

17th September 2026

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Cc National Committees,

Just under a month has passed since we opened our doors to students ahead of the new academic year at RBC.

It has certainly been a whirlwind of experiences for our first years who have been introduced to the UWC values and the realities of what a transformative education actually means - from a new approach to learning, which for most is not in their mother tongue, to experiential placed-based education (working in the garden or engaging in the outdoor weekend) and learning more about the beautiful local environment that we are so lucky to find ourselves in here in this corner of Freiburg. Many have already discovered the truth in Kurt Hahn's words "there is more in you than you think".

Our second years have taken on the mantle of being "elder siblings", setting the tone for the academic year whilst bearing in mind the question: "what kind of community do we want to be?" This has seen them guide their first years through student orientation as well as taking on formative roles in the community, such as running workshops and leading CAS activities. Of course, work in the academic program continues with Extended Essays (EE) submitted, Internal Assessments (IAs) progressing and the checklist of IB requirements steadily being ticked-off and thoughts turning to life post-RBC.

University Visits to RBC

RBC has received many university visits in the last couple of weeks. Almost half of our students do not have the opportunity to further their studies without significant scholarship support, even if they were to return home to attend a university in their country. The great privilege of students in Germany and several other parts of Europe to study for (almost) no tuition cost is by no means universal. Scholarship support for undergraduate study is often very hard to secure.

In this regard, UWC graduates have the extraordinary benefit of the financial generosity of Shelby Davis, who has partnered with around 100 US universities and colleges to make it financially possible for UWC graduates to receive scholarships that meet their financial need for both tuition and accommodation. (Given the cost of especially private higher education in the USA, most of these universities and colleges need to provide generously from their own funding sources to supplement Shelby Davis' extraordinary support, and we thank them for this.)

In the last two weeks, RBC has received visits from admissions staff from 4 US universities and 11 US colleges – all Davis partner schools. Student recruitment for private U.S. universities and colleges is far more personalized than for universities elsewhere. Admissions staff often visit, give presentations, and pre-interview prospective students. This level of attention, along with the abundance of information and the need to interview, adds pressure on our students,

especially in their 2nd year at RBC. We should acknowledge this while also celebrating the great opportunities available to them.

We must also acknowledge the difficulties faced by some of our students in light of the travel ban imposed by the USA on some countries. The Davis UWC Scholars Program remains committed to the ideals of the program and they have no intention of stopping or reducing their support for UWC graduates. Further to this we continue to present alternative options to all our students, from university programs (with / without scholarships) such as Canada, the UK and Hong Kong as well presenting options for GAP years.

Open Day

Saturday (September 19th) is our annual Open Day. This is always a special occasion – which provides an opportunity to showcase the College and the UWC movement, it's our contribution to the movement-wide celebration of UWC Day (September 21st) and it's also always on the weekend nearest to the anniversary of our official opening which is Robert Bosch's birthday (September 23rd). During the day, we will be opening our doors to the local community, but will also be joined by alumni, host families, supporters together with members of the German National Committee; I hope a number of you can join us.

Project Week

Project Week runs from Sunday September 27th until Friday October 2nd. The week will see some second years working on different social service projects such as Supporting Refugees in Vienna, Working with homeless people in Brussels or at a Dog shelter in Croatia. Others will pursue personal challenges and growth opportunities, such as undertaking a Via Ferrata in Austria (under staff supervision) or writing new music together.

All first years meanwhile, will be engaging in our new pilot PW – “Peace and Sustainability” supported by staff and some second year students. Whilst they will largely be on campus undertaking workshops, they will also spend time at Lake Schluchsee (about 1 hour away by car, up in the Black Forest, with limited mobile phone reception) for a couple of days to learn basic outdoor skills as well as engaging in trips within the local area on the theme of Peace and / or Sustainability.

As our first years head into their inaugural Project Week and our second years navigate their own projects, I hope both groups find a genuine change of pace, a chance to test themselves outside the classroom, and to discover a little more of what they're capable of.

If you wish to write to me, please feel free to do so in a language of your choice.

With best wishes,

Helen White
Rektor