

Robert Bosch College UWC GmbH · Kartäuserstr. 119 · 79104 Freiburg

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Almost two weeks ago, your children left home to travel to UWC Robert Bosch College. For half of the students this was a journey very much into the unknown, for the other half a journey into a familiar place, with strong relationships already formed with people in their year group and with the adults of the college. Letting our children go is seldom easy – I know this not only in a professional sense but also as a parent. One way of thinking about this transition is that UWC Robert Bosch College is a half-way house. Given the strong, interested adult presence ('the reassuring presence of adults') together with the approach of the college to give students as much trust, autonomy and responsibility as possible, our students grow better prepared for when they move to the next phase of their lives – to university, on 'gap' years, wherever, where adults generally are far more in the background and without the same quality of engagement or level of formal responsibility for their welfare.

Your children – our students – have moved into an incredibly diverse community. The easiest diversity to measure is the national diversity. Our students come together from 93 different countries. The next diversity (still to be measured for this generation of students) is that traditionally we come speaking roughly 60 different languages. On the first Sunday of the Orientation we had an exercise of sharing the word used for 'sustainability' in our different languages, and breaking that word in our language into its core concepts. With so many different languages and several students having only rudimentary English as they arrive, each generation we need to discover ways to communicate that build community.

At a very practical level several students are used to having a bedroom to themselves. Others are used to sharing a room with one, two, three or more people. With previous sharing comes experience either of learning to negotiate compromise or alternatively of learning to accept the authority (tyranny?) of the dominant person in the room. Students who have not shared rooms before have to learn for the first time to navigate these areas - most students at UWC Robert Bosch College share their room with 3 other students from different backgrounds.

Some of us come with a background of political / environmental activism, some not. Some of us are conscious of the serious negative effect of climate change on our communities, for others this is a more theoretical topic or indeed something to which we haven't yet given much thought. Around half of our community would describe themselves as religious in one way or another, the other half would not. Within those students and adults that would describe themselves as religious of course there is a wide range of formal religious identification and an even wider range of understandings of what this might mean. A common debate, especially near the beginning of each year, comes between people ostensibly from the same faith tradition jostling over what their faith might mean for them as individuals and 'representatives' of a faith group living in this more secular and 'liberal' school and society.

Orientation has the purpose of starting the process of building a close (yet complex) community. Over the Orientation period our approach at times focused on the whole student body. At other times, we focused separately on the two year-groups (for instance, the 2nd year students went away on a two-night camp with several of the staff, leaving the 1st year students on campus to start building their own year-group identity, with the support of other members of staff). Some of the time we focused on building relationships between the groups (the 1st year students prepared a welcome-back song for the 2nd years, the 2nd years' a welcome show for the 1st years' at the close of Orientation). At times in the Orientation we focused on the more basic 'building blocks': our student houses (normally around 24 to 26 students with a balance between first and second year students) and our rooms. Each 1st year student has a "buddy" from the 2nd year, and they had scheduled time to do things together. Another college identification is by Tutor Group (generally 10 students and a Personal Tutor, the students being a mix between 1st and 2nd year students). Tutor Groups enjoyed two extended meetings and a breakfast together.

The 1st year Orientation also has included exploring Freiburg, working in the historic college gardens, going on short hikes, introductions to the academic programme, the different subjects, the library and IT systems as well as introductions to the extensive, exciting and increasingly student-initiated co-curricular programme. There have been workshops on inter-cultural communication, individual meetings with the College Nurse and introductions to the wider Student Health and Well-being team. Necessary administrative work has been completed for the registration of students in Freiburg.

Allied with its focus on sustainability, the College relies substantially on bicycle transport for students. Each student who wishes to cycle needs to pass a cycle test. Many students have passed their test in recent days, others are learning to ride a bicycle for the first time or gaining confidence cycling in these parts.

Bringing all together have been a couple of parties and what in UWC Robert Bosch College is called a 'Café' – where students share their musical and other talents.

Last Friday, the 1st year students confirmed their subject choices and on Monday (4th September) regular classes began. Again, classes are approached with a diversity of expectations and needs. Many students are excited starting 'new' subjects – subjects like Environmental Systems and Societies, Anthropology and Political Thought. Many are excited learning in classrooms that are highly diverse and with teachers who are both passionate about their subjects and committed to their students. For some students, to begin with it is a terrifying and exhausting experience: the first time learning through the medium of English, for some students the panic of hardly being able to understand anything (at this stage!) the teachers and fellow students are saying. For many, the journey to understand the IB approach also is new and challenging. As a College we are committed also to helping students in their academic transitions. The College has an Academic Counsellor as well as an Academic Support Team including for those who for whom English is such a struggle.

At a deeper level, while I believe all students have come to UWC Robert Bosch College committed in their own ways to the UWC Mission, for some the academic part of the programme is more important than for others. Some students find extraordinary satisfaction and motivation through their academic development and through their love of individual subjects. Other students see their academic development more as a means to their future studies and a career. Some students come from backgrounds where 24 points (out of 45) on the International Baccalaureate Diploma is sufficient to get them into a good university at home. Other students come from backgrounds where their scholarship to attend UWC is their 'once chance' to gain the next scholarship: to university, to gain a profession, potentially to lift themselves, their families and sometimes their communities out of poverty. For these students, obtaining strong grades in the IB takes on additional importance. Some students have the expectation that the 'real' part of the UWC experience is the co-curricular programme and the living in a community comprising people from such a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. As in so many areas, there is no single perfect answer as to what a UWC experience should look like, except that it includes things like growing in understanding, growing in tolerance of the 'other', being able to see things through the eyes of the 'other'. Over the two years I hope that people grow in commitment and in capacity to work for a better world, distrusting simplistic, populist approaches, understanding the complexity of the world and the need (more often than not) for nuanced approaches.

One World Award

On Friday morning, a group of students and staff members will travel to Legau, Bavaria for the celebration of the One World Festival. During a gala on Friday night with 800 guests and speakers including the state's federal minister Dr. Gert Müller and Ethiopian environmentalist Tewelde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, UWC Robert Bosch College and UWC Mahindra College will be awarded winners of the 2017 One World Award, given out every three years to honor people, projects and

innovative ideas that give globalization a positive dimension and make the world better and more equitable. With support from staff, three students (one who has since graduated) submitted the application last term, focusing on UWC's mission for peace by educating students from a range of backgrounds while promoting the idea of sustainability in the classroom. If you would like to follow the Gala live, here is a link for a livestream starting at 7.45 pm (CET):

<https://www.facebook.com/Rapunzel.Naturkost/>

Tag der Offenen Tür / Open Day

On September 23rd from 12 – 5 pm, we will open our doors to the public: visitors from Freiburg, partner organizations or parents living close by will get the chance to take a look at the College and meet students and staff members, participate in activities offered by the community, sample some food prepared by students or learn more about UWC through videos, presentations and tours. For the college community, this day is an opportunity to organize and create a special day together, learn more about one another and also get to know local people from outside UWC. A cordial invitation to those parents living in or near Germany to stop by and say hello!

Keeping in contact

Our children are not always brilliant in keeping in contact with home. One way to keep a sense of what is happening at the College (and as points of reference for conversations) is to follow the College on Facebook and/ or on Instagram. The news section of the College website has several articles and videos that may be of interest to parents and guardians. I try to write letters to Parents and Guardians at least a couple of times a Semester. The College publishes a Newsletter several times a year as well as an Annual Report, both of which can be accessed via our website – all links to the platforms mentioned are summarized below. After the close of each Semester, the College issues a detailed report (also copied to the sending National Committee). Should you feel the need, please do feel welcome to contact your Child's Personal Tutor or to contact me directly. You do not need to write in English!

Thank you again for allowing your Child to come to UWC Robert Bosch College, and for your support.

With best wishes,



Laurence Nodder
Rektor

Links to keep in contact:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uwcrobertboschcollege>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/uwcrobertboschcollege>

News Section Website: <http://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/en/category/news>

Newsletter: <http://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/mehr-uwc/newsletter>

Annual Report: <http://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/en/more-uwc/annual-report>