



Update from the UWC International Board
18-19 June 2010, London

We had an excellent meeting of the Board last week. In many respects I consider this meeting to have been the best I have chaired in my time with UWC. Much of the success was due to the excellent papers and presentations prepared by the International Office which clarified the issues for us and helped focus the discussions that followed. I am hugely grateful to Keith Clark and his team for the hard work that went into preparing for this important meeting.

Strategic Plan, Annual Plan and Budget

The key to the meeting was that we were, for the first time, able to take the strategic plan that we adopted last year, turn this into an annual plan, explore the resource implications, and link the plan very closely to our budget for 2010-2011. This might appear a very obvious process, but it should be seen in the context that we are in our first year of UWC's first strategic plan, we have significantly improved our finance capacity in the International Office, and we have an international fund development capability for the first time. Several Board members referred to the 'joined-up thinking' that characterised the meeting.

Annual Plan

We took as six distinct items those areas which will represent new or different work arising from the strategic plan in the coming year or where our planned work will present a significant resource implication. A paper on the annual plan gave us an overview, and also served as a useful reminder that it is not just the headline and new areas of activity that should concern us. It is the ongoing support for and coordination of the UWC organisation that represents our day-to-day business; added to that is the inevitable need to react to events within UWC and external factors that impact on us. This routine work is crucial: some of it is explicit in the strategic plan, and all of it is the bedrock on which our strategic development is grounded.

I will say a little about each of the areas that we covered as separate items.

Strategic Objective 1: Education

Our first decision will, I believe, be crucial in support of the strategic plan: to put in place an educational support resource at international level. I believe this is essential if we are to support the College Heads and their communities in achieving some of our educational strategic objectives, to help bring to fruition some of the excellent ideas emerging from the Heads' Committee, and to build a clear role for our Education Committee. We need to give considerably more thought to how we develop this function, but I am very pleased that the Board was able to give us the go ahead to work on this.

Strategic Objective 2: Impact - Outreach

After education, we moved on to outreach and considered what will be necessary to build a platform for work that will aim greatly to increase UWC's impact. We endorsed a definition developed in an outreach workshop earlier in the year – "UWC outreach consists of any programme/project that enables UWC to deliver transformational learning experiences, which embody the UWC mission and values, beyond existing UWC communities" – and we approved the scope of work that will be necessary to build on this definition.

Strategic Objective 3: National Committee Development

National committee development is the most obvious area where we must maintain a balance between support for ongoing operations and development: the resource we devote to this area clearly has to cover both needs. We are fortunate already to have secured some specific funding for capacity building in national committee development and this has allowed Tian Bersey and her team to build into the plan for the next year some pilot projects to study where additional resource really can help committees to build their performance and foundations. Tian is also working with the National Committee Development Committee to look at how we can take proper account of the great diversity of committees within the system, and in particular how we can create meaningful standards, expectations and support against the background of such diversity.

Strategic Objective 4: Finance and Funding – Financial Model

Jill Longson gave us an excellent presentation on the outcomes of the first Need Based Scholarship pilot. As we expected, the pilot – involving five colleges, five national committee and 25 individual student places – has thrown up many further questions, but also some fascinating data. It is clear that we have plenty more work ahead before we have the answers that will help us move forward, and the Board approved the NBS task force's proposal for a further pilot with a focus on national committees who already adopt need based approaches, together with the start of a more thorough review into our overall scholarship allocation model.

Strategic Objective 4: Finance and Funding – Fund Development

I am delighted with the way our fundraising operation at international level has started, already with the chance of an invitation to the Clinton Global Initiative and an accompanying major scholarship proposal currently under consideration. Steve Donato has moved ahead very quickly, and his research and information gathering has resulted in proposals for an international case for support and an ambitious campaign strategy. We will learn much more about this at the UWC Council meeting in October, and in the meantime Steve will be completing his feasibility work. The initial work certainly affirms our decision to build this function, and I am confident that it will succeed in making a meaningful difference to our overall financial health. However, it will need us all to help by opening the right doors. Manfred Schepers and Peter Sands have shown the way by providing crucial introductions and I appeal to you all to think very carefully about where you can help. Some of you are too modest to recognise that you have the contacts that might be helpful, but in reality we all work with or know people who might be able to assist us in some way. Please have a real think about this and feed in any names to the development team.

Strategic Objective 5: Communications

The first communications objectives in the strategic plan are concerned with creating internal and external communications strategies, and the Board endorsed the strategies that Megan Munsell has drawn up. There has been a great deal of foundation work going on in communications, not least the branding process, and we are now poised to move beyond this. The development of a comprehensive database and extranet will be a major boost across all our areas of activity and will continue to demand much time and resource in the next year. But Megan, with the Communications Committee, has identified a number of other key pieces of work that will help us to become very much more effective in our communications, both inside and outside UWC.

2010-2011 Budget

We were able to reflect on all these areas overnight before moving on to the budget. Willa Geertsema, our Head of Finance and Administration, had produced an excellent set of budget documents which built on the annual plan and clearly laid out the challenges and ambitions of the next year. We were made aware of the strategic risks, particularly those associated with income. We were also conscious that in approving a balanced budget, we were accepting that there are a number of second priorities that will only be possible if we can attract income over and above our already challenging targets. Some of these second priorities represent work that is important in the context of the strategic plan. But at the end of the day the team in the International Office has been forced to make some tough decisions. We certainly know that there is much more that could be done if we had more resources.

Engagement Issues

We have always been conscious that accomplishing the strategic plan will require a great collective effort from the whole organisation, particularly the wider school, college and national committee communities. On the day before the Board meeting we held a full-day, externally-facilitated workshop involving six Board members and the management team to discuss issues of engagement and the role of the UWC Council and Board in providing leadership. It was a fascinating day and at the end we achieved a very strong consensus about where we need to concentrate our efforts to make the strategic plan a focus for the whole organisation. We reported on the outcomes to the Board, and agreed that this should become a major item of business at the UWC Council meeting in October.

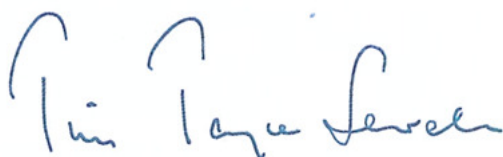
Other issues

It hardly seems possible that there was room for other business, and I am grateful to my Board colleagues for their patience and perseverance in tackling such a full agenda. Let me mention just a few items:

- Having given Preliminary Approval to the proposal for a UWC in Spain at our last meeting, we met Pedro Gonzalez Grau and Berta Fraguas from the UWC España project team. This was a very productive session, and we were able to discuss issues relating to governance and financing that were of particular interest to the Board. We all know that there remains much work to be done in Spain, but we were greatly reassured.

- We received a report of the pretty intensive work of the Nominating and Governance Committee in the last three months. Various matters were discussed and the UWC Council will be hearing separately about the recommendations arising from this year's nominating process. I am pleased that we will be starting the search for my successor, and the Committee will be presenting a framework for this process to the UWC Council in October. I really would like to have completed that work a year ahead of time – which gives us until the end of 2011. Please do think about people you know who might be contenders. Apart from the normal requirements of any chair, I am keen that my replacement should have a wide range of international contacts at the highest level: retiring chairs of internationally-recognised companies, banks or universities or heavyweight politicians would all seem to fit the bill. Please put any suggestions to the Nominating and Governance Committee as soon as you can.
- In addition to its scrutiny of the budget, the Finance Committee passed two items to the Board for consideration. We agreed to amend our reserves policy to reflect the need for an appropriate reserve in cash, and not just on paper at the end of each financial year, and after some discussion we agreed to retain our current investments mix.
- We were encouraged to hear that work is continuing in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of creating stronger and longer term structures for UWC's work there.
- We continued to support the concept of 'decentralised' events to mark our 50th anniversary, linked in some way through a technological solution.
- We discussed our schedule of future meetings and agreed to give a little more time for committee meetings when the UWC Council comes together this year (in Singapore, 14-16 October 2010). We also thought about the cost and locations of our three Board meetings a year. In part inspired by a dinner very generously hosted for the Board and for London-based Pearson alumni by UWC Council member Peter Sands, we agreed that we should consider meeting at 'hub' locations and including in our programme events with UWC alumni who are based there.

I hope I have been able to convey a flavour of the Board's discussions. We had a packed agenda, but I hope you will see that we made excellent progress, with the strategic plan at the very centre of our thinking. I know the plan is ambitious and will present us with many challenges, but I also have the strong sense that we are on the right track.



Tim Toyne Sewell
25 June 2010