems to support students are certainly improving – we spoke at length to the Nordic National Committees in mid-November at their AGM on campus about the learning outcomes of the Pastoral Care Conference in June 2016 and pastoral developments at the College. Ashok, our new Director of Residential Life, gave his perspective on these developments and explained that we continue to work with the Student Council and Staff to improve (and make consistent) our delivery of pastoral care at RCN.

Management and Staffing

The new members of the Education Staff have made excellent starts and we are delighted to have them here. The Rektor is currently meeting them all between now and the end of term to discuss their experiences and impressions over the course of the term. So far, the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

Elisabet Bøe started full time as Daily Leader of UWC Connect on the 19th October 2015 and, following discussions in October, we agreed that she should resign and – as part of the transition - reduce her role to a 50% position until a successor would be found. She has been offered an irresistible opportunity by the County to run a hydrogen project which she first initiated in her former position. Elisabet has very much enjoyed her time on campus, working with her team to develop UWC Connect and is looking forward to staying connected to RCN as an ambassador for our work in the local region.

In January, we need to think carefully about the staffing for the next academic year taking into consideration new projects, leave of absence requests and resignations. We continue to have some high calibre individuals who have expressed an interest in working at the College, which is very encouraging and signals that RCN is seen as a stimulating and challenging place to work at.

The Union Rep popped in for a brief chat, following a Union Meeting, encouraging the team in charge of the timetable to finalise it asap each year so that teachers are aware well in advance of the subjects that they will be asked to deliver. Apart from this, 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.

We continue to work on policy development at RCN to underpin good practice in this Norwegian workplace with some focus given in this period to accommodation, hiring processes, food for staff in the kantine routines, host family practices etc.

We continue to run our system of medarbeidersamtale, in the spirit of collaboration, for members of both our Education and Support Staff – and this provides us with a helpful platform to share and to support each other.

Norsk lessons have continued this term for staff interested in learning the language – and the weekly class run by Hilde Genberg has now been split into two sessions (one for beginners and the other for those of intermediate level).

We continue to focus on team building and look for new ways to support staff: a drinks party was held at the end of the PBL week for all staff involved in running activities; a Halloween dinner was held in Sperrestova and run by a colleague; new members of staff were invited to a drinks reception to meet the Nordic NCs; House Mentors and spouses were invited to a buffet dinner at the Rektor's House on Thanksgiving night to thank them for their contributions to the residential side of the College; and we are all looking forward to the Staff Julebord. At the suggestion of a member of staff, we have also introduced an evening when members of staff can volunteer to give a presentation in informal surrounds to other members of staff on their own research interests / hobbies – the first one is scheduled for late November on 'Vulturine Ecology and Phenomenology'.

UWC Congress

In the last week of October, a delegation from RCN attended a conference at our sister college, UWC Adriatic, and then the two day UWC Congress in Trieste:

Pär Stenbäck	Chair of the RCN Council
Sven Mollekleiv	President of the Norwegian Red Cross
Tove Veierød	Chair of the RCN Board
Ivar Lund-Mathiesen	RCN Board Member (UWC Norge)
Liv Ronglan	RCN Board Member (Red Cross)
Elizabeth Sellevold	RCN Council Member (UWC Norge)
Larry Lamont	Rektor
Alistair Robertson	Deputy Rektor
Arne Osland	Director of Development
Daniel Toa-Kwapong	Geography Teacher
Kathini Cameron	Events Coordinator
Tess Luttikhuis	Student Rep on RCN Board and second year (The Netherlands)
Mohammed Swadi	Second year student (Iraq) and member of the Survivors of Conflict Programme

The Deputy Rektor co-led the conference held at UWCAD for education specialists and students from all sixteen colleges. The focus points included discussion on the UWC Educational Model and the education pages of the draft UWC strategic plan – the feedback from staff and students will be passed onto the UWC International Office. On the same evening, there was an event / opening reception at the main conference centre. 30 RCN alumni had registered for the Congress (with many of them representing National Committees) – we invited them by letter to join the RCN delegation at the opening reception and we thoroughly enjoyed connecting with them.

Sven Mollekleiv, President of the Norwegian Red Cross, delivered an outstanding keynote speech to launch the Congress under the title of *'Why the World Needs UWC'*. He received a standing ovation from over 550 delegates. We could not have hoped for a more relevant and thoughtful start to the event which fully underlined the value of the shared mission we have with the Red Cross. Later that day, the RCN team ran a 90 minute workshop on the theme of 'deliberate diversity and inclusion' in tandem with the Waterford Kamhlaba delegation. See Appendix I for the Rektor's introduction to the session. Students Mohammed Swadi Al-Bazoon (Iraq) and Tess Luttikhuis (the Netherlands) made important contributions to the success of this workshop and contributed to a student-led session on the UWC of their dreams on the final afternoon, and submitted a document on resulting 'Student Resolutions' – see Appendix II. The Congress focused on three streams: Education, National Committees and Strategy. It also proved to be a great opportunity for connecting with RCN alumni, our colleagues at other colleges, our partners representing NCs, and many others.

In preparation for the Congress and UWC Council, the Rektor submitted a three page College Annual Report (2015-6) to the International Office – and ran two workshops on RCN for Council members.

We have been asked to share the latest draft of the UWC strategy with our staff and students (via the Student Council) – and also with our Board members. We have included in the Board papers and placed as a discussion item.

Antonin Besse

UWC Red Cross Nordic heard the news that Antonin Besse, patron and honorary vice-president of UWC, had passed away and took the opportunity to extend our thanks to his family for his deep commitment to UWC since its founding and, in particular, for his support of students from the Yemen who have studied here at RCN over the past 21 years.

It was Antonin who bought and donated St Donat's Castle for the founding of Atlantic College back in 1962 and who, later, contributed to the founding of the UWCs in Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Closer to home, a few years ago the Deputy Rektor and Rektor were on the phone to the Yemeni National Committee and were in the process of giving a full report on the Yemeni students on campus at the time – a few minutes into the conversation, something began to

dawn on the Deputy Rektor and he began to mouth that 'Tony from the NC' was, in fact Antonin Besse II (one of the founding figures of UWC). Highly articulate, erudite and perceptive, Tony was committed to following the progress of Yemeni students on our campus – a phone call from Tony from his flat in Paris was never short and always enjoyable. With support from the British Council, he would carry out selections himself with his motto at the heart of his forging connection between the backgrounds of the students and UWC: 'From Nowhere to Somewhere'.

He was a great admirer of Tom Gresvig, one of the founding members of Red Cross Nordic, and regretted that he had never found an opportunity to visit our campus.

Our Yemeni students owe him a debt of gratitude and so do all members of our College, past and present, given the rich addition of our Yemeni students to our deliberately diverse community over the years.

Frenchman, Arabist, businessman, educator and friend – we thank him for all that he gave to UWC and educating for peace and a sustainable future.

Developments

We have submitted a detailed set of documents to CIS as part of the accreditation process and have now progressed to the Preparatory Evaluation Stage. We will next receive the evaluation team which will consist of a CIS School Support & Evaluation Officer and one peer evaluator.

We have also established an Admissions Development Team which meets weekly and consists of six members – this has been introduced to support and develop the admissions portfolio.

An RCN delegation was invited to attend the opening of UWC Thailand - an exciting development in the history of UWC. The Rektor was a member for the Task Force responsible for developing this educational project under the UWC banner.

The Chair and the Rektor extended the trip to include a visit to UWCSEA (East Campus) where we were given a three hour tour and introduced to the residential support structures in place for students. The RCN delegation took advantage of the trip to hold an alumni event in Singapore – open to alumni, parents of current students, and other supporters. We were delighted that Jonathan Carter (Director of Admissions at SEA) and Leon Toh (Chair of the NC) joined us for this event.

Following on from the gift from the Leif Høegh Foundation (Leif Høegh Stiftelsen) of NOK 1 million to help launch the RCN Jubilee Fund in September 2015 (and fund the students on the Foundation Year, the Rektor has set up a meeting with the trustees of the Foundation on Thursday 1st December to update them on the project.

Following on from correspondence, HM Queen Sonja's Private Secretary invited the Rektor to a meeting at the Palace to discuss the provisional plans for HM the Queen's next visit to the

College. See Appendix III for the letter sent to the Palace outlining the proposal of a visit on UWC Day 2017 centred on the theme of inclusion and the Queen Sonja School Prize.

Our IB Diploma Coordinator and English/Theatre teacher, Pete Wilson recently spent a week at LAMS school in Faisalabad. The school was established to provide free education for the children of factory workers in Sultan Town. The factories produce rugs and other cotton goods for export, including to Norway. Currently almost 700 children from 3 to 16 years of age are accommodated by the school. There are 29 teachers and staff at the school (see below). From kindergarten upwards, much of the teaching is bilingual in Urdu and English. Pete visited the school by invitation from Laila Bokhari, a deputy member of RCN's Board and State Secretary in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose father was one of the founders of the school in 1996. The school is funded via profits from the factory, donations from private individuals and sponsorship from the likes of the Rotary Club.

Boys must leave the school aged 12 and enrol in other local schools, as the school's philosophy is to concentrate on girls' education at the secondary level. Long-held beliefs and cultural traditions have meant that until very recent times, girls' education in Sultan Town has been a low priority for families. Pete was also able to visit local families to witness at first hand the difference in local living standards that having educated daughters can bring about. Pete intends to pay a return visit next summer to work with the LAMS teachers on staff and curriculum development and to explore further possible links between our two schools. Following on from a superb presentation at a recent Education Staff Meeting, four other members of staff have expressed an interest in joining him for this professional development opportunity.

It was a pleasure to host the Nordic National Committees on campus for their Annual General Meeting in mid-November. Their itinerary included connecting with students, meeting for their AGM and with the Education Management Team, and attending the Asian Show in the Høegh. Following initial discussions, we are looking forward to working together to launch a Nordic Short Course (perhaps in tandem with Red Cross Youth with a view to promoting both UWC and Red Cross values) based on our campus - and to take advantage of our spectacular campus in the summer and facilities.

We are also beginning to explore the possibility of a new initiative (the last piece of the Nordic jigsaw) with an alternating scholarship being offered to the Shetland and Orkney islands.

The members of the Central and Education Management Teams continue to work extraordinarily hard to run their portfolios and to work as a team. It has been a real privilege to work alongside the COO as the latest addition to the membership of this team – highly committed, he is working hard to implement structures within the Support / Admin Staff to ensure efficiency and productivity.

And finally....

We received a very encouraging message signed by all the Nordic Ambassadors following their visit:

‘On behalf of all the Nordic Ambassadors, many thanks once again...for the kind hospitality and for arranging a fantastic visit to UWC Red Cross Nordic last week. It is a truly impressive operation. The visit and in particular our meetings with the students was really inspirational for us all and gave us hope for a brighter future in these rather gloomy times. I wonder if you could be so kind as to express our gratitude to all your colleagues and the students involved in making our stay there so successful and memorable. If there is anything we as Nordic ambassadors to Norway can do to help you in your efforts, please let us know’.

In concrete terms, Axel Wernhoff wrote to ask for the contact details of the person at the MFA in Stockholm responsible for the Swedish contribution to RCN as Axel wanted to write to give an account of the work we are doing here.

On reflection, UWC Day this year served to increase our support base and reinforce the funding model which underpins our work here at RCN. Vital work as we seek to prove our relevance in current times within the Nordic region – as the Board understands, complacency on this front could prove deadly!

We continue to do our best to deliver a UWC education to our students and to develop our commitment to the mission of UWC through local impact in our region.

Richard D A Lamont
Rektor
22nd November 2016