

3rd December 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Winter has arrived in Freiburg! On Tuesday the first snow of the season fell, and the hills and forests that we look out onto from the college remain covered in white. It feels a particularly cold winter because covid regulations require the main doors of the Kartaus to be kept open during school hours, and all classroom windows to be opened for a few minutes every 20 minutes (the practice makes good health sense even if it offends in terms of environmental sustainability).

Plans for the Winter Break are being finalized, and at this stage somewhere around 120 – 130 students are likely to spend their Winter Break on campus. We will try to balance the need (and desire) of students to have good downtime with providing a sufficient level of support to student initiatives to celebrate that this is a holiday! While RBC will incur significant costs for this (including staffing, catering, energy, special events), RBC will not be making a charge for students who stay on campus for the break. The reason is simple: each family was assessed for an appropriate level of financial contribution for their child's attendance at RBC. RBC trusts the integrity of that assessment. Most students from far away would not have returned home, so for most families there are no significant flight costs to save.

If you are in a position to make a donation to help RBC cover these costs and potentially to increase the special events budget for the Winter Break, your donation will be gratefully received! German tax donation certificates will be issued for all donations.

Online donations can be made through: <https://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/support/donate/>

Alternatively, RBC's banking details are:

Robert Bosch College UWC GmbH
Bank: Sparkasse Freiburg Nördlicher Breisgau
BIC: FRSPDE66XXX
IBAN: DE53 6805 0101 0013 3572 52

Again, many thanks!

We sense that we are in the final weeks of the Semester. "Block Week" finished on Monday. RBC organizes its timetable in "blocks" – a block referring to the classes that are taught at the same time – and Block Week is structured in such a way that instead of the usual hour and a quarter for each lesson, Blocks are given 3 hours to allow for an extended piece of work or for an extended test / examination. Naturally, for the 2nd year students, the results of tests and examinations help inform the grades awarded, subject by subject, at the end of this Semester. (1st year students' reports do not contain grades, as the first semester is a time of academic readjustment for students coming from a multitude of schooling backgrounds and a strict focus on grades could well divert attention from the real progress that hopefully is being made. Instead, teachers make detailed comments in each subject and area of formal engagement.)

Almost inevitably, grades are a source of increasing stress for many of our 2nd year students as they think about their university applications. In many national contexts, these need to be submitted by the end of 2020. In addition to the pressure that many students put on themselves, some students sense pressure coming from home and well as from their national committees. A little bit of university snobbishness from some students adds to the stress. Things are not helped by uncertainties relating to university studies during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I spoke a little about this at Assembly on Wednesday. This is my 21st year as a UWC Head, and my observations are based on having observed close to 2 000 UWC graduates leaving UWC Waterford Kamhlaba and UWC Robert Bosch College, being admitted to university, and staying in subsequent communication with many of them. The large majority of these graduates left UWC to study in the USA (especially those from WK), made possible by the extraordinary philanthropy of Shelby Davis supported by the scholarship funds of some 100 partner colleges and universities.

I observe that at least 99.9% of the people that I know or know of and who lead fulfilled, meaningful lives have not been admitted as undergraduate students to the Ivy League universities, or Oxford, Cambridge, MIT or Stanford. (Several of them have not gone to university – that is another conversation.)

My next observation is that all the US universities and colleges that Shelby Davis partners with are very good universities and colleges (colleges are places of higher education whose main focus is on the undergraduate programme and that award bachelor degrees). With these universities and colleges the differences in the actual quality of the teaching and learning will almost certainly be far more influenced by our graduates' (your children's) engagement with their Professors and friends than the ranking of the institution on some list. That robust engagement with Professors is what helps in guiding students into the most appropriate post-graduate programmes. The teaching at the liberal arts and sciences colleges is done by the Professors, for whom teaching is their core responsibility. At universities, the teaching of undergraduate students generally is not the Professors' main priority.

In my view, a student normally is best advised to be in a university or college context where, if they work reasonably hard (with patches of working very hard) and with appropriate focus, they are likely to be able to be in the upper half of their class - and still have time and energy for to develop friendships, become engaged in activities, clubs, societies, sports, and for many further develop their activism around issues of ethical and practical importance - not struggling in the bottom half or bottom quarter of the class.

I acknowledge that these are uncertain times. Yet I remain convinced that every one of the RBC students who keeps their head, who works at least steadily, who commits strongly to the wider programme at RBC and who works closely with Hubertus Zander (the Career Counselor at RBC) will find a good solution for their next steps, maybe including taking a gap-year. The task must be to find a good solution, not a solution that primarily is driven by considerations of status or ranking.

Student Sustainability Projects

Also at Assembly, students spoke about some of the sustainability projects they are engaged in following the Special Focus Day on Sustainability. These projects include:

- Working to reduce and streamline online orders from students;
- Developing a methodology to encourage the sourcing of students' material needs from items already within the school community;
- Working to reduce the use of plastic in the Mensa;
- A zero-waste college stall;
- A clothing-repair activity also to support the Chic Boutique; and
- A school newspaper to inform the RBC community about (sustainability) happenings in town

Global Affairs

This week's Global Affairs session focused on inequality and inequity in health and healthcare in a global context. It was led by Dr Esther Earbin, Coordinator of the MSc Global Urban Health programme at the University of Freiburg. Her presentation challenged some of the assumptions around the inevitability of richer nations addressing better the health inequities in their societies.

Key Dates for the Spring Semester

Sun 10th January Campus opens at 14:00 for those students who have left Campus for the Winter Break. All returning students are expected by 19:00 with negative results from a PCR Test issued within the previous 48 hours.

Wed 31st March Programme closes at 18:00 for Easter Break. **Student Houses remain open for Easter Break for those who wish to remain on campus.** Easter is too far ahead to be able to predict Covid-19 precautions, if any, that will need to be taken for students to be able to leave and then return to Campus.

For 2nd year students, all dates after this have to be considered as provisional, dependent especially on whether or not the IB conducts a May 2021 (final) examination session. RBC sincerely hopes that the May examination session will take place and plans for this. However, if the IB cancels these RBC is likely to bring forward the Closure ceremony, and after that to require new graduates who can return home to do so, unless they would be returning into adverse circumstances.

Sun 11th April Campus opens at 14:00 for those students who have left Campus for the Easter Break.

Fri 23rd April Last day of classes for 2nd Year students if the IB continues with May examinations.

Wed 28th April IB Diploma final examinations are scheduled to begin.

Thur 13th May 1st Year students' year-end examinations begin.

Sun 23rd May Closure ceremony for Year 2 students, Covid-19 circumstances permitting. If the IB cancels the May examination session, this date may be brought forward. At this stage it is doubtful if Parents, Guardians and other guests can be invited to be physically present at the Closure ceremony.

Mon 24th May All Year 2 students to leave Campus by 12:00, Covid-19 circumstances permitting. If the IB cancels the May examination session, this date may be brought forward.

Sat 12th June Summer Break starts for 1st year students. Campus closes at 12 noon.

RBC again undertakes to find solutions – either on campus or with families in Germany – for those students (1st and 2nd year) who cannot return home because of a breakdown in travel possibilities or because they would return otherwise into adverse circumstances.

This week, in the cold of winter and the height of Covid-19 infections in many parts of the world, there also is hope: the coming availability of vaccines means that we can hope for a better 2021.

With best wishes,



Laurence Nodder
Rektor

cc. National Committees