WELCOME MESSAGE
Denise Davidson. Welcome 03

WHAT’S UP
Scott Benzenberg. The Co-Curricular Laboratory 04
Events Digest 06

ON AIR
Pioneers of the Magic Valley. Interview with Head of Faculty of English Sian Hill and Head of Visual Arts Kevin Hopkins, UK 08

COLLEGE LIFE
Making Every Voice Heard. Interview with the core of the UWC Dilijan Student Council Elena, Italy, UWCD’18 and Jeppe, Denmark, UWCD’18 12
Yahia, Syria, UWCD’18. Humans of UWC Dilijan 16

SHARING KNOWLEDGE
Gianmichele Laquale. Caring People for a Caring World 18
Jaime Miguel Nieman. Global Politics: When Rituals Become the Culture 20

HAYASTAN, OUR UWC HOME
Project Week – Autumn 2017 22
Fernando, Spain, UWCD’18. Diliglish Project or Making Dilijan a Pioneering Town in Armenia 26

BIG WORLD IN ONE FAMILY
Workneh, Ethiopia, UWCD’18. Dreaming with a Clear Focus 28
Sergio Escalera Soria. Communicating in the “Language of the Invisible” 32
Lizi, Georgia, UWCD’19. Everyday Rhythm of Painting, Composing Music and Writing 36

WORLD AROUND
Under the Shades of the Prince Charles’s Planes 38

ALUMNI CLUB
News from Alumni 40

LIBERIANS RECOMMEND
Max, Mexico, UWCD’19. Comprehensive Portrait of a Fracturing World 42

DIRECT SPEECH
Tim Flynn. Building an Armenian International School 44
Dear Friends,

As we come to the end of another term of learning, the time of reflection and review is upon us. We look back and see what we have accomplished and at the same time see what still remains to be done. Put like that, it seems simple, straightforward and statistical. But what it doesn’t reflect is the “everything else” that has gone into making yet another term part of the growing history of UWC Dilijan.

Learning here is not just about absorbing and regurgitating facts. It is also about plumbing emotional depths to respond to many challenges and frustrations in order to build the resilience needed to cope with our increasingly demanding world. Learning here is not just about absorbing and regurgitating facts. It is also about plumbing emotional depths to respond to many challenges and frustrations in order to build the resilience needed to cope with our increasingly demanding world. It is about recognizing that just because an opinion has been expressed and is different doesn’t make it invalid. Indeed, it requires a closer reflection and deeper respect to ensure that our mission of diversity is not just a matter of words.

And neither is it a purely cerebral exercise. I recently attended a lesson on a Sunday afternoon run by some of our students who are teaching English to our local Armenian (see the article on page 26, “Dilinglish Project or Making Dilijan a Pioneering Town in Armenia”). As the students also had their own brand of pronunciation, the resulting conversation severely challenged received B.B.C. pronunciation. However, the joy and laughter that rang around the room and the sheer delight in achievement on the faces of the children far outweighed petty accent deficiencies. It gladdened my teacher-heart to hear the students say they had never realized just how exhilarating it is to see learning take place and to know you are a partner in it. Indeed, some are now considering becoming teachers: as someone who has dedicated fifty years of my life to learning and still enjoys every day doing so, I can only encourage such ambitions whole-heartedly.

This, of course, is only one of the many activities which take place here and I hope our magazine helps you to appreciate how much our students undertake in their wider experiential learning and to know how generously our UWCD Community welcomes you all to join us in whatever way you can.

On behalf of the whole UWC Dilijan Community, I wish you all a joyous holiday celebration and, despite our global sorrows, a hopeful and peaceful year to come.
THE CO-CURRICULAR LABORATORY

Scott Benzenberg
Co-Curricular Coordinator and English Teacher, USA

This academic year, UWC Dilijan adopted a model for the Co-Curricular programme that seeks to guide students along learning pathways according to related skills clusters. These pathways, called “Streams”, are the first step in developing a project-based model that provides students opportunities to work in a semi-structured environment to learn a progression of related skills, share ideas and resources and organically develop new initiatives in response to the needs and opportunities around us.

Our focus Stream areas, Arts & Media, Development & Entrepreneurship, Dialogues, Outdoor Education & Sport and Sustainability, each house specific activities and service projects, leadership opportunities and particular skills sessions. The premise of the Stream system is that each staff and student join one of the Streams as an area of focus for skills development and student initiatives. The students progress through a semi-structured Co-Curricular programme that provides skills training and staff oversight while still allowing opportunities for students to create, develop and lead projects related to these Stream content areas.

Like streams of water, our Co-Curricular Streams have a clear direction and a targeted final outcome. In our programme, the outcome is measurable skills and involvement in meaningful projects. Students should progress through the Co-Curricular programme further along in their own development than when they began. This metaphor can be extended even further – Streams sometimes meander and may have tributaries which aren’t quite as powerful and don’t extend quite as far. In the Co-Curricular programme, these “tributaries” might not result in a successful project or long-term endeavour, but they are every bit as useful in the process of experiential learning. Students are encouraged to reflect on why the project didn’t have the intended results or long-lasting impact that they had hoped for.

The Co-Curriculum is the right laboratory for learning the set of skills and personal competencies that students need for success in the 21st century. The ultimate aim of the UWC Dilijan Co-Curricular programme is that we are able to graduate students with measurable skills and personal attributes that extend beyond the academic curriculum. This set of soft skills, the Dilijan Toolkit, is one way our school is helping students learn to ask the right questions and be confident in their ability to navigate through complex answers.

There is a good model for the types of skills that we should provide in the Co-Curriculum. The same skills that are natural areas of strength for many of our students will be necessary for success in the wider world. At the same time, we need to give opportunities for flexibility, exploration and experimentation. We can consider how, for example, some qualities required for leadership may change in the 21st century. Students need the opportunity to experiment with leadership roles and develop personal styles while at our college.

An additional attribute required for success is the ability to thrive in the face of adversity – to ensure even difficult experiences become critical moments of growth. Students receive support from our pastoral team in facing these challenges, but we also have opportunities to integrate these real-world obstacles as resources in the learning process. We need to look very carefully at ways to continue supporting the growth of the whole student as part of our formal educational process. The Co-Curriculum is the laboratory for developing a personal “best practice” and for learning the set of soft skills necessary for success in the world.

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UWC Dilijan hosted the National Centre of Aesthetics. Small Theatre of Yerevan which came to town to present their famous performances to the entire Dilijan community. As part of the visit, the Founder and Artistic Director of the theatre, Valerian Badalyan together with the actors of the inclusive troupe, gave a master class to the UWC Dilijan students, focusing on developing skills such as free-flowing movements, engagement, imagination and attention to one another with the aim of creating inclusivity. The theatre is on a mission to break down psychological barriers and change attitudes towards the disabled in society.

With this in mind, the troupe left the Dilijan community speechless with their touching performance of “Ye me quite pa”.

**THE ART OF PUPPETRY**

As part of the International Puppet Festival dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the “International Puppetry Association (UNIMA)”, a group of puppeteers from the Israeli Kay Theatre came to UWC Dilijan. The group organized workshops, which taught students how to make and operate their own puppets. This was a rare and enriching opportunity for students to learn about the art of puppetry.

**THE INCLUSIVE POWER OF THEATRE**

Thanks to the support of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, UWC Dilijan had the honour of hosting Armenia’s most popular jazz ensemble – Levon Malkhasyan Jazz Trio. More than 400 people from Yerevan, Vanadzor and Dilijan (not counting the UWC Dilijan community) turned out to enjoy the fantastic jazz concert. The happiest people were the UWC Dilijan students who played together with the legendary musician.

**LEVON Malkhasyan JAZZ TRIO CONCERT**

The 21st September was a triple celebration day for UWC Dilijan: UWC Day, Armenian Independence Day and Peace Day. In collaboration with the Dilijan Community Centre, the college organized a big celebration programme for the town, which included a traditional flash mob, marathon and a concert at the school. One enterprising group of students launched a video campaign to raise awareness of the growing Rohingya crisis. Additionally, Rhi-Zone organized a workshop for local kids designed to tell them about the benefits of replacing plastic bags with reusable cloth bags. It was an unforgettable day of events, especially for the UWC students who joyfully shared their appreciation of being part of the UWC movement. A photo taken by a drone of the entire UWC Dilijan community was made to commemorate this day.

**TRIPLE CELEBRATION**

Lord Darzi, Armenian-Iraqi-British doctor and former UK Health Minister, a specialist in the field of minimally invasive and robot-assisted surgery and pioneer of many new techniques and technologies, visited UWC Dilijan to give an inspirational talk to the UWC Dilijan Community. He talked about the use of technology to inform health systems, motivating students to think in new ways and develop new ideas. Furthermore, he outstanding example of bravery and modesty, decency and commitment, was a lesson which students could follow throughout their lives. “Life is full of opportunities, opportunities are never the problem. Life is also full of threats. What you need to have is the right skills to use those opportunities, and the right resilience and skills to face the threats.”

**REACHING OUR GOALS**

A football game was organized between the professional First League Lori Football Club from Vanadzor and the UWC Dilijan students’ team. The professional football players were 16-20 years old and some of them represent Ghana, Nigeria, Guineea and the Ivory Coast. Similar in age and having a common intercultural understanding, the club members were excited to visit the school. As a result, the friendly atmosphere between the teams led to an entertaining game. In the end, the football club presented the school with footballs signed by the team.

**CROSSING BORDERS THROUGH SPORTS**

October 8th was one of the highlights of the month, as the inaugural Diaspora Dialogues conference was held at UWC Dilijan, organized by Common Purpose and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. The students had the chance to engage in dialogues with sixty diaspora leaders from around the world. Through the collective discussion of the topics centred on practical action and thought leadership, the students enriched their understanding of the added value of having multiple Diasporas together. Furthermore, the students had the chance to attend a Ruben Vardenyans talk on bridge-building leadership.

**DIASPORA DIALOGUES**

The inspirational speaker and business philosopher Mark Strom, who hails from Australia, visited UWC Dilijan and gave a TED-talk in front of the whole college. His influential talk empounded students with how they can transform from being a good leader to becoming a great one by encouraging them to take action. His simple and sincere words paved the way for the audience to open up and share some very personal stories, as well as reflect on their experience at the college. Additionally, he presented his book “Lead with Wisdom” to the college library.

**MOTIVATION FOR TOMORROW’S WORLD!**

The 21st September was a triple celebration day for UWC Dilijan: UWC Day, Armenian Independence Day and Peace Day. In collaboration with the Dilijan Community Centre, the college organized a big celebration programme for the town, which included a traditional flash mob, marathon and a concert at the school. One enterprising group of students launched a video campaign to raise awareness of the growing Rohingya crisis. Additionally, Rhi-Zone organized a workshop for local kids designed to tell them about the benefits of replacing plastic bags with reusable cloth bags. It was an unforgettable day of events, especially for the UWC students who joyfully shared their appreciation of being part of the UWC movement. A photo taken by a drone of the entire UWC Dilijan community was made to commemorate this day.

**THE SONG OF SERJ TANKIAN**

Serj Tankian, world-renowned star, talented musician and lead vocalist of the alternative metal band System of a Down surprised the UWC Dilijan community with an unexpected visit. As soon as news about his arrival spread, students and teachers hurried to greet him, sneaking out of the classroom. He was welcomed by the school with great excitement: the students guided him throughout the campus and introduced him with the facilities of UWC Dilijan. With an exceptional piano performance of some of his famous compositions, Serj Tankian left many of our students absolutely enthralled with his art.

**LED BY WISDOM**

UWC Dilijan was honoured to get a one-time opportunity to spend a week hosting worldwide experts and learn about drastic innovations in the areas of technology and sustainable development. The week was devoted to the theme of “Motivation for Tomorrow’s World” where among the prominent speakers visiting the school were Nara Hasnaylyan, Professor of Mechanical Sciences and Engineering at UWC, and Gareabed Antranikian, Professor at the Hamburg University of Technology. Having access to such a tremendous source of information, the students reflected on the importance of technological innovation as well as competence, research-oriented skills and leadership when it comes to the challenges of the future. From sustainable agricultural development to new wave renewable energy options, the presentation of the diverse opportunities and problems in the world was crucial for many of our students in making decisions regarding their, and our, future.
PIONEERS OF THE MAGIC VALLEY

Head of Faculty of English, Sian Hill and Head of Visual Arts Kevin Hopkins, from the UK, can be considered among the founders of UWC Dilijan. They have been working at the school for four years and are already teaching the third generation of UWC Dilijan students. Here is a frank and controversial talk about art education, the IB, UWC, talented kids and books.

Was it exciting to set-up a new school from scratch?

Sian Hill (SH): The person who told us about the opening of UWC Dilijan, said “this school is just right for you two because you’ve got the pioneering spirit”. You have to be a pioneer to be at a start-up school, because you have to “roll up the sleeves” and accept everything that’s going to come your way.

Kevin Hopkins (KH): We expected it to be a bit worse.

SH: The most exciting thing was being part of the founding faculty, most of whom had UWC experience teaching already. The teachers who arrived were from five different UWCs – Atlantic, Singapure, Costa Rica, Mahindra, Mostar. Although we have been teaching forever, we learned so much about the UWC approach from these UWC people, especially from someone who came out of his retirement – Dr. James Mendelsohn. He taught at the UWC Atlantic for about 35 years and he helped to set up the biology lab. The excitement in the faculty meetings was just incredible, it was all start-up new school, new ideas, new spirit. It was a brilliant team of different ages, different experience and different methods of teaching.

I know you chose to come to this school because it was a UWC. What is special about UWC?

SH: For me, UWC is different, because when the first UWC – UWC Atlantic – opened in 1962, I was a very young baby. When it opened, and it was in the part of Wales I lived in, everybody talked about it and it was something exciting for my parent’s generation. Most people, though, thought it was going to be only for the rich spoiled kids – the same perception that every UWC has. When the movement grew, it became incredibly well respected in educational circles for providing education in post-conflict parts of the world.

UWC is special not because of the number of nationalities – we’ve worked in international schools with about the same number of nationalities. What is unusual is the deliberate diversity and the way that the kids are selected. Having kids on full scholarships in international schools is not unusual either. But we are dedicated to the altruism of the movement, and we thought that it would be a highlight to end our career in a UWC.

KH: We nearly went to Mahindra and Singapore, but, in both cases, it didn’t happen at the last moment. So the last 10 years in Dilijan sounded good. We wanted to get this school to work properly, to help to establish the good reputation of the school, to put our expertise here and this makes us happy.

And the students at UWC are very special and brilliant. What do you gain from them?

SH: For me, UWC students are very different from when it was when we were students. I think UWC students are special because we spoil them, we push them, we put too much work on them. They think they are the best of the best, but actually they’re not.

KH: I have actually had kids say, “We are UWC, we are different, we are special.” And I said, “No, you are not special, every human being is special and every human being is also the same. What you are is lucky, because you were accepted at UWC.” But of course a 21st century UWC student’s outlook on life is very different from when it was when we were students. I think UWC students are special because we spoil them, we push them, we put too much work on them.

You have travelled and worked all over the world. When you came to Armenia, what was surprising for you?

SH: When we first arrived, we loved it so much. And it didn’t matter that at that time there was only one café, Mimino, in town and one restaurant in the restored historical complex, Tufenkian. And I was afraid that the development could ruin the charms of the place. We hope Dilijan won’t be turned into another Disneyland.

KH: One of the things that’s been really positive is the ‘human development’. When we go out to other Armenian regions on our educational trips with the students, we can still feel this sense of exoticism towards our students, which might be perceived as racism, when local boys and girls want to take pictures with our students. And here in Dilijan, the kids don’t know, don’t see, don’t care about
friendly. One of the other things that is close-knit families, and they are so lovely by the technology and come from such the 1950s because they are so unspoiled within the Art in the Community pro

with the Dilijan Community Centre kids years already.

the tradition of your community

ones who do speak it. I would like to see from the development as much as the have computer skills, aren't benefiting the exceptional ones can, they

also benefit, and there are plenty of nice other kids, whom you can gently

In the first couple of weeks. And I think it is challenging to try and try solving it. There is a special way

For some people, it can change the most rewarding. SH: It depends on what you want, a holistic or academic education.

But why is it beneficial for a person to have art in school? KH: It’s been said, and I think it might be true, that art is not in a very good place at the moment. It is kind of in another dark age, it’s going nowhere, it has no direction. And it’s been said that it started to go wrong with the introduction of art education. I think that’s right! I don’t think art education in the IB is very helpful to young artists. Another thing about the IB is that all the groups are compulsory, apart from Group 6 – the Arts. A lot of the students would like to take Arts, but they can’t if they want, for art education necessary? KH: It is not, there are plenty of nice people grown up without an art education, and it’s not necessary at all. But what’s not the most necessary in life, is the most rewarding. SH: It depends on what you want, a holistic or academic education.

During your long career you have taught lots of students. Do you ever receive any feedback after they complete their higher education? KH: I have a good example of what my first international school in Kenya from 1994. This kid, Priyesh Shah, finished his A level programme in 1996, and he strugg- gled with his A level art. He wasn’t that
talented, but he really wanted to do it. So he was one of those, who wanted something very much, and in the end he got it. He wanted to know about light, how light affects objects: his portfolio was all about light. I helped him, he got an A star (for that mediocre talented kid). He said, thank you very much, and he went to an art college in London, and 20 years later, e-mail, I just wanted to say thank you for everything you did for me with arts, because you really showed me how things work. And I went into animation when I got into university, and now I work for Dream Works and I have a house in Beverly Hills. And we’ve just finished in the “Shrek” animation team.” We bought the DVD and watched the titles at the end and, sure enough, there was his name, Priyesh Shah.

SH: There are some kids who, I know are going to be brilliant authors and there is nothing I can teach them, because they have a great authorial voice. Then there are other kids, whom you can gently teach the skill... and that skill may not develop until 10 years from now. Different kids develop at different stages. You are either planting the seeds for some, or you are putting fertilizer for them, or you are helping them trim their own branch-es. So perhaps it’s not the talent that stands out, but the desire.

Is art education necessary? KH: Because there are people there, who want me to do this, i.e. the students. But I don’t think it really helps them to be an artist. I help them to get an IB or A Level diploma. When choosing Visual Arts in the IB, the students probably think it is an easy option where all they have to do is to draw a picture. And they find it out is different slowly. But for the few, it is something special. It can be eye opening for some people, it can change their whole viewpoints on the world and civilisation.

SH: I think the most important thing is that Kevin gives the students the confidence to explore the way they look at the world, no matter if they are talented or not – I think that talent is quite rare. When I was at school the only thing that the art teacher said was “that’s rubbish, put it in the bin”. But you give them that confidence to explore and experiment, they start flourishing, developing and become successful. I think this is the key: allowing them to be themselves. You are allowing them to sink or swim. And it’s ok if they sink, because you are always there with a life jacket to pull them out, dry them out and set them off again.

Please tell me about the books that you recommend reading.

SH: When the school was only starting, we recommended around 800 books for the UWC Dilijan library and all of them arrived – books on art, literature, dictionaries, etc. As to the educational programme, I have had a challenge going for 3 years here to read James Joyce’s “Ulysses” in English with the students and have a conversation with me about it. KH: I have tried and I cannot get through the first 5-6 pages, it’s impossible.

SH: I don’t think you can say you have a favourite book, I think there are books that come to you at different times in your life, and you visit them at different times, and it might be the same book that you visit over and over, and they each leave a mark, and the exciting thing is when the students realize there is intertextuality: they realize that lots of different texts of different authors link with each other.

To go back to James Joyce, one of the most exciting emails that I have received recently was from Nilou, Iran, UWC’17, from my literature class. She studies in London now, and she is a bit lonely there. She said she was walking past a book shop in London and she stopped when she noticed a copy of James Joyce’s “The Dubliners” in the window and it was exactly the same copy as the one we studied in class. And she said she started crying, because she felt as if she had met an old friend. I was crying when I read it. A book being an old friend, that’s lovely, isn’t it?

That’s why I usually prescribe reading anything and everything. The only reason I love reading so much is because I was never ever denied anything. If I wanted to read something, even if it was way beyond my reading age, I was always told “Yes, read it, explore, experiment.” It was fine even if I didn’t understand it. Many students are afraid to say they don’t like a book, because they are afraid to be judged incorrectly. And I often teach books that I personally don’t like, so I think it is challenging to try and change a perception, so you can see why a piece of work is a great piece of art, but not necessarily something you like. It is also good to be able to say why you dislike something as a piece of art.

My favourite quote is from one of my favourite authors, Doris Lessing, which I think everybody should read. “Think wrongly if you must, but by all means think for yourself”.

Think wrongly if you must, but by all means think for yourself.
MAKING EVERY VOICE HEARD

The core of the UWC Dilijan Student Council from May 2016 to November 2017, Elena, Italy, UWCD’18 and Jeppe, Denmark, UWCD’18 provide an insight into their work – the responsibilities borne, the ambitions fulfilled, the skills acquired, the experience shared and the successes achieved.

What role does the Student Council play at UWC Dilijan?

Elena

The Student Council is a link between the student body and the SMT, the Senior Management Team, which is the decision-making body of our community. We listen to students’ voices, whether it is in Toons, in the cafeteria, in the corridors, on a hike in the mountains, and we discuss issues taking into account the perspective we have heard as well as our own. Then we connect these concerns with those who can improve the situation, whether it’s the head of academics, the pastoral team, other UWCs etc.

Jeppe

Besides being the representatives of the students in meetings with Toon Parents, the Senior Management Team, and other important people, the Student Council is responsible for finding solutions to issues that face the whole college. There are a lot of things staff and students have to do as working (and learning) in a UWC is not easy. We are a tight community that knows all about each other and everyone has strong opinions about everything. We are trying to make sure the level of communication between members of the community is kept at a good level and we are there for people that need our help. We help students talk about their issues when it is concerning bigger problems with complex solutions.

Why did you decide you wanted to run for it in your previous school?

Elena

I decided to run for the Student Council because I care about this community that we all live in. I care about our well-being, I care about the improvements that we can make, I care about getting the most out of this opportunity that we have, and I care about future generations as well, who may live with our decisions, or our omissions. Before, I had been a class representative, but in the school I was in before coming here the Student Council only had a function like the one our social committee has: organizing parties, or better, organizing one party at the end of the school year. The differences I have seen in this community, the openness and the fact that students do have a voice, and a powerful one, that we are all willing to fight for, and one that the community wants to take into account.

Jeppe

I’ve been in management positions on student-run projects where we had to facilitate meetings and make decisions on behalf of students, but I’ve never been in such a professional group as the UWC Dilijan Student Council. We have a clear drive for helping the school with whatever it needs. This is why I wanted to join. I was sure that I was doing a lot of good things for myself, but helping others and helping the school is something with a wider purpose, something I would see myself fighting for.

What skills participating in the Student Council’s core help to develop in you?

Elena

The most important skill I have learned while in the Student Council’s core is responsibility and accountability. While being a core, I have been collecting concerns from everyone, from the discussions at lunch, from conversations in the hallways, from a debate after cinema on the couch, from a class discussion. I brought every voice I heard to the broader Student Council and I have let everyone know that we have discussed their point of view. I worked a lot with transparency and accountability, with people knowing what we are working on and how we are working on it. This has been possible also thanks to my co-core, Jeppe, with whom I have worked in harmony and incredibly well, especially in the aspect of responsibility and accountability. I personally developed my abilities by being more responsible, speaking up more, asking questions when in doubt, delegating responsibilities and being honest, accountable and transparent about my choices.

Jeppe

Immeasurable skills! Management, speaking, endurance, putting your foot down, people-reading, efficiency in debates, general supervision when there are a lot of things happening at the same time, and most of all, learning about the bigger structure of our school. Getting a grasp and sense of what it’s possible for students to actually do, for me, has been valuable to learn. This school is great, but there are certain boundaries about what we can ask for to be changed. I have a clearer head and idea of the systems working in unity in this school, and also about the systems that need improvement.

What was the advice your predecessors gave you before you started? Was it helpful?

Elena

When we were elected as core we had two weeks of transition when the old core mentored us and gave us advice. I think the majority of it was about dealing with criticism and not letting it affect us too much, as well as not letting issues be forgotten in the process and never solving the problem. The old core has been an incredible resource and we have worked side by side with them even afterwards, while greeting guests and meeting members of the board or possible future heads of college.

Jeppe

Everything is about feeling. Advice won’t help until you’ve actually sat at a Student Council meeting and found out how everything works out. The structure of our debates must be tightly controlled so we can keep on track because everyone wants to say something, personal opinions are not what we are looking for when we are discussing solutions to problems.
What advice did you give to your successors?

**Elena**

Something I found hard while being on the Student Council was to properly deal with criticism. You know you are working hard but somehow people will always criticize you for not doing enough. I told the new core, as personal advice, not to listen to the non-constructive criticism— it comes from people who do not know how much effort you are putting into your job, but it’s something you know. Another piece of advice I gave them was to always remember that they are not alone, that the Student Council is a body of 10 people, who will always be there and work together with you. It is something I always struggle with, finding a balance between my actions and the collaborative actions.

**Jeppe**

Keep your head cold and make sure discussion is heading in the direction we want it to go in. I said that it is important that you can put your community’s values in front of your own. Arguing about something that you disagree with to be implemented is tough, but you will learn it. Many times the student body wants something that you know will not work. This is where you must make sure that you fight for the students as much as possible, even though you don’t agree.

What can you count as your successes? What did you learn from being part of the core?

**Elena**

As a success, the improvement of transparency and communication between the Student Council and the wider student body has been a great achievement. We dealt with transparency, we dealt with attendance at events, we dealt with the problem of parts of the community being silent and not having a voice, we dealt with policies and issues that have been the same way for a long time, and that we haven’t found a solution to yet— such as a personal day policy, a room agreement policy and an improvement in the smoking policy. As a success, I would also count the support that we as a core got from the rest of the Student Council, and the fact that our core was a very approachable one. One important part of our being core was the effectiveness of the link between the student voice and the SMT: issues were always raised as soon as possible to the SMT and answers have always been given back to the student body very promptly.

From being part of the core I learned a lot about how this community works, what are its perks and its flaws, how we think and how we talk. I also learned skills such as issue management, coping with criticism, how to effectively propose ideas, dealing with an answer that is different from the one I thought I would get, replying to counter-arguments, keeping the Student Council on track with issues, and being brave enough to put ideas— whatever they came from— forward.

**Jeppe**

We have set up a new council system called “Community Council”. We had a big two-week-long discussion about a lot of issues. We had to find the root of the problem between a student-teacher relationship that could be improved. We just needed transparency and communication between staff and students, something that we are in the process of achieving. I got a better sense of justice and I learned argumentation. I also learned to see things from a bigger perspective, something our students don’t always do. Many students victimize themselves and say that everything goes against them, EE, SAT, the school, the Code of Conduct, when in reality, we are privileged to be in a school where we are valued and where we have an actual impact. Sure, maybe there are some things that students want to do that they cannot do, but there are a million other things we have access to that nobody in the world could ever imagine. Also, the SMT and staff, the people that the students sometimes complain about, often have even bigger issues in their lives.
One of the most exciting things I did during my studies in United World College Dilijan, was cooperating with the Development office and especially its Communications part. At first, I was randomly assigned there, as my student job. However, I got more enthusiastic about it. Especially as I already liked communications and marketing and wanted to study it in the future.

Aimed at enriching my knowledge in virtual marketing and inspired by the idea of showing our school through the lens of its students, I joined the team running the school’s Instagram page. Thus, the first student-led media account across all the UWC schools was created.

Apart from posting highlights of everyday life at the school, I was eager to continue the Humans of UWC Dilijan project, which was started by Lucia, UWCD’16 – one of the first generation students. I knew through living here how many different thoughts, values, cultures exist in this small community, and how listening to many late-nights conversations has been valuable to my experience here.

I wanted to continue to make our Instagram account a platform for students to express themselves, to reflect on their lives, on past, current events especially because I realized that here, due to the educational system we follow, we are so busy here that we forget to care and talk about these details. I believe that this project is eye-opening, especially because I believe that the experience of each person represents something valuable that we can learn from.

So far, I’ve collected fifteen different stories and experiences to share on our Instagram page. I also recruited a team of photographers to help me, including every member of our society. Finally, I would love to pass this project to one of the first years so it grows and spreads even wider.

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Yahia is from Damascus, Syria. He is a very socially-aware and compassionate member of UWC Dilijan community. He is passionate about Global Politics and in particular issues of peace and conflict and development. He plans to study Media or International Relations in either Canada or the USA.

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Zuhan, Bangladesh, UWCD’19

“All my life, I’ve been inspired by people who were either dead, or lived half way across the world and didn’t even know I existed. However now, for the first time in forever, I feel inspired by the beautiful people around me.”

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Mungo, Malawi, UWCD’17

“It was nerve wrecking and exciting to start a new life.”

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Ola, Poland, UWCD’18

“I often wonder how easy and smooth my life would be, how lighter my choices would have been and how many things less would not let me sleep at night, if I stayed at home in my safe nest. But then I remember that living, loving and growing has to go together with sometimes uncomfortable self-exploration and taking challenges seemingly greater you can overcome. That’s what makes me smile and gives me energy.”

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Kati, Germany, UWCD’18

“At times UWC reminds me of one big airport. It isn’t the destination, but a stop to a greater place. Some people arrive with an exact idea of their destination. Some of them change their flight and some others go home. It’s intimidating at first; strange faces, strange ideas, strange people. But then we begin to share thoughts and emotions. We commence to talk. We speak about happiness and stars, about globalization and conflicts, about religion and communism. And that’s the moment we realize the journey is what makes us, us. The people here make us, us. The conversations we load are what make us, us. And soon enough this airport doesn’t hold strange faces anymore. The strange ideas are destined to become ours. This airport begins to carry stories of love and hope and desperation. It’s a place that makes us struggle. It hurts and inflicts pain, it loves and holds us tight. This airport begins to carry us. And in the soft grasp of the memories, we are lifted to the next stop, to the next destination.”

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CARING PEOPLE FOR A CARING WORLD

Gianmichele Laquale
Pastoral counsellor, psychologist/psychotherapist/group analyst, Italy

An ongoing debate animating the UWC movement concerns how the UWCs are changing and in what direction they are developing in order to face the challenges that students and schools will deal with in the coming future. This issue is at the core of the movement itself since it informs and steers its own mission. The UWCs have a very clear mission: to promote international understanding and a sustainable future through education. How is it possible to pursue this challenging and today in a changing world? How can education promote the self-realisation of young people and, at the same time, an understanding attitude between people coming from different cultures? How can this aim be pursued in an innovative way?

Existing educational systems often seem to find it difficult to respond to the challenges of contemporary societies and to prepare students to find their own way. We go on asking ourselves, how should a learning environment be structured and what do children and young people need to learn? In answering these questions, we often have in mind what societies need from students. We often forget that educational systems are historical and cultural precipitations on which social system are built. It seems that they are based on activities which mainly promote the cognitive development of children. On the other hand, it is common to find people speaking about old school mates who had difficulties in school but success in life or, vice versa, about acquaintances who were brilliant in school but found life problematic. Notwithstanding the subjectivity and complexity of these dimensions, we can ask what the variables are that allow people to fulfil their potential and to learn skills that will be useful in their existential experience. On the same page, can we be courageous enough to envision an educational system as a space in which people can go beyond their identifications and experiment with who they desire to become? It seems that something is missing or at least partially neglected in this exploration: what is it?

What is probably undervalued in several learning environments, however well-designed they are, is the attention given to emotional development. We know today how important the impact that attachment patterns and emotional experiences can have on the life of a person. We also know how essential adolescence is for development, since it is during this period that our interpersonal bonds and attitudes are revisited and renegotiated. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the role that the school has in these processes.

The ability to read our own emotions and to describe them, the competence to understand what other people feel, seeing things from somebody else’s point of view, thinking feelings, mentalizing experience, making sense of one’s emotional and relational world, and perceiving behaviour as intelligible are all extremely important dimensions that heavily affect our ability to listen to our desires and find a way to realise them. How can we not heed Jacques Lacan’s words when he says that the biggest guilt in life is to betray our own desire? These aspects not only shape our intrapsychic life but also influence our interpersonal relationships. The more we are able to read our own and other people’s feelings, the easier it will be for us to work through conflicts and to establish effective interactions with ourselves and with others.

We often live in a context in which we usually think that proof comes before trust. We are used to thinking: “First you show me that I can trust you and only afterwards I will trust you.” On the other hand, we know that developmental processes are based on the opposite principle. If we do not trust a child, it will be very difficult for them to show how good they are. And only if we trust them will they be able to prove their ability. We are not able to believe in ourselves until someone else believes in us. For instance, we won’t be able to learn from our mistakes until we have the opportunity to see our failures as learning experiences. Furthermore, we are not able to know how much we can take from others, until we find out how much we are able to give. All these dynamics show that without a significant relationship based on trust and confidence, no exploration is possible and no meaningful learning can happen. This is particularly relevant in adolescence in which teenagers unconsciously look for adults who are different from their parents, and with whom they can share an interaction based on trust.

This frame of thought has very important implications for education, more specifically for the education of adolescents and especially for the UWC world. We cannot build peace outside if we do not learn to build peace in our relationships and inside ourselves. We cannot fulfill our potential if we do not have the chance to know our limits and embrace our longings. These ideas have often been neglected in the past, or they have been only partially taken into account. But they can inspire and guide us. The UWCs have already bet on the importance of emotional development, setting up a system in which, beyond the importance of cognitive, creative and physical growth, the emotional dimension is seen as an immense potential for cultivation.

From this point of view, the system of pastoral care in the UWC is setting to promote the emotional growth of students and not a tool to fix or contain them. It is a fundamental dimension of the UWC experience which is further developing. In this perspective, more specifically, any activity of pastoral counselling is an instrument not only to care or prevent psychological distress but mainly to promote well-being, resilience, self-awareness and ultimately emotional development.

Adolescence is usually a very challenging period of life in which teenagers need to explore their ambivalence toward their caregivers and their developmental processes, build their identity, complete their separation and individuation processes, take responsibility for their desires and turn them into plans. Living far from home and in a cross-cultural environment makes these dimensions even more challenging.

Counselling and psychotherapy provide students with a space where they can work through their experiences, when they need it. They can bring their challenges and difficulties and, together with a therapist, explore the connections between themselves and others and the relation between thoughts and emotions. They can meet the parts of themselves they don’t know and learn to use desires and emotions to grow instead of letting emotions become overwhelming.

Group settings are dimensions in which students can share thoughts and emotions and learn from each other. Groups on emotional life skills, for example, can help students to learn experientially how challenging and rewarding it can be to explore self-perceptions, close interactions, decision making, emotional intimacy and so on. Playing emotional games and reflecting on what happens during the game can foster an attitude of self-observation and learning from interpersonal experiences. Any activity in the interpersonalization is facilitated can promote emotional development and ultimately a caring attitude for oneself and others.

These perspectives can work only if the staff are available to get evolved, from an emotional point of view, and take a stake in the outcome. Anything that happens to staff has an effect upon the students and vice versa, anything that happens to students leaves a mark on the staff. Group experiences and staff development processes are different from their parents, and with whom they can share an interaction based on trust.

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We should never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.
GLOBAL POLITICS: WHEN RITUALS BECOME THE CULTURE

Jaime Miguel Nieman

Teacher of Global Politics, Spain/USA

It is easy to do things as they have always been done. The educational landscape and needs of our globalized youth are changing so rapidly that a revision of common practices that have been taken for granted is needed. If we constantly call on our students to step out of their comfort zones, should not we be the ones leading this process? My own journey has been one of looking for ways to meet the diverse needs of my students and assist them to discover and pursue their passions while at the same time enabling them to navigate the many challenges they will encounter. Through conversations with the students and personal reflection, a broader reimaging of what learning looks like began to emerge. The demanding expectations of the students across our three educational programs at UWC Dilijan – Academic, Co-curricular and Pastoral – means that somehow our class needs a much better integration of the core values that run through our mission and philosophy.

Here is a short insight into my own search of how to be a teacher in the 21st century. It is an evolving work in progress. There are, however, some very clear fundamentals that I stay loyal to whether doing SCRUM (a framework for managing complex projects) or giving students 20% time (personal passion projects).

In our Global Politics class, we found value and significance in the experiences of the students; practice is what mattered, not the narrative. We also began to tinker and experiment, and we discovered that what you can do with the acquired knowledge was more important than simply possessing this knowledge. The educational space became as much about self-cultivation as it was about Global Politics. Many times, students analyze their own countries as case studies and are forced to see them in a variety of new ways. They move beyond the binary or basic understanding to see their own experience in relation to others around them. This develops a lasting impact, leaving them with a wide range of lenses and perspectives through which they view the world.

The Learning Environment or the Space as a Temple

Re-thinking the space and learning environment is essential. In this new environment, relationships and communication are at the forefront of everything we do. The first task is getting all the students to be comfortable with each other and with the setting. My role as a teacher is to facilitate and frame these interactions and make sure that the space is one where everyone feels like their presence matters. I try to do this by creating an environment that stimulates all the senses. Music and fragrances are always emanating from inside, creating a unique atmosphere. The space becomes like a temple: a safe place to breath, think and grow. We practice our weekly rituals of Tai-chi to train the body and the mind to stay fresh and focus ourselves on the topics of the day. This relaxed yet real-life space provides students with a stake in and care about. Students are given autonomy to pursue issues and topics that matter to them. These experiences range from simulations, games, political methodologies and real-world scenarios that help us understand the contemporary nature of Global Politics. Many times, students analyze their own countries as case studies and are forced to see them in a variety of new ways. They move beyond the binary or basic understanding to see their own experience in relation to others around them. This develops a lasting impact, leaving them with a wide range of lenses and perspectives through which they view the world.

Learning as a Team or Culture of Learning

Learning happens through collaboration. There is wide autonomy for students to decide how they are going to pursue any given project. The learning goals, expectations and assessment criteria are very clear from the beginning and the teams plan together, divide the tasks and do continuous quality control to make sure everyone is learning and that the work is up to the level that each team desires. Some teams often times fail to create a proper group dynamic and face disputes and conflicts. In these circumstances, it is important for the team to attempt to overcome and manage the emerging conflicts. This mirrors authentic scenarios that challenge the view that conflict is something to avoid. The secret, which many students have discovered over time, is to create an environment where everyone not only works in a team but that they work as a team.

The GPC as a concept focuses on authentic learning experiences that students have a stake in and care about. Students are given autonomy to pursue issues and topics that matter to them. These experiences range from simulations, games, political methodologies and real-world scenarios that help us understand the contemporary nature of Global Politics. Many times, students analyze their own countries as case studies and are forced to see them in a variety of new ways. They move beyond the binary or basic understanding to see their own experience in relation to others around them. This develops a lasting impact, leaving them with a wide range of lenses and perspectives through which they view the world.

The Nitty Gritty of Authenticity or Experiential Realism

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In the GPC we are driven by peer to peer learning and we derive our power from participation; we belong in order to learn. I, as a teacher, am included in this journey and I have learned as much as my students about myself and developed new ways of enrolling teaching. Through flexible learning strategies, I am able to use my full range of skills, interests and specializations. As I move between the students, to support either group or self-driven projects, I realize that my students don’t need me to teach them content but to probe them and trust them in their learning journey. The path is not a linear one but rather the road less traveled. The culture that in the end emerges in this new environment is one of deep learning that transforms us into more compassionate critical thinkers and feelers.
PROJECT WEEK - AUTUMN 2017

Every semester students take a break from class to take part in projects designed to put their UWC learning into practice. These Project Weeks are enjoyable but also challenging for the students, taking them out of their comfort zone to learn a new set of skills. This year, UWC Dilijan’s first Project Week took place from October 9th–15th. By undertaking the projects, the students were able to improve their skills in fields as diverse as gardening, camping, teamwork, communication with the locals and more. Furthermore, the week also gave the first years, second years and staff members a chance to bond and create a closer community as they worked side-by-side to organize their Project Week. As a result, this year the students had the chance to work with a numerous external organisations: Fuller House, Armenian Camp Artenish, Vanadzor orphanage and Dilijan Community Center.

THE MYSTIC CAVES OF YEGHEGIS

An adventurous spirit is key to the UWC experience. Students camped out and explored the caves in the region of Yeghegis, Armenia. By visiting the local villagers, they gained assistance with camping, which was of great help to students. Being in an unfamiliar environment with alternative living conditions, the students recognised the role of teamwork and communication to stay calm in stressful and inconvenient situations. They had to always be prepared for any situation as camping is a source of constant surprises, meaning that listening and communication skills were very important in this project especially because at times the group had to find the cave without guidance.

TEAMWORK FOR OUTCOMES

UWC Dilijan students continue to work with the Fuller Center for Housing – a non-governmental charitable organization that assists in the building and renovation of housing for families. This year the students used their teamwork abilities and applied their plastering skills to finish renovations for one of the houses in Katnakhbyur, Yerevan. Despite the physical demands of the work, they completed the project and were able to effectively engage and communicate with each other and the family that was waiting to move into the house. Through this project, the students managed to improve their practical plastering skills, as well as develop their team working and communication abilities. As a result, they are eager to continue working with the Fuller Center for Housing.

EXPLORATION OF CAUCASUS

Situated within the Lesser Caucasian mountain range, Armenia gives plenty of opportunity to those who are fans of exploring the world through hiking. By partnering with the Transcaucasian Trail Organization (TTO), the group of eight students led by the philosophy teacher hiked from Shorzha to Gosh. Throughout the project the students collected data through the GPS coordination system, which will further help the TTO in the creation of new routes around the Dilijan National Park to attract more tourists to the region. Along with struggling through the bad weather and overcoming some physical challenges, the students were able to acquire many practical outdoor skills and embrace the natural beauty of Armenia.

SWEETWATER OF SEVAN

One might not immediately think of sailing when considering UWC Dilijan. However, a group of students were able to spend a week learning how to sail on lasers and a yacht in Lake Sevan. In the Armenian Camp Artenish, they managed to ride out the cold weather and wet clothes to learn how to sail, everything from understanding the principles of how a sailboat works to how to balance a laser in different wind conditions. The intense focus on learning resulted in the students’ personal growth – from only being able to capsize their boats on day one, by day five they were already racing each other.
The Dilijan Dog Project Week was aimed at visiting Yerevan’s prominent dog shelters in an effort to learn methods to solve an eminent issue that ails Dilijan: stray dogs. This project is of tremendous importance as it touches upon animal rights and service towards the community. A group of 11 students along with supervisors went to Yerevan in order to volunteer at two shelters, Dingo and Pawsitive. Through this, they gained knowledge about sterilization, funding and plans that could effectively be implemented in Dilijan, as the students understand their responsibility towards the community in which they live. As it is often said, “Act local, Think global!”

Another successful Project Week where the students worked alongside the community of Dilijan was the Peace Garden. The project is aimed at expanding the college’s greenhouse area to build a garden for personal use. Despite the physical exhaustion and the cold weather, the students were more than successful, while at the same time only spending a quarter of their budget. This garden gives people a space for relaxation. Additionally, it allowed the group to obtain practical skills that they can put to use anywhere, especially in areas of undeveloped land, where something sustainable can be created. The students admit that the project would not have been as successful without the teamwork and team building skills, which they applied during the project.

Another group of students visited Vanadzor to help the kids there decorate the orphanage with colourful murals. They managed to develop a spirit of collaboration with the children, as the kids of the orphanage were excited to contribute to the project. Regardless of the language barriers and limited resources, the students created a large mural using the grid method as well as organizing activities to play with the children. The highlight of the project was the learning outcomes that the students achieved: adapting to changes in plans, time scarcity and discovering their creative sides.

Youth empowerment is vital in the UWC movement. The latter came with the exploration of the region of Yeghegnadzor. The students empowered the local youth through sport, teaching them how to overcome cultural and language barriers. This in turn motivated the Armenian students to be more involved in sport. Working with kids from the local community and partnering with the community centre of Yeghegnadzor, as well as US Peace Corps, the students improved their adaptability and teaching skills.

Additionally, the students were able to widen their perspectives of Armenia by having contact with the southern region of the country. This was achieved by visits to museums and memorials, such as the discovery of the merchant rest house from the third century. Being impressed with the remarkable hospitality and successful outcomes of the project, the students look forward to doing it again.

Getting to know the community is very important to the students at UWC Dilijan. This has led to the creation of The Humans of Dilijan Project, organised by Bora, Turkey, UWCD’17, Turkey. This year the students led by Diogo, Portugal, UWCD’18, expanded the project into the town of Yerevan in order to get to know more of Armenia. For the project, the students would talk to locals and get their opinions on current events as well as their perspective on their daily lives. As one of our students wrote, “To find the real heart of a culture you need to approach its people, know their life and struggles”. This proves once again that community involvement is key to this project as well as the UWC movement, as it enables the students to discover aspects of the current political situation from different social perspectives.
Fernando is from Granada, Spain. He is a self-driven changemaker and a passionate member of the UWC Dilijan community. Being interested in social movements he plans to study Politics & Government in Sciences Po in Paris, France.

Our college and its uniqueness is based on an extraordinary sense of community that we all share. We all appreciate our peers and teachers with whom we interact on a daily basis. However, we sometimes seem to overlook engaging the school staff into our community.

We state in our mission that we have the duty to transform the community that surrounds us, yet we do not pay enough attention to all those workers who make our experience possible with their tremendous dedication and hard work. This is the thinking that occupied my mind for a long time, and eventually moved me to launch a new project: Dilinglish – a platform through which we are now attempting to make a change in our nearest community by teaching English to the staff children.

Everything started at the staff appreciation event organized by the students. I explained my intentions and plans to the staff members and gave them a survey so that we could grasp the interest among them. The response obtained was unbelievable: more than 100 children expressed their willingness and excitement to participate in the project. Meanwhile, I began “recruiting” students who would potentially become the teachers. Again, the response from the student body was exceptional since more than 30 people were willing to help.

After some weeks of preparation and organization of the logistics, the children came to our school. We divided into different groups according to age and the lessons started. In total, we have six groups on Wednesdays and Sundays involving over 90 children overall.

What has impressed me the most is their enthusiasm and their real willingness to learn. The lack of use of English in Dilijan is real, but Dilinglish shows us all the will of Armenian families to overcome this barrier and, together with their profound and admirable culture, move forward and open up to the world.

In this sense, our college is the best catalyst to facilitate this change and make Dilijan a pioneering town in Armenia. For now, I have started to witness first hand how trust between our students and the children is starting to form and how the children are starting to feel more and more comfortable at the school.

Moreover, it is priceless to be thanked by many gardeners, canteen staff or cleaners, who truly appreciate what we are doing. I am satisfied with what we have done during these months, but I already envision the future growth of the project. Many staff expressed their desire to be students themselves and I would like to expand the project to them and include them in Dilinglish so that the impact is maximized.

This is my last year in the school, but I am convinced that I am leaving the project in good hands. Many first-year students have become deeply involved and will lead the project next year. I am hoping that in a few years, I will return to Dilijan only to find a more harmonious community and be proud that Dilinglish has played its part.
I am not special, but I believe I have my own story, which I consider not just a series of events that happened one after the other, but a series of lessons I learned from one occasion to the next.

I grew up in a small rural village called Matala Hembecho in Wolaitta Zone, which is about 450 km away from the Capital Addis Abeba, in southern Ethiopia. My childhood was very challenging. But I believe it is the most educational part of my life and it has given me the solid foundation and positive energy to face any challenge on my way. Like any kid in my region, and as the first-born son for my mom, I was expected to collect firewood, keep cattle and fetch water for the family. To collect firewood, I had to walk about 6-7 km every day, the same for water. So, every day after school, I was occupied by those little but very challenging chores for my childish ability. At night my Kerosene lamp (Kuraz, I called it) could hardly last two hours, and it was the only time I could do my homework. When I think about my childhood, I remember the nature that I grew up with. I spent most my time in forests, keeping cattle, collecting firewood, I used to climb trees a lot. I love it! I do not regret my situation. I believe this experience has added the determination and courage to the content of my character!

My parents are farmers. They tried their best to educate me. From grade one to three I studied at the Matala and Gadal Primary School, which is about 6 km away from my home, and every morning I walked to school and walked back home. During grades four and five I studied at two different schools – at Dilbehibiret School and at Wadu Primary School (both are at Areka town in Bolooso Sore Wereda). After grade six, I took an entrance exam and I successfully passed to the Wolaita Liqa Primary and Secondary School, which is in Wolaitta Soddo town, and studied there till grade 10. It is seen as the best school in the region and very competitive at the national level as well. It is run by a local non-profit organization called Wolaita Development Association. The school’s main goal is to support and provide basic educational requirements for students who are academically good, but face challenges because of the socio-economic situation of their family.

Challenges on the Path of Education

After the third grade my family could not meet all the basic demands for my education. So, I worked as a shoeshine boy from an early age. This meant I could buy books, notebooks, kerosene and other basic stuff I needed. I did not have electricity until grade 6, and I used kerosene to study. I cared more for my kerosene than my food. Even after getting support from Wolaita Development Association I still needed to work because the support was not enough for all the basic things I needed. I tried all I could to get money and support myself. I tutored kids and was selling small stuff like gum, plastic bags and matches.

Still, on two occasions I was on the verge of quitting education. The first was when I was in the 4th grade. One day I was so disappointed with my mother because she could not buy kerosene for me, she did not have money, but I just denied the fact she did not have it, and I decided to quit the school. I did not go to school for three days. In the fourth day, my teacher came to me. I saw him and tried to hide from him, but he caught me and he asked me why I did not go to school. I told him that I do not want because my mother could not buy kerosene for me. He took me with him to his home, he started to engage me with different stories, among them all there is one statement which has inspired and helped me to continue all the way till today, he said, “If you waste your time today, it will be a huge debt one day that you will never be able to pay back! You might think you do not have any resources, but do not forget – you are born to make resources not to consume! You can go beyond your situation”. From that time on, I always understood that wasting time is a debt and burden for the next generation! I do not want to be a burden for the next generation, rather an input to facilitate them so that they will be able to draw beautiful artistic history! My teacher’s name is Zeleke!

The second time the idea of quitting education came to me because I could not handle work and education together. I needed more time for my education, but I did have no way to do that. I tried...
to have evening classes and work during the day, because as I grew I needed more time for my education but at the same time I needed more time to work to at least to help myself get basic things. However, I had some very compassionate people, the entire family of Mulgeta Shiferawu, who helped me to finish grade 10! It was, at that moment I got a UWC scholarship. I would say it was the happiest moment of my life.

**Acquiring Essential Tools to Bring the Change**

I got accepted to UWC Dilijan and I really enjoy being here. I feel like I am wearing new glasses to look at the world. It has given me huge space to experience sociopolitical and cultural differences and has widened my understanding of myself and the world around me. The best thing here is having friends from completely different cultures, places and with different views but still finding a great connection that bonds very strongly and works perfectly well. It is, and will be, the best experience of my life. The actions, the ways he/she interacts, and the values he/she holds have a great impact on the content and structure of his or her student’s character and societal approaches. I personally think of my teachers as people who equip me with the important tools to draw a beautiful history in the next chapter of our world, in my life! So, simply their role is to equip pupils with the essential tools to bring change!

I love almost all the books I read, either religious or political, philosophical or historical. But just to mention some of my favorite books include: Papillon, an autobiographical novel written by Henri Charrière (I read the Amharic version), The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli, The Price of Africa by Daniel Gizawu, The Crucible by Arthur Miller, Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad, Love unto Crypt - the greatest Ethiopian novel of all the time by Hadis Alemayehu. Papillon has influenced me a lot. The content of the book and the determination of the main character, Papillon, encouraged me so much. Besides that, the three series of books by Myles Munroe (Understanding your potential, Releasing your Potential, and Maximizing your Potential) have influenced me a lot. After reading these books, I became more focused on finding myself and finding the way that I can make an impact. I am in serious search of understanding my potential and discovering the hidden me as the book describes.

Academically it was not that hard, but it challenged me until I got used to the question styles and requirements. I swiftly adapted to it and I have been doing it with relative ease. But it is far more challenging than the education I had back home. It is very different! I will be applying to Princeton, Imperial College, UCL, Michigan and Chicago. I want to study chemical engineering and mathematics. I want to make a change in my country. I believe one day something different will happen and I want to be the cause of that. Before that, I want to use every opportunity the world has to offer and equip myself well so that I can realize my dream. I dream to be able to solve the problems we have in my country. My country faces poverty, it is short of clean water and also its economy is more dependent on garniture, yet we have not developed the chemical knowledge, or the chemical industries to provide clean water, provide good fertilizers, to enhance the productivity of agriculture in general. That is why I desperately want to study chemical engineering, through it I believe I can bring great impact and change to my country. Besides my hard work, I believe God will help me to realize my dream.

Living without a clear dream is like walking in the dark! Having a dream in life helps us to be focused and cultivate ourselves for a meaningful purpose! If one does not know where he is going, one cannot choose which way to go! He/ she will get lost in the bubble of ways, losing focus! I started the race at one edge of the world – in the forest of Abako Kaka, I believe I will finish the race at another edge of the world! I am lucky!
Music as a Habit and Personal Necessity

Becoming a musician was not a single act or a defined moment that occurred in my life, but rather a habit that I chose to dedicate myself to. It is something that happens constantly but only when I am disciplined enough to carve out a creative space for myself and for those around me.

I remember spending countless hours with my first teacher, Russian pianist Nadia Lapich, playing the piano, looking at paintings and taking walks around the hills where she lived in the outskirts of Cochabamba, Bolivia. It was with her and my subsequent teachers Igor Cognolato and Michael Lewin, that I learned the discipline and mental preparation needed to face a career as a pianist.

However, it is my current teacher and mentor, Brazilian pianist and conductor Ricardo Castro, with whom I have the rare privilege of continuously strolling along the path of music-making with the aim of social transformation. Departing from the knowledge that music is a human necessity, I learned from him that I could contribute to creating opportunities for others, always by means of playing music together and integrating youth from diverse, contrasting backgrounds.

UWC Legacy

I share my mentor’s ideas and keep on learning to incorporate music into different social projects in Latin America, especially in my native Bolivia. My own social background, including my service-oriented activities as a student of the UWC of the Adriatic, contribute to shaping my musical personality even today.

Being a student at the UWC of the Adriatic inspired me to explore and dig deeply inside myself. Living in Italy for me was a synonym of artistic inspiration and personal discovery. Competitions, festivals and concerts were the norm, as well as daily dedicated instrumental practice. Of course this was easier thanks to the “Trio di Trieste” Chamber Music School, which functioned at the UWC of the Adriatic and gave us, a dozen music scholars, highly advanced training since we were all going to pursue music professionally.

Last summer when I performed at UWC-CA, I found out that not only does the “Trio di Trieste” Chamber Music School no longer exist, but unfortunately even the musical situation there is uncertain. Because of measures like this one – stopping...
adjacent programs which do not focus on quantifiable outcomes – adopted by the UWC movement as a whole, we may be at risk of actually becoming an obstacle towards unconventional education if we do not diversify our methodologies.

Youngest Teacher and Active International Performer

I was lucky I had the opportunity to develop my passion, but this does not mean that I am more “talented” than anyone else. In fact, I needed much help and personal effort to pursue a life in music. Coming to UWC Dilijan is another one of these opportunities for me to keep growing, but to do so in hand in hand with the community. I believe that personal growth means very little without collective improvement.

Developing the craft of making music is an arduous process and it usually happens through one-to-one coaching sessions. I always try to benefit from the fact that all the students I teach are unique – this is the key to understanding them and their motivations: for playing a wide variety of musical genres and styles, be it a jazz standard, a fado tune, a sonata, a piece of chamber music that I have never heard before. Each student will understand these artworks in his/her own way.

At concert venues but rather as a tool for development and integration. Scientific studies have suggested that the collective practice of music is highly beneficial for cognitive and creative reasoning for people of all ages. Some people might decide to develop their musicality.

Today, the concept of being a professional musician is very complex, and some might argue that not everyone has the means to afford a musical education, especially if a state is focusing on more basic needs for its population such as public services, health, and others. Nevertheless, there are striking examples of systems where music is a fundamental part of the society, and they provide an arduous process and it usually happens through one-to-one coaching sessions. I always try to benefit from the fact that all the students I teach are unique – this is the key to understanding them and their motivations: for playing a wide variety of musical genres and styles, be it a jazz standard, a fado tune, a sonata, a piece of chamber music that I have never heard before. Each student will understand these artworks in his/her own way.

The Aram Tigran Conservatory in the Armenian highlands. I am constantly amazed by the richness of Armenia’s artistic personality – the instruments, melodies, dances and traditions never cease to amaze me. I especially value the interaction of all the peoples living in this area, and the influence they have had on each other. As a matter of fact, my next project is a series of recordings that will showcase my own arrangements of Armenian music (by Komitas, Arno Babajanyan and others) as well as traditional Kurdish tunes which are rarely heard by international audiences. This is made possible thanks to renowned violinist Brusk Zanganah, with whom I regularly collaborate.

I believe that a musician in the 21st century needs to embody the many diverse aspects of music-making in order to be performing, improvising, composing, conducting and, of course, teaching. 
EVERYDAY RHYTHM OF PAINTING, COMPOSING MUSIC AND WRITING

A Childhood Full of Art

I remember when I was four-years-old, hardly able to reach the piano keyboard, trying to play. At the age of five, I entered the Tbilisi Z. Phaliashvili central musical school for gifted children. Then I remember how I stepped into art. I was seven when I passed the entrance exam. I can vividly recall the feeling I had when they read out my name from the list of accepted children. Writing comes afterwards. I was ten or eleven, can’t really remember, when I wrote my first poem. This how it all started, in a nutshell.

10 years passed. I graduated art school, specializing in painting. The following year, one year ahead of schedule, I graduated from musical school, from the composition class. A year later I graduated from the Georgian-American high school of Tbilisi, with a gold medal.

Looking for New Experience at UWC Dilijan

All these school-years had a huge positive influence on me, and now it was time for higher education. I passed the exams to enter the Tbilisi State Art Academy and State Conservatoire at the same time, but I was still looking for new perspectives, trying to explore new paths. So, I found myself at UWC Dilijan. The College is full of all kinds of experiences, valuable relationships and beautiful memories. That’s what is most important for me here. UWC came into my life to form your personality, build up an identity, polish your soul, explore yourself and release feelings when you feel full. I wonder how they never get in the way of each other. Yes, during school years often I had to stay up till late. But that’s fine, I guess. It’s definitely worth it.

I have two published books. The first one “Playing with thoughts” was released when I was 13 and another one “Sunflower” – at the age of 16. Both of them are compilations of poems and short stories. I write about things and feelings that I’m full with and want to release to clear the room for new thoughts. Poems are rarely written in my head, memories to compile, to write about. It’s a pity that I can’t think of expressing myself in English. I write only in Georgian, because this is the language that comes first to my mind.

My mom was the one who noticed my art skills and helped me to develop them. My dad has always respected my choices as well. My parents aren’t connected to art through their professions and never received an art education, but I strongly believe that they are the ones from whom I have these skills. They just didn’t develop their artistic talents. When it comes to art, the right teachers are as important as self-development. And I’ve always been very lucky since I have always had great teachers who intensified my enthusiasm.

A common question has always been: “But how does it work, three art spheres at the same time?” It may sound a bit unreal, but actually it isn’t. As I’ve been living this way since I was a child, it has become my casual, everyday rhythm. I’ve never thought about dropping painting, composing or writing. No way. All these three aspects of art are different ways of expressing yourself. They help you to form your personality, build up an iden-

Open for the Future

Since I was 10 years-old, I’ve been participating in art, literary and musical competitions, concerts, book presentations and art exhibitions in Georgia and abroad, which I suppose are necessary for people involved in art as they help them to develop – giving them stimuli and inspiration for new achievements. I had the opportunity to hold personal exhibitions in Tbilisi, Georgia (2014, 2015), in Adria, Italy (2014) and in Vienna, Austria (2016, 2017). In 2016, in Tbilisi, I had a concert of my compositions. I also presented both of my books in Tbilisi. And just recently, in November 2017, I took part in the presentation of my second book which was translated into German, in Frankfurt, Germany. There was also an exhibition of my artworks during which I played some of my own compositions, as well.

In the future, I want to continue with the arts and music. Despite the fact that Georgia has a rich culture and long tradition of art, at present, unfortunately, art is an undervalued sphere there. I am afraid the economic state of the country is not allowing art to flourish. I believe, though, that if the passions of an artist are strong, firm and honest, nothing can confine them. I am going to continue my studies at universities abroad and return to my native country afterwards to develop its cultural traditions and art.
A private visit by the Prince of Wales to Armenia in 2013 laid down solid foundations for long-term cooperation between UWC Dilijan, the Scholae Mundi Foundation and His Royal Highness. During this memorable visit, the Co-Founders of UWC Dilijan and Scholae Mundi Foundation Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend and the architect of UWC Dilijan Tim Flynn were privileged to meet His Royal Highness and to tell him about the new UWC school in the beautiful resort town of Dilijan, surrounded by the lush forests of the National Park.

Being the President of UWC for 17 years (1978 – 1995), HRH knew long before that the new addition to the UWC family was going to be in Armenia, but back in 2013 his busy schedule meant he was unable to visit the construction site of the new school in Dilijan. Still, one year later, he recorded an inspiring address to the 92 students from 49 countries who were the first stakeholders of the new UWC Dilijan for the Opening ceremony in 2014.

His Royal Highness’s active position in educational issues led to the creation of a British-Armenian project. The partnership between Scholae Mundi and Dumfries House, a Scottish Country House and Estate with a developing education centre, set in East Ayrshire, was aimed at providing support for the joint educational programme of Dumfries House and UWC Dilijan. The partnership involved two principal elements: the restoration of one of the estate buildings and the opportunity for UWC Dilijan students and other pupils from schools in Dilijan to study at Dumfries House over a period of ten years. The estate is under the patronage of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales or as he is known in Scotland His Royal Highness The Prince Charles, the Duke of Rothesay. The Scholae Mundi funded the restoration of Dilijan – one of the estate’s main buildings, named after UWC Dilijan. The Dilijan building has 16 guest rooms, each is named after one of the 16 principal donors of Scholae Mundi who took part in the project. The first group of 40 UWC Dilijan students and 8 students from the local Dilijan community visited Dumfries House to study various courses during Project Week in 2015, and received a welcome from the Prince of Wales.

Known as a passionate environmentalist and gardening enthusiast, His Royal Highness’s philosophy is that it is better to work with Nature than against it. He commended Tim Flynn’s idea of the putting back everything that had been taken away during the construction of UWC Dilijan: the school building has living walls, with plants from surrounding hills growing on them, and the beautiful lawn which used to lie on the site now grows on the roofs of the campus buildings.

Contributing to the architect’s idea, Prince Charles presented a number of Plane trees to UWC Dilijan. These trees have become a starting point for the long way from school to the town which was named Prince Charles Avenue in honour of HRH. Prince Charles Avenue follows the Agstev river embankment and connects all college facilities and buildings. Prince of Wales Avenue starts with a naturally shaped river embankment where the river makes a curve forming a beautiful small garden. There are 20 Oriental Planes that form a perfect shade with Red Maple, Mammoth tree, Dawn Redwood, Weeping Willow, roses and lilacs contributing to a wonderful atmosphere of tranquility and contemplation. Organic shaped rocks and plantings of local shrubs, perennials and grasses give the impression of a flowing river with its natural local flora, bringing the ecosystem back to where it was before the river embankment was formed by artificial walls.

The embankment within the campus territory is now planted with lilac trees and rose bushes, but in time and during the next stages of campus construction new Plane trees are going to be added in order to extend Prince Charles Avenue to the centre of Dilijan. UWC Dilijan is going to keep and develop the idea of living with nature as an ongoing symbol.
I am currently studying Agriculture at the Instituto De Empresa (IE University) in Spain. I graduated from UWC Dilijan in May 2017. It is also an international school and I realised that I had something to say to almost everyone, “Baree Dzes” to the Armenian, and so on. It is great seeing how saying “I have visited Tiksi” will bring a smile to the Georgian in the corner of the room. It is impossible! I am honestly so glad I got the opportunity to study in a UWC because it changed my life completely. It opened so many doors for me. The fact that I am in IE University right now is because of UWC Dilijan. I even was able to win a grant and work on a youth empowerment project in Malawi last summer. It was successful seeing as we got to empower and encourage a lot of youth to go through with their education and go to university.

MUNGO
Malawi, UWC’17

ALEXANDRE
Georgie, UWC’17

I am currently doing a double major in Finance and Economics-IBBA at Michael F. Price College of Business of The University of Oklahoma in the United States. The University of Oklahoma has the largest number of UWC Scholars in the US, meaning students from UWC are treated very well. I am studying with new friends all over the world who improve ourselves through friendly rivalry, just like in Dilijan. I am now working for the marketing department of Innovation Hub to deepen my understanding of the field of marketing. Indeed, what I learned in terms of organization skills, time management and economics knowledge is now proving very useful.

MICHAIL
Russia, UWC’17

I am currently studying architecture at the Instituto De Empresa (IE University) in Spain. I graduated from UWC Dilijan in May 2017. It is also an international school and I realized that I had something to say to almost everyone, “Baree Dzes” to the Armenian, and so on. It is great seeing how saying “I have visited Tiksi” will bring a smile to the Georgian in the corner of the room. It is impossible! I am honestly so glad I got the opportunity to study in a UWC because it changed my life completely. It opened so many doors for me. The fact that I am in IE University right now is because of UWC Dilijan. I even was able to win a grant and work on a youth empowerment project in Malawi last summer. It was successful seeing as we got to empower and encourage a lot of youth to go through with their education and go to university.

MUNGO
Malawi, UWC’17
COMPREHENSIVE PORTRAIT OF A FRACTURING WORLD

La región más transparente
(Where the Air is Clear)
by Carlos Fuentes

In this novel Fuentes paints a comprehensive portrait of what Mexico City (and most of Central America’s big cities) is like and how inequality and imperialism can fracture a society. It explores a post-revolutionary scenario and intertwines the lives of a prostitute, a bourgeois family, a vigilante and many other characters to lay bare the skeleton of Mexico City.

El hombre que amaba a los perros
(The Man Who Loved Dogs)
by Leonardo Padura

The Cuban author gives a detailed account of the Russian Revolution and its consequences, focusing on the usually quiet perspective of Leon Trotsky and the effect his beliefs had internationally, mainly in Cuba and in Mexico. The novel follows the lives of the author, Trotsky’s and Ramón Mercader’s (his murderer) through a beautiful narrative, at the same time denouncing the dehumanization that occurred during the Stalinist era.

Librarians Recommend

Omnilingual
by H. Beam Piper

Omnilingual narrates the story of an abandoned planet, which is visited by human archaeologists for the first time in an attempt to get a grasp of the civilization that used to be there. They face the challenge of understanding a new language from zero to fathom how the ancient civilization thought. In such a multicultural environment as UWC Dili, this book’s implications of the universality of language and the similarities of different planets is very applicable.

Nausea
by Jean-Paul Sartre

“I suppose it is out of laziness that the world is the same day after day. Today it seemed to want to change. And then anything, anything could happen.” As a pillar of existentialism, this novel is an anthem for coming into existence and overcoming ourselves, embracing a challenge such as we do here everyday. A beautiful piece of literature.

Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution
by Matilde Zimmermann

Latin America is more than dancing and football, the historical baggage it carries is enormous, and even small nations such as Nicaragua have had a crucial role in how things are today. Zimmermann delivers a brilliant account of 100 years of Sandinism, and the impact it has had on the whole region.
BUILDING AN ARMENIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Tim Flynn

The founder of Tim Flynn Architects and the architect of UWC Dilijan

From a Small Camp to UWC Dilijan

At present, perhaps only a few will remember that UWC Dilijan started out as a small summer camp. Back in 2004, the beautiful location of the valley in Dilijan on the embankment of the Aragats river surrounded by the colourful mountains, which were covered with the exuberance of vegetation, induced philanthropists and social entrepreneurs Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend's dream of bringing children to this place. The idea then intertwined with their aspiration of developing quality international education in Armenia, which in turn led to the idea of the establishment of an international school rather than a camp.

The ambition grew and grew and in 2006 we were already discussing an international boarding school for 400... and then for 650 students. A school such as this required larger buildings, Ruben had to buy more land here, as the campus needed to be privately owned. Originally, it was going to be a school for students between the ages of 13 up to 18, but then we realised that in the first stage it would be easier to engage students of 16 to 18.

Never a Boring Space

I had several ideas which outlined the whole architectural concept of the school. Simply building an international school in Armenia was too easy, so I decided to do things differently. My thought was, "I am not building an international school in Armenia, I am building an Armenian international school". That's why the architecture is informed by Dilijan, and contains many traits of the town's own historical architectural tradition, which was influenced not only by the Armenian culture but the Georgian as well – it's only 200 km to Tbilisi. Random stones, carved wood en balconies, etc. can be found all over the campus.

We took advantage of the location on the hill to compose the campus into a village. We wanted students and staff to enjoy the different levels of the buildings, creating a safe atmosphere of the village rather than a common dormitory.

The slope of the roofs of the campus buildings are meant to reflect the mountains. This similarity with the surrounding hills helped me to turn the building into an Armenian version of an international school. The "Tuf" stones, the different colours of which are used in different parts of the building also underline the school's belonging to Armenia, as "Tuf" is an outstanding feature of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

In order not to reduce the scale of the large buildings – I broke not only them into segments, but also created pedestrian routes. When you are in the building, you always know where you are in the campus, wherever you are, you have a reference as opposed to big museums or schools where you can get lost easily. I also wanted the place to be jovial, that's why we have the colors present in the surrounding hills. In spring time, you get yellow and green, and in autumn you get brown, so it is very Dilijanian. All these elements help in breaking up the size of the building and make it less intimidating.
Development Never Stops

The success of the school promoted the bigger ambition of the proposed Dilijan Educational Cluster, which is to unite several kindergartens, schools and vocational colleges of Dilijan, and this project is really thinking outside of the box, and it’s incredibly exciting to think about how we can achieve it. With regard to the school, I would like to move on to the next stage. We’ve been working on a Performing Arts Centre (PAC) that would accommodate 650 people and is designed according to the highest international standards. It will comprise of a big concert hall, a multi-configurational theatre, a dance studio and will bring a lot more music, performing arts, dance and drama, not only to the school and its educational programme, but also to the whole region, helping Dilijan to regain its famous heritage as an artistic town.

From the very beginning I wanted to see the school constantly developing. UWC Dilijan is changing and growing with students playing a significant role in that growth. They can observe and contribute to the change in school from the day they arrive to the day they leave the school. The school continues to change and grow and when they come back in 10–15 years’ time, and maybe bring their kids to school, the trees that they have planted will have grown and they can say “I planted this tree”. My aim was that the design of the school includes the ever-changing element, which also symbolises the growth and development that students experience through education.

Innovative Solutions

I was always worried about the site and how difficult it was to build there, so I wanted to put back everything that we had taken away during the construction effectively. But I also did not want to do it in a false way. For example, there was a beautiful grown orchard. And we have made natural living walls – now we have a hanging gardens everywhere. We secured the mountains to ensure that the plants we have on the roofs and on the walls would be able to grow, and wouldn’t need constant attention. So, over time, the species that were able to live and survive like in nature, live and survive. And the green roof also insulates the building in winter, and cools it in summer, and the living walls help the environment.

We organised the laboratories according to a new design of the outreach program of Imperial College, London. They had come up with this novel way of teaching practice and theory, and also designing it in a non-traditional way where the teacher can sit and see everybody, much more of a group learning style. This way, the student is able to do their practical and theoretic work in the same place as opposed to sectioning the two in different places. We use that as an innovation.

We have natural gas in the laboratories which isn’t allowed anywhere else in Armenia. We had to contest the legislation and proved that as long as the pipe is exposed, there is no reason why we cannot do it. And so, we conduct experiments using natural gas at UWC Dilijan.

So, a lot of innovation was brought into the school. We wanted to raise the standard of construction, to use this school as an example for the rest of Armenia, that you can create something here that is of international standard and as good as anywhere in the world. We wanted to create a legacy with the creation of an Armenian architectural team and with the workers whom we gathered for the project, in order to understand the quality of the finish and the reasons behind it.

We also played with light a lot. When you introduce a transparent roof and a light coming through it, it is good to create shadow, because there is always strong sunlight in Armenia. Every time you go into the academic building, it is always different depending on whether the sun is going over or if there is a cloud. So, the building is ever changing and never the same boring place.

The outdoor spaces are also for learning, so you can use your laptop and get the Internet anywhere in the school. All the classrooms are equipped with interactive white boards, in a quantity you’ll rarely see in any other school. And the idea has always been about the long term to link to other schools and organise distance learning.

We chose certain things that we were not going to compromise on, for example the furniture, as we were going to make the school a fun place, and have things that were nice and unexpected. And we wanted the building to be a surprise. When you see it from the outside it’s one thing, but when you come in, you do not expect to see the inside as it is.

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We wanted to make the gymnasium and the swimming pool to the highest standards, so the gym and the pool are as good as you can find anywhere internationally. For the library, we wanted to create it in a traditional way with proper books and not only technical ones. The most expensive building per sq. ft. on campus is the Black Box. Though small, it is a multifunctional space for theatre performances and staging, concerts and meetings, TED talks and Open Mic.

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