



Update from the UWC Council and International Board October 2010 and January 2011

This update covers two sets of meetings: the meetings of the UWC Council in Singapore in October, and the meetings of the International Board immediately afterwards in October, and then by conference call in January.

UWC Council, 15-16 October 2010

We were extremely grateful to Charles Ormiston and Julian Whiteley at UWCSEA in Singapore for so generously hosting all our meetings. Although during a mid-term break, the visit gave us a wonderful opportunity to have a look at the college's new East Campus and the hugely innovative work that will make this one of the most environmentally sustainable educational buildings in the world.

As well as meetings of the UWC Council and Board, the College Heads met for three days beforehand, the College Chairs met for a day, and there were meetings of most of the Board's committees and several task forces. We were also joined by a meeting of the school and college finance directors, a first for this group and an important step in building another professional network across the organisation.

This was the third meeting of the UWC Council since our major change of governance in 2009, but in effect it was the first in what will now be the normal pattern of annual meetings. It was also significant that we were meeting one year on from the adoption of the strategic plan. At times I was aware that we were continuing to find our way through the challenge of establishing a clear identity for the UWC Council and of defining the relationship between the UWC Council and the Board.

Strategic Plan Implementation and Report of the Board

The first part of the UWC Council meeting was taken up with a report from the Board on activity in the past year and an update on strategic plan implementation. Monitoring the strategic plan is a key responsibility for the UWC Council, and a detailed survey of the plan's action points demonstrated that we are making very good progress across many of the objectives; at the same time, it was also an opportunity to identify where we need increased commitment or an adjustment of priorities. None of these 'red flags' should give us undue cause for concern at this stage, but they do illustrate the importance of regular monitoring, and we have subsequently discussed how we can achieve this most effectively through the respective roles of the International Office, the Board and the UWC Council. The comprehensive report from the Board covered the work undertaken in the last year, with Board meetings in October, January, March and June, and a great deal going on between meetings as well. It is worth drawing attention to two specific items.

Guiding Principles: The Heads were able to present the outcome of their work to draw up 'Guiding Principles of UWC Schools and Colleges'. I congratulate the Heads on this significant step forward. Although it represents just the first stage in a major piece of work to articulate more clearly UWC's educational model, and we know there is plenty more to do, including collecting and using outcome data more effectively, this should not diminish the importance of the guiding principles.

Admissions and financial model: We received an update on the work of the Board task force looking at UWC's scholarship allocation model. The initial remit of this task force was to look at the viability of a need-based scholarship system, and the task force reported on the results of a pilot run with five schools/colleges and five national committees. The results proved that in many countries the current system results in students being matched to scholarships, with all the discrepancies and inequities that can bring when there is insufficient funding for the scholarships we need, and that as a consequence it is not a system that can truly be said to give us selection on merit and potential. As well as the UWC Council discussion, an earlier joint session of the College Heads, finance directors and the task force proved particularly productive in progressing this work. The Board subsequently agreed that the remit of the task force should be extended to cover the wider admissions process and the link between finance and admissions.

Major Discussions

One of the drivers of our governance change was the opportunity for the UWC Council to add considerable value through thorough discussion of a limited number of major issues. The breadth of perspectives and interests on the UWC Council means that it should be especially effective for this type of discussion. At this meeting we focused on three such issues: cross-organisational engagement, the international case for support, and new school and college development.

Engagement: this item was inevitably inward-looking, but we felt it important to have a good discussion about how we can use the governance model most effectively to increase cross-organisational engagement in UWC's affairs, particularly in the context of a strategic plan that requires such broad commitment. A number of good ideas emerged, including about the UWC Council meetings themselves and increasing engagement between meetings. There was also recognition that the College Heads and College Chairs play the critical role in acting as channels of communication and engagement with school and college communities. Perhaps the most significant outcome was the enthusiasm for increased involvement and the clear sense that the strategic plan really does represent a collective commitment.

Case for Support: Our Development Director, Steve Donato, gave a very good presentation on the four themes of the international case for support – scholarships, facilities, capacity-building and educational innovation – and outlined the nature of the Campaign that will initially form the core of our fundraising at international level. Steve challenged us to recognise that such a campaign will only be successful with a strong sense of collective responsibility – not least in identifying prospective donors. The UWC Council had an opportunity to consider and comment on the key messages that will illustrate each of the four elements of the case.

New School and College Development: The strategic plan commits us on the one hand to a cautious approach to new school/college development, because of the need not to have an adverse financial impact on the existing organisation, but on the other to a more strategic outlook. The UWC Council, in an excellent discussion, looked at the strategic and ethical considerations that might determine whether a particular country should be ruled in or out of our thinking. The upshot was some clear guidance to the Board: UWC Council members overwhelmingly felt that every opportunity should be considered on a case-by-case basis, but that risk assessments of particular locations should be made against a number of criteria, including the freedom to recruit staff and students from all parts of the world, freedom of access to information, freedom to be able to act in line with the characteristics common to all UWC schools and colleges, and the likelihood of being able to assure a certain level of safety and security.

As always at the UWC Council, we had a report from each of the schools and colleges. We struggle to find a way to deal with these reports most effectively – this time we gave them the better part of one whole session – but they always bring us a strong sense of the vitality and the successes and highlights, as well as the challenges, in each college. As a reminder of life on the frontline of what we are doing, the reports do a good job.

We received a brief survey of the national committee system, using the information gathered to date by the 2010 annual reports. The themes emerging reflect some of the priorities of the strategic plan: the need for sustainable structures that reduce the reliance on small numbers of individuals, and the importance of clear expectations and standards that can take account of the diversity of the national committee system.

Within the UWC Council meeting, we designate some time specifically for the Annual General Meeting of The United World Colleges (International), the main purpose being to receive the annual report and accounts. The report and accounts is always available from the UWC International Office (and will soon be available on the extranet); it is worth reading in particular for the survey of our work set out in the Report of the Directors.

As we embark on the search process for my successor, an important idea emerged from the UWC Council: to have separate Chairs for the Board and the UWC Council. The advantages would be twofold: a split role would increase the sense in which the Board has a degree of accountability to the UWC Council, and it may be that we will find it easier to identify both a relatively 'hands-on' Board Chair *and* an individual with a degree of profile and presence on the international stage. We will now analyse the pros and cons of such an approach in more detail. In the meantime, we will continue the Board Chair search, but keeping in mind that we may end up separating the two roles.

The UWC Council welcomed the appointment of several new members from 1 January 2011: Dr Franz Fischler, Giuliano Giovanetti, Chris Howarth and Leon Toh. The UWC Council also elected as Board members Dr Axel Kravatzky (already a UWC Council member), Rama Diallo Shagaya and Lisa Darling who succeeds John Lawrenson as Chair of the College Heads' Committee. We also welcomed to their first meeting Stephen Cox, Chair of UWC Atlantic College, and Valentina Mindoljevic, Head of UWC in Mostar.

As well as welcoming new members, we also said farewell to several retiring members: Derek Blackman, who has been an exceptional Vice Chair of the Board, Marisa Léon, Tony Richards and Jim Taylor. The service of all four retiring members has been outstanding and is already much missed.

UWC International Board, 17 October 2010 and 19 January 2011

This update brings together the outcomes of our Board meetings in both October and January, where possible grouping issues according to the framework of the strategic plan.

Strategic Objective 1: Education

The Board adopted as policy the 'Guiding Principles of UWC School and Colleges'. We noted that the work on the educational model that will follow to some extent shifts the emphasis away from the objective of a UWC Diploma. It does seem more sensible for a recognition framework to emerge from a more clearly articulated educational model.

We continue to struggle to distinguish the respective roles of the Education Committee and the College Heads' Committee and this will require further work in the coming months. We were, though, able to note that plans were in hand to create an educational resource in the International Office in order to support some of the initiatives coming out of both committees.

The College Heads' and Education Committees took an important step in agreeing to move away from a system of quality assurance through self-evaluation to an accreditation model, operated with a specialist accreditation partner.

Strategic Objective 2: Impact

The Board welcomed the clarity emerging from the UWC Council discussion about new school and college development. This led to further discussion about the legitimacy of any further development while considerable financial vulnerability remains in the existing organisation. There are differing views on this complex issue and we will need to revisit it, not least because of proposals that we already know are gathering pace. In the meantime, our experience of the Spanish proposal demonstrates that our approvals process is robust and sets a high bar for the development of new schools and colleges. On the subject of Spain, the Board welcomed some revisions to the proposed college's governance arrangements, which reflected the Board's earlier comments.

Strategic Objective 3: National Committees

It is encouraging to see the National Committee Development Committee (NCDC) becoming increasingly active and maintaining a very strong focus on the strategic plan. Some of the committee's current work will come to fruition later this year when we look more closely at ways of categorising the national committee system in order to better match expectations and standards to capacities.

The NCDC and the College Heads' Committee have together been working on a set of protocols relating to the relationship between schools/colleges and national committees. One prompt was a

particular situation involving two colleges and a national committee. In advance of the protocols being completed, the Board decided to put in place an arbitration panel to look into that particular situation and make recommendations.

Strategic Objective 4: Funding and Finance

The Board approved the extended remit of the group that started life as the Need Based Scholarship task force to become the Admissions Policy and Procedure task force, reflecting the strong link between funding, scholarship policies and admissions. I really am grateful to Jill Longson for taking on this hugely complex and challenging piece of work with such gusto. It will not be easy, but I am certain that developing a stronger and more easily understood system will be critical to unlocking much of our potential and making sure that we do what we say we do.

By the time of our January conference call, plans for the Campaign for UWC and the case for support had been further refined and the need for us all to think hard about names of contacts and prospective donors was made very real. While the Board must take a lead role, for the Campaign to be successful we will need buy-in throughout UWC. Remember, that the Campaign is about resources for the whole organisation. Please do think hard and let us have your ideas for prospective supporters and donors whom we are not currently reaching.

We also approved a remit for 'President's Ambassadors', a group of high level supporters who will be able to act as advocates for UWC and support our development work.

Strategic Objective 5: Communications

A task force is continuing to take forward plans for UWC's 50th anniversary in 2012 – making sure also that we complement UWC Atlantic College's plans. I am convinced that we have adopted the right approach by not attempting a single major event, other than our six-yearly International Congress; too many organisations make the mistake of diverting resources from elsewhere and then discovering that the anniversary has not met their expectations. A whole series of local-led initiatives around the anniversary date, linked through an online solution, will be far more manageable, and will also have the potential for greater impact.

I am pleased to see the Communications Committee now up-and-running with a membership that brings various professional skills to the table. It is also very good that UWC has a stronger 'official' social media presence – now with more than 4,000 followers on facebook.

Strategic Objective 6: Organisational Effectiveness and Unity

The Board approved as policy the Code of Conduct for students proposed by the College Heads' Committee. I believe the significance of this is in more than its content – it is an important step for the Heads to have developed such a policy to be adopted in all the schools and colleges. It shows the extent to which we are stronger when we work together.

The UWC Council discussions on engagement, as well as on strategic plan monitoring, gave us much food for thought about the relationship between the UWC Council and the Board and about how we can make our governance most effective.

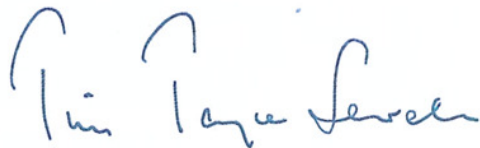
I remain concerned that we do not now have a full quota of College Chairs on the Board. The College Chairs' Committee has become an increasingly useful body, and the majority of College Chairs or their nominated alternates, attend UWC Council meetings regularly. However, there are still absentees, and this has also made it difficult to identify the three Chairs willing to take on the increased commitment of serving on the Board. Unless all the schools and colleges take this responsibility seriously, it fundamentally weakens our governance structure.

Other Issues

We covered a great deal in our two meetings. Let me list just a few other notable points:

- At the October Board meeting, we remained concerned about a lack of progress in establishing a dedicated governance model for the UWC in Mostar, in the approach to the end of the mandate of the existing structure. By the January conference call, we were able to welcome progress towards a structure that includes a body more readily recognisable as a 'college board'. We have some reservations about the autonomy of this body and its relationship to its 'parent' foundation, but nevertheless we concluded that this arrangement does represent a way forward.
- I am very pleased indeed that the Board appointed Jill Longson as Vice Chair, with the unenviable task of succeeding Derek Blackman. Jill will take on specific Board responsibility for strategic plan implementation. I know that Jill will also provide first class continuity when the time comes for me to hand over to my successor.
- In addition to the farewells to Derek Blackman, Marisa Léon, Tony Richards and Jim Taylor recorded at the UWC Council meeting, we also expressed our appreciation to Jeff Thompson, who leaves the Board but will continue for one further term on the UWC Council, and John Lawrenson, who steps down at the end of his term as Chair of the College Heads' Committee.

I hope this update gives some sense of the breadth and depth of our discussions. The strategic plan provides us with plenty of challenges, but it is at the centre of our thinking in UWC International and I believe we are making good progress. Our sole intention is to make UWC stronger as an organisation – for the benefit of all our constituent parts. We are doing what we can, please do support us in these efforts.



Tim Toyne Sewell
February 2011