



## UWC BELGIUM NEWSLETTER June 2017

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### Editorial by Harold Boël, Chairman of UWC Belgium



For those of us up and about on Ascension Day 2017 around Brussels, it would have been hard to ignore the inauguration of the new NATO HQ's in Evere: bystanders banned from the streets, the sound of jet planes roaring in mid-afternoon above the skies of the capital, and geopolitically inspired headlines on every newsite. A year ago, who would have predicted the singular atmosphere in which this event took place: new coalitions between conservatives and opponents of multi-lateralism have succeeded in seating D. Trump in the most powerful office of the world, have upended Britain's place in the European Union, and have consolidated authoritarian rule at Europe's doorsteps. While this is taking place, Mother Nature reminds us that all is not well at home: a freakishly warm November in the North Pole and increasing signs of accelerated melting of the Antarctic ice shelf makes the perspective of seawater levels rising to a catastrophic proportion before this century is old, very real. There is in other words much to regret, even to fear. It is wise though, not to give too much credence to these negative emotions. As UWC graduates we also know the power of positive coalitions, like the ones that have kept populist of all stripes away from power in Austria, The Netherlands, France. We also know how powerful positive ideas can be when they're put to work by those able and willing. So the shows, the handshakes, the stern pronouncements of the past weeks hold as much promise of progress as they do of doom: as usual, the future is what we'll make it to be!

A year ago, when the storm clouds were still gathering, UWC Belgium as an organization volunteered to do something about it, "right here, right now". One year down the line, the organisation has risen to the challenge. It may not be much, but it's a start: a short course is being organised in Belgium this summer! It will bring together youths from Brussels, the scarred city, and Belgium, as well as the rest of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa for a fortnight's reflexion and action on the theme of Building and Crossing Bridges. Antonio Carvalho (coordinator), Elena Gilis (program developer), Charlotte Mavandalt and Martin Dethier (selection and logistics) have brought together more than 25 alumni (both short course and IB) to volunteer significant amounts of their free time to reach out to find and select students, coordinate and develop workshops as well as train facilitators (many of them last year's participants of a short course). Through this patient building of the program, participants, this summer, will have the courage, we hope, to try leaving the safety of "what one holds to be true" and venture to "the other side". If successful, this practice, acquired at summer short course could turn into a lifelong habit. We do plan to give the short course sufficient coverage so that it can showcase UWC ideals within our borders -- so watch the website, facebook and the press for news and reports. This short course is in many ways an illustration on how we as UWC alumni can have an impact. It's about getting a project going, about bringing people from different horizons as well as different National Committees together (thank you Germany, Portugal, Turkey and Czechoslovakia for your help!), about thinking together of the things we all hold dear, and building activities around these. It's also

about not doing it alone: the project has been put together with the Talented Youth Network ([www.tynasbl.be](http://www.tynasbl.be)) an association whom we proud to be friends of.

This year is definitely a year for the short course; we will welcome 40 students to “Building and Crossing Bridges”, and next to this, another nine youths will be joining short courses in Austria and Germany. Charlotte Mavandalt has been a dedicated cornerstone of the Executive Committee, for many years single handedly organizing the Short Course selection that made sure each year troughly 15 youths enjoyed the same chance she had had. Martin Dethier, also a short course alumni, will pick it up from here.

The rest of the National Committee didn't stay idle. Youri van Leynseele and his team masterfully set up the 2017 entry selection process. We had a lot of interest; more than 100 people took part in the info sessions and just short of 60 files were filed. With the help of dedicated readers, the field was narrowed down to 24 candidates. After a busy day in January with a large crew of volunteers, and another one with the final jury in February, scholarships were offered to 9 students. Unfortunately, two turned down these offers for personal reasons. So it's to 7 students selected that we look forward to give scholarship awards in June. The number may be modest, but hopefully many of you join us to meet them on the 24th and, as were the juries, be struck by their motivation and their budding talents. Like in the previous years, the outreach efforts made and the help of our partners, we have had a number of candidates, successful and otherwise, from segments of society where the opportunity of UWC was unknown a few years ago. Though on any given count we can imagine doing or having done better, the numbers of our outreach efforts are adding up; this year, 2 students in the Boost Your Talents programme will join one of the UWC's (after 2 last year and one in 2015). One is of Syrian origin, having rejoined Belgium only a few years ago. This added diversity in our candidates and in our students will probably help us grow in the years to come. So, though the seeds were few this year, they hold the promise to together become a thick forest.

The activities of the National Committee do not stop there. I would like to use the occasion of this editorial to mention and thank those carrying out other tasks, without whom we would not be able to achieve any of our objectives.

First, Cees Guépin, as you know, has been in charge of our finances for more than 10 years. He asked to be relieved of this responsibility this year; Charles du Parc and Marc Reichel have agreed to take over.

On top of the financial aspects, our students' welfare during their stay at the different colleges is an object of much attention of the National Committee; Mirjam van Lith endeavours for the past years have been that, in spite of the distance, through Facebook and other means, our students and their families feel bonded to one another and know there is a National Committee that takes their joys and concerns at heart. Two years at UWC is a demanding experience: students are challenged in many ways, not in the least by the fact that UWC's are also “human”, i.e. they are not perfect. Dealing with their imperfection(s) is maybe one of those unexpected teachings of the experience. Mirjam has been playing a key role in this, and it will likely take all of Theo de Brouwer and Marie de Voghel to carry the torch.

Again, I have strong words of appreciation for Simkje Kruiderink's coordinating work with the Executive Committee: she is truly at the centre of the organization and ensures on a daily basis a smooth and efficient execution of our many tasks. Do get in contact with her if you wish to get involved. There are always tasks (outreach to potential students, communication, alumni relations etc), that need tending to by someone with a bit of time (a day a month would be ideal) and enthusiasm.

As I wrote earlier, the times are rough, and ideas that couldn't be further from UWC ideals have found their way in the mainstream of politics and societal discourse. In spite of this, we are very grateful to have had this year again the support of our sponsors, the National Lottery, the Inbev Baillet-Latour Foundation, and many private donors; all have recognized the unique opportunity a UWC education offers and have been keen to help giving such a chance to youngsters with great potential and modest means, believing as we do that a better world tomorrow starts with giving every youth the means to make the most of his full potential.

All readers are welcome to join us on June 24th in Brussels (see [www.uwc.be](http://www.uwc.be) for details and registration): let's meet again, catch up, come get to know the team that puts together the Short Course Building and Crossing Bridges, and meet the 2017 cohort of Belgian UWC students!

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## The IB 2017 -2019 students present themselves

### Leen - UWC Atlantic college



Hello, I am **Leen**. I'm a 16-years-old and study at Our Dear Lady's College in Antwerp. I'm Syrian and I've been in Belgium for two years now. My family moved to different places and finally settled here. There was always only one reason that made us take the decision to move: to give me better chances in pursuing my education. Since I was a little girl, I appreciated education and was convinced it is the only thing that will let me put my mark on our world and will give me the chance to fulfil my dreams and goals.

When I learned about UWC, my dreams changed: I felt that UWC would let me grow up and absorb the education and the ideas that will let my mind blossom. It will prepare me to achieve the purpose of my life.

Seeing how many children in my country and around the world don't get the chance to go to school or seeing them go to school every day with the fear of never coming back home, terrifies me. They aren't getting a proper right to education to build their communities later on. Our world and countries will be in the hands of their generation when they grow up, and knowing that there could be an astronaut, a doctor, an architect and simply a child with an idea that could change this world to the better among them, lets me question myself: Why aren't these kids able to just go to school?

Getting into **UWC Atlantic** made me realize how lucky I am, how thankful I should be and how hard I've worked to get where I am today, to go on this journey and to get the most out of it. I can't wait to see my ideas turn into reality in this world and to make the voices of the unheard heard. Therefore, nothing would be more perfect than UWC to be the next step in building my future.

### Chloé – UWC Changshu



Hello! My name is **Chloé** and I am a 16-year-old girl who calls Brussels home as I have been living here all my life. I am of French and German origin. I go to the European school here in Brussels where I study in English.

My favorite subjects at school are Biology, English and Art. I love literature and I sometimes write myself, having contributed to the school yearbook and a poetry anthology. I also am a very artistic person and love to draw, paint and do photography among other things. I have been attending an art school for extracurricular classes for 8 years now.

I also like volunteering with an organization called "Serve the City", helping out in my primary school and tutoring English. Other interests are politics, debating and human rights. I participated this past March in the Model European Council and had an amazing time.

In August, I will be leaving for **UWC Changshu China** and I could not be more excited! This will be a huge turning point in my life and I am ready to embrace the challenge

## Sarah – UWC Mahindra college



Hello ! My name is Sarah and I am 17 years old. I study at the “Institut Saint-Boniface Parnasse” in Ixelles. I am about to finish 5th grade in Latin-Greek in bilingual program (Dutch and French). I am a true believer in the ancient philosophy “Mens sana in corpore sano”. This is why I try to maintain a balance between sports and academics. My favorite sports are trapeze and swimming. I live in the south and the north of Brussels because my parents are divorced. Lots of my family members come from different parts of the world (Morocco, Congo, Vietnam, Bulgaria, ...). This brings a lot of multiculturalism in our family. I travel a lot with my parents, I guess this is what brought me to be interested in the world and the people.

Since 2015, I volunteer in an NGO that works for education for global and solidary citizenship for teenagers between 15 and 18 years. These past 2 years have taught me so much that some parts of myself today are a million miles away from the same ones 2 years ago ... It has taught me that when it comes to ecology and inequality every gesture counts!

I am so grateful to be part of the UWC community. I will do my best to make the most of the 2 coming years.

One day one of my favorite teachers quoted Mark Twain: “They did not know it was impossible, so they did it.” Sometimes the barriers that stop us from reaching what we want are settled by ourselves. If you do not believe that you can do it, you will never succeed. This is how I try to live my life, by believing in myself.

## Marie and Jolan – UWC USA



Hi, I’m **Marie** and I’ll be attending **UWC USA** next year! Right now, I’m finishing my 5<sup>th</sup> year at Atheneum Anderlecht where I’m studying plastic arts. After school, I spend most of my time with friends.

Last year, I attended the Short Course, building a sustainable future at the Robert Bosh College. I then realized how incredible UWC is: I made friends from all different nationalities and I am still in contact with them. We talked about so many interesting subjects and learned about everyone’s culture. It was an amazing experience.

I’m very excited to go to UWC USA in a couple of months and I try not to have too many expectations so that I can get surprised and stimulated there. At the same time, I am dealing with a lot of questions and am very curious right now. I am really grateful to UWC for this opportunity and I am just waiting for the adventure to begin!



Hello! I'm **Jolan** from Opwijk and I'm leaving Belgium this August to attend **UWC USA**. Even if try, I still can't believe I've been granted this amazing experience. About me; I love music. I play the organ and started this year with folk guitar, something I will definitely be taking with me to Montezuma! I also follow singing classes and I'm member of a choir. My favorite hobby however, is theater. I love performing and look forward to continue doing so the next two years. I'm in a swimming club and I love to write fantasy and science-fiction and I would definitely like to do something surrounding acting or writing when I'm older.

I love the fact that the UWC schools are so active in sustaining the environment because I'm vegan, or at least trying to be. I think it's important that we focus on global warming, animals and our earth before it's too late for our planet.

One of the main reasons I applied is the diversity of the UWC schools. I love traveling, discovering other cultures and meeting people from all around the globe. To share day to day life with people from different countries, backgrounds and cultures is amazing. I can't wait to hear their stories.

This quote from Nelson Mandela pretty much sums up why I'm going to a UWC college: "There is no passion to be found in playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living."

## Renske and Samsara – UWC Costa Rica



Hi! My name is **Renske** and I'm fifteen years old. Since I was very small, the ocean has been my passion. I love diving, snorkeling, surfing and every other sport that has something to do with water! Other hobbies of mine include drawing and writing. I love music, travelling, languages and sciences, especially biology. After UWC, I would like to study marine biology and focus more on my writing. I have been dreaming of becoming a marine biologist for a couple of years now, but I feel like my UWC experience might change my point of view.

I will be leaving for UWC Costa Rica in a few months and I am over the moon! I never could have dreamed of living in a country with such beautiful nature, interesting people and of course an amazing culture. It truly is a dream come true and I can not be thankful enough

to be able to have this experience.

I can't wait to meet people from different cultures, become friends with them, listen to their stories... I think my time at UWCCR will be challenging and interesting, and, most of all, unforgettable!

*"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."*

~ Aristotle, 384 BC – 322 BC



I'm **Samsara**, a sixteen-year-old living in Brussels and about to end her fifth year at the European school. My family is composed of my mother, my father, my eleven-year-old brother and I, all of whom are nervous and excited about the two years that lie ahead.

In my free time, I like to do anything from reading and writing to dancing and painting. I also tutor primary children and participate in monthly 'Serve the City' focus days. I'm passionate about gender equality and feminism; I like to read about it and debate about it in school (and out). Last year, I raised money for the Malala Fund to help girls attend school and I hope to continue similar

projects with the help of UWC.

In a few months, I will be leaving my home for a new one at **UWC Costa Rica**, one full of like-minded students who are independent and want to take responsibility and control of what they are learning. I'm curious about this melting pot of cultures and although I don't know exactly what to expect or how those two years will turn out I am sure I will have lots of surprises in store for me.

"As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." – Marianne Williamson

Samsara's project: **Walk for education!**

Over 60 million girls worldwide are out of school. Last year we (my grandmother, my dad, my brother and I) walked 400 km from Geneva to Briançon. This year we will walk from Briançon to Menton near Nice (250 km in 15 stages). I **have decided to fundraise for Camfed**, a charity that focuses on rural areas in Africa (Ghana, Zimbabwe...) where girls are often excluded from education. **The money is used for helping girls to attend school** (just \$25 can keep a girl in primary school for a year) and to provide stationary and supplies. For example, the money could be used to buy bicycles for girls who live far from their school.

There is no minimum sum to donate and there is certainly no maximum!

To donate please visit my website:

<https://camfed.org/donate/personal-fundraising/464-crossing-the-alps-in-30-days-part-2/>

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## A UWC boom: every year a new school since 2013

2013: the 13<sup>th</sup> UWC Robert Bosch college was founded in an eco-friendly city in Germany;

2014: the 14<sup>th</sup> UWC Dilijan opened in a national park in Armenia;

2015: the 15<sup>th</sup> UWC in China, in the 3000 year old city of Changshu;

2016: the 16<sup>th</sup> UWC: Phuket International Academy becomes UWC Thailand



UWC Thailand is founded on the fundamental principle of providing a caring, supportive and joyful environment for all members of the community so that they can grow as individuals. Even before being approved as UWC Thailand, the school was known internationally for its progressive approach with embedding social emotional learning and mindfulness into the curriculum.

The School offers a holistic educational program that encompasses academics, social emotional learning and mindfulness, service, outdoor education and activities

2017: the 17<sup>th</sup> UWC :International school of Asia, Karuizawa Japan is now officially a UWC



Founded by UWC Pearson College alumna Lin Kobayashi, the school has been in operation since 2014. ISAK's mission is to "develop transformational leaders who explore new frontiers in service for the greater good of Asia and beyond." That mission, which is at the heart of the ISAK educational experience, becomes even more powerful when combined with the UWC mission to "make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future."

With the enhanced diversity achieved by becoming a member of UWC, we believe that ISAK will be even better positioned to serve the world as a unique school that is fostering the change-makers of the future.

2018: We hope the 18<sup>th</sup> UWC will open in Ghana ...

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## The story of a freshly graduated alumni from UWC- USA

**Seventeen years old and a beautiful program on a beautiful campus: that was the starting point of some wonderful memories.**

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I could talk about specific moments such as hiking in the Grand Canyon, partying which made my experience better, playing basketball and being amazed at the passion of my Environmental Systems and Societies teacher during some classes, which all made my experience at UWC better. However, I prefer to talk about the wonderful memories that made my experience special!

Throughout my time in Montezuma I saw people changing and growing in a way that I did not know from back home. On campus I witnessed some people opening up, others becoming more acceptant and understanding of differences and a variety of ideas, and almost everybody taking over or shifting away from the values they grew up with through understanding what these mean to them and others. I saw a mutual respect growing in our community. At times I have been disappointed, but living around these changes occurring within people's personality made me grow and was an important part of my time at UWC-USA.

Another special memory would be the combination of my two project weeks. During my first year I went to the Sonora desert to work with No Más Muertes – No More Deaths, an organization which provides humanitarian help to migrants coming mostly from Latin America into the harsh Arizonian desert. During my second year I went back to Arizona to learn more about border issues such as violence, effects on the environment, and the political and financial implications of having such a border. I learnt a lot and these two weeks really opened my eyes on what being privileged means, how complex justice is, and the level of corruption in our world – and I am sure that that part is not done disappointing and horrifying me. However, thinking about the fact that UWC is an educational program I can say that taking part in these projects was truly special and rich in values and learning.

UWC enabled me to take parts in so many different things and do some of them at quite a high level. By saying this, I really have to talk about rugby. Indeed, over my two years we created a rugby team from NOTHING! Except two players on the team, no other student had ever played this sport. We were lucky enough to have one of the English teacher, who had played rugby during his college years, to coach us, even if he had never coached before. So we suffered all together through hours and hours of training while still being committed to all other activities on campus, academic life, and social life. We joined the New Mexican Youth Rugby league and fought to finish the season with only one loss. I will never forget all the emotions after our last game when we, the players and the coach, all realized that it was now over and we would never all play together again... It felt to me that it had gone way too quickly, but my heart felt warm to realize what we had created and achieved all together.

Finally, I want to talk about UWC as a place where everybody, no exception, experiences amazing chats in groups, individually and with different kind of people. For example, I remember a dinner which diverted to a discussion about the idea of infinity and how it is compatible with god; another evening I talked about the space for women in African Catholic churches and in Muslim families. I had so many of these wonderful conversations that it is impossible for me to point out at one which stands out because what really made them rich was having people from completely different backgrounds, religions, countries and social classes talking about their vision of the topic.



So all these conversations as a whole definitely represent one of the best memory rooting from my UWC experience. For some reasons the best talks I had were always at night either in a quiet room or outside during a warm night with a bright moon. I think it gives a peaceful tone to most people and fosters listening. I don't know if I'll be able to ever find that feeling again because Montezuma is special... Montezuma adds its own elements to the moments... all the pink clouds at dusk, the ever blowing wind that makes trees sing... I will miss and am extremely sad I will probably never find the exact same feeling again, but I can't deny how happy I am to keep it deeply in my memories and share it with others.

## In Memoriam

Dear friends and UWC Belgium community,

It saddens us greatly to inform you that our dear alumna Anouk de Fontaine (UWC Pearson 2007-2009) passed away Saturday, June 3th. She was surrounded by family and loved ones in her home in Belgium. For the past year, Anouk battled an aggressive gastric cancer, a struggle that she and her family chose to keep private. During her last months, Anouk traveled to visit family and close friends. On the 29th of may, Anouk married her long-term lover and dear friend, Rhubini Kunasegaran. With friends and family at the hospital with them, the ceremony was full of laughter and song. She enjoyed her life to the fullest and fought with a formidable spirit.

Anouk graduated from Pearson in 2009 and took a gap year during which she engaged herself in taking care of youngsters aged 12 to 15, with identity problems, in the first nation communities in the very north of Canada. She then went on with her studies to study a bachelor (BA) in human ecology at COA (College of the Atlantic) in Maine, USA. After graduation in 2014, she was awarded a Watson Fellowship for one year, to study dance as medicine to bring healing to communities and she spent a significant part of her fellowship in Brazil. After her Watson, Anouk returned home to be with her family and had begun medical school.

She is loved and missed by many individuals and networks across the world.

All of us who have known Anouk extend our deepest sympathy and support to her family. Anouk was an incredible dancer, a loyal friend, and a beautiful soul. Anouk understood movement and music as powerful tools to heal and bring people together. She was also a massage therapist and an advocate for students with special needs. Her spirit and her memory will be alive in all of her friends who loved her, who shared and were inspired by her passion for living a life full of magic, growth, music, dancing, and community. Hers was a life gracefully lived, with abundant kindness and empathy.

"A ship sails and I stand watching till she fades on the horizon and someone at my side says, "she is gone." Gone where? Gone from my sight, that is all; she is just as large as when I saw her. The diminished size, and total loss of sight is in me, not in her, and just at the moment when someone at my side says "She is gone." There are others who are watching her coming, and other voices take up a glad shout, "There she comes! »



## Call to action

### UWC Belgium is looking for help in PR

“UWC Belgium is the best kept secret”. This is something we would desperately like to change, but we can use some expertise. Do we have a PR tiger in our network who, on a voluntary basis, could assist the office of UWC Belgium in generating brand awareness? PR plan, media contact, free publicity.... who wants to help? Contact [info@uwc.be](mailto:info@uwc.be) if you are in !

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## **UWC MAKES EDUCATION A FORCE TO UNITE PEOPLE, NATIONS AND CULTURES FOR PEACE AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

UWC (United World Colleges) is a global non-profit, equal opportunities organisation that provides intercultural learning programmes for young people around the world. It is the pioneer and best practice leader in the field of global education for peace and justice and sustainable development.

There are 17 United World Colleges located around the world, which each year accept new students to complete their final two years of secondary school. UWC also offers Short Courses in several countries during 2 weeks every summer.

UWC students enroll for the International Baccalaureate and are extensively engaged with extra-curricular activities such as social services, sustainable development, leadership, conflict prevention, sports and the arts.

UWC Belgium is the national representative body of UWC for Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and the Ostkantons.

We welcome your financial donations via the King Baudouin Foundation, rue Brederodestraat 21, 1000 Brussels. Gifts above €40 are tax deductible.

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