

**June 17th, 2020**

**Letter to parents and guardians of our first-year graduates** (see letter for second-year parents and guardians below)

Dear Parents and Guardians of 1st year students,

„Hi Mum, I’m on my way home, on the day that I’m meant to be going home“. So recounted the Parent of one of our first year students last Tuesday on receiving a call from her daughter, also adding that her daughter couldn’t quite believe that together we had kept the school and learning open during this Corona pandemic. It has been a partnership, with the staff and Board honouring your and your child’s – our student’s – commitment to continue their UWC journey despite the unknowns and challenges.

While we finished the academic year with 93 of the 99 first year students on campus, also I want to acknowledge those students who bravely accepted that their health histories placed them at higher risk of serious illness if they were to contract Covid-19, and returned home in March, lessening the deep burden of responsibility in these times for my colleagues and me. Also a few students returned home out of a sense of caution and later could not return to Germany when classroom teaching resumed due to there being no longer viable flight routes from their home countries to Germany. We are a small and intimate community, so I note that one student was called home due to his father’s grave ill-health, before his father passed away. I used the word “bravely”: in addition to any health anxieties, it is difficult to have a full UWC experience away from the daily shared living together, and challenging to keep fully engaged in one’s studies when most peers are in class and the focus of the teachers inevitably is more directed towards classroom teaching.

There are around 40 first year students who still remain on campus, together with around 20 second year students / new graduates. Some of these students still will be able to travel home this summer, but many will not, either because of closed borders and cancelled flights, or because they would be returning into adverse circumstances. I recognize the heartache in these circumstances: for parents, guardians and for students. What RBC has undertaken – staying open for those who cannot return home – does not remove heartache, but I hope that it does reduce your anxiety about your child’s welfare during these holiday months. There is at least one upside: there need be no anxiety about these students being able to return to Germany and RBC on the 22nd August!

Here I want to thank RBC families and host parents for welcoming RBC students enjoying a short summer break from campus.

### **Semester Reports**

Please find attached the Semester Report for your child. Grades are important but not all-important. Please give at least as much attention to the comments in the different subjects and extended essay, in activities and from the House and Personal tutors. Every year I am in awe especially of students who are studying in their 2nd or 3rd language and the many who started at RBC last August with relatively weak English. Every year I remind myself that very few RBC students entered the IB Diploma having previously studied the IB Middle Years programme. For most students, the IB approach to teaching, learning and assessment is relatively new. Please use the report as a prompt for a conversation.

## **Appeal – RBC remains open!**

We celebrate that RBC was able to stay open until the end of the academic year, the only UWC to have done so. I think also we can celebrate that those students who need to stay, can do so for the Summer. I want to thank and celebrate the staff for having volunteered, without further financial recognition, to provide the necessary level of supervision and care for the students remaining throughout the holiday. We do not take this level of support for granted!

The direct costs of keeping RBC open over summer are likely to be in the order of €60.000. The unanticipated “holiday” costs include catering, cleaning (both are contracted and include staffing costs), energy and pocket money for the students. We have decided that our welcome of students staying on campus should not be tied to their Parents’ ability to cover costs (and especially for catering, given the staffing costs these are much, much higher per month than would be the case at home).

We invite those Parents, Guardians and Friends who have the ability to do so, to contribute financially towards covering these direct costs. (I understand that for many RBC families financial support at this time simply is not possible, however much you would want to support.)

For those able to support financially, the donation link is:  
<https://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/en/support/donate/>

For those able to support financially, you will receive a German donation tax certificate. Tax-efficient donations through some other jurisdictions also are possible – please contact me if you would like to explore this possibility.

## **The New Academic Year**

RBC sees no advantage to delaying the opening of the new academic year which has been advertised for Saturday 22nd August, while the Authorities allow RBC to re-open at least as a boarding establishment. My full anticipation is that the Covid-19 situation in Germany will remain such that RBC can operate as a school, even if with social distancing and other health arrangements.

The Campus will open, as usual, at 10:00am. Flights will be met at Frankfurt International Airport throughout the day – though we ask students, if possible, to book flights scheduled to arrive in the morning or early afternoon (later flights will be met, but there may be a longer wait for the final transport to Freiburg). Closer to the 22nd, more specific meeting details will be sent. As for every year we also will meet flights at Basel/Mulhouse airport if indeed the border to France remains open. However, if you have not yet booked flights, we strongly advise arriving in Frankfurt.

We expect, though, that the Orientation will be far from “as usual”. It remains likely that students arriving at least from beyond the EU will be required to enter a 14-day quarantine regardless of their Covid-19 status. RBC has been granted permission to run quarantine in the Student Houses, with two people per four-person room. We will only be able to get a good sense of how many students will need to enter quarantine much closer to the time – for instance, 49 of the incoming 1st year students have not yet gained interviews at their (currently closed) local German Embassies as part of their visa application process, and we cannot be sure that their visas will be granted by the 22nd August. Also, we cannot yet be certain what the Boarding and the Health Authority regulations will be in late August. We do anticipate that we will need a little improvisation in the initial accommodation of students who do not need to enter quarantine, for instance initially in having more than four students per room in houses not needed for quarantine. I hope you have confidence in the college finding pragmatic solutions to these types of challenges.

### **Covid-19 Testing of Students and Staff on arrival in August**

Within 24 hours of their arrival, all students and staff will be tested both for current Covid-19 infection (PCR test) and for Covid-19 antibodies. Our partner in this testing is CeGaT. The cost of these tests will be carried between RBC and a Donor, and where applicable by EU students' health insurance.

### **Conclusion**

We all wish that the totality of circumstances had been different this Semester. But we still achieved several highlights before the response to Covid-19 impinged deeply on our lives. We managed to complete the final Project Week – as one of only a few UWCs that still undertakes four Project Weeks over the two-year period. The fledgling RBC Orchestra brought forward its first performance. During the lockdown and within the context of RBC being considered one household and in strict isolation from wider society, we enjoyed two Musical Theatre productions and several UWC Cafés. Students accepted a wide range of new responsibilities. We participated in some RBC rites of passage, with the second-year students handing over specific responsibilities to their “first years” and the school community saying farewell to the “second years” in a variety of ways. We also had some challenging conversations including trying to understand better circumstances and policies in the US that have given rise to Black Lives Matter. We cannot pretend that this was a typical UWC year, but it has all the hallmarks of an authentic UWC experience.

Thank you, Parents and Guardians, for having kept faith in UWC Robert Bosch College through these most challenging times. Our standing together gives me hope for the future.