

29th April 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Spring Break came at a good time: my sense is that many people were in need of some days of low institutional pressure. My sense also is that the voluntary college activities over Spring Break were well-judged: not too demanding, but sufficiently available so that the remaining campus community did not drop in spirits. Thank you to the staff and students who initiated and led these activities.

As was almost inevitable, some of the students and members of staff who travelled over the Spring Break contracted Covid during their travels. Even though PCR tests are expensive, these tests also picked up some asymptomatic infections that otherwise might not have been detected. Sometimes “ignorance is bliss” in relation to Covid infection, but not in a situation of close living where others might become infected before or during final external examinations. Some students needed to delay their return to RBC and, in one instance, having discovered their infection through their PCR test, this created a challenge for a student who then could not travel back to Germany and needed to stay longer in rented accommodation in a neighbouring country (they have now been able to return to RBC). PCR testing for returning students has allowed us to be reasonably confident in keeping safer arrangements on campus. This morning, all on-campus students conducted their 2nd self-administered antigen test of the week, and all test results are negative. You can imagine that this was an important objective especially with the final external IB Diploma examinations having started this week for 2nd year students!

In instances where members of staff have tested positive (and have entered their own quarantine), RBC requires further precautionary measures for students (and colleagues) who recently have come in contact with them. So far, these measures have proved adequate in preventing spread of Covid infection between people on the RBC campus.

The 2nd year students are in their final (external) examination period, which started yesterday (Thursday) for physics and anthropology students. We wish 2nd year students a most productive study and exam-writing 3 week period.

For 1st year students, in a formal curriculum sense this week was dedicated to students launching research and writing for their Extended Essays (EE), working sufficiently closely with their (teacher) supervisors. In previous years including for RBC’s current 2nd year students, students were expected to conduct their research mainly through the summer vacation, and were expected to return after the summer break with the first draft of their EE. Many students struggled launching their research and writing without the close availability of their supervisors, and for many students a far-from-complete EE then became a further and significant pressure in their 3rd Semester. This year’s experiment comes at the cost of a week less in “normal” class, but hopefully will lead to much less pressure for many in the 3rd semester and thus more productive teaching and learning in the 3rd Semester.

This week, 1st year students initiated and led an inaugural War and Conflict Awareness Week. A summary from RBC’s social media: *A big shout-out to the student team organizing this year’s war and conflict awareness week, and all participants sharing their stories. In addition to being the first of its kind at RBC, it was a week filled with a variety of events shedding light on a wide range of perspectives on and experiences with war and conflict. During the 7pm testimonials in the Auditorium, the community for example learned about The Cameroonian Civil War or The Roots and Presence of War in Armenia. An exhibition in the Kartause further displayed personal stories in form of photos and texts, speaking about the Bosnian war, the Venezuelan crisis and the history of the Yazidi people. Three podcast series, a reflection box inviting thoughts and feedback and a booklet filled with more personal stories gave further insight into the diversity of experiences our students bring with to UWC Robert Bosch College. As one of the student organizers, Colin, put very well: ““The world is different for all of us when we’re not living on this hill. We hope this week has been a reminder of the diverse realities and valuable perspectives being in this community allows us to engage with and learn from, and we hope that engagement can continue.”*

Our sister UWC South East Asia (SEA) in Singapore is reaching the conclusion of its 50th Anniversary. As part of that conclusion, it held a Forum entitled Learning to Shape the Future. The Forum led into a

UWC Heads Meeting and Retreat, which I was fortunate to attend. For interested Parents and Guardians, here are some links to recordings of some of the Forum Keynote Addresses/Discussions:

Prof Howard Gardner, lead researcher of the Harvard Impact Study on UWC and best known for his pioneering work on the concept of multiple intelligences, spoke on the topic: Good work for our time: From ideas to impact. In this address he refers to the not-yet-published Harvard Impact Study and in a small way to his visit to RBC.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GQUdxN9Wlc>

Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, Chair of UWC International, speaks on the UWC Movement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn-Riob3Mo0>

“New” UWC International Executive Director Faith Abiodun, was interviewed by UWCSEA students:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rn_7pGXV3oA

A fascinating final discussion took place between Carma Elliot (President of UWCSEA and a former diplomat) and Kishore Mahbubani, distinguished Singaporean author, diplomat and geopolitical consultant and former Chair of the UWCSEA Board.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kishore_Mahbubani) The discussion started last September with the title: **will the 21st century continue to be peaceful**. The title of the discussion series did not change with the war in Ukraine, and this concluding discussion touched on that and other geopolitical challenges. Kishore Mahbubani speaks of the tension between educating students with a high degree of idealism, yet that preventing or ending war often needs deeply pragmatic and hard-headed approaches:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeajhIWqKBo>

If interested, you may explore the fuller UWCSEA Forum programme at:

<https://www.uwcsea.edu.sg/uwcsea-forum>

With best wishes,

Laurence Nodder

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