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Dear Friends,

Another academic year gradually draws to a close.

Just as the changing seasons tell us the time of year, the packing away of exam desks tells us that another College year is over. The dazed zombie-like faces of our students as they once again emerge into the daylight tell us of the enormous effort that has gone into that final achievement. All they have to do now is wait for the results that will determine the next step in their career.

But, before we move on, let us just take a look back on a few highlights of the term we have all just spent together.

Of course, completing their IB was high on the agenda, but our students, as always, proved that they have so much more to offer. It was the term in which the College marched through Yerevan to support women throughout the world and demonstrated their allegiance to equal rights and justice (page 4). Dalia, Lebanon, UWCD’18 and her team organised dancing and singing in Freedom Square joyfully celebrating World Women’s Day but followed this with serious workshops exploring the issues which still face many women in the world. They worked with the Yerevan Municipality, and also in partnership with their fellow Armenian students.

Another initiative led by Helen, S. Africa, UWCD’18 reached out to our local community in Dilijan (page 20). Remembering the cultural and artistic traditions of Dilijan they revived the Dilijan Arts Festival, with the intention of it once again becoming an annual event.

Sustainability featured highly this term, Flora, Armenia, UWCD’18 talks about the Rhi-Zone Project (page 14) which aims to discourage the use of destructive plastic bags and encourage the use of Eco Tote Bags. Cedric, Germany, UWCD’17 and Misha, Russia, UWCD’17 tell of their continuing project to encourage re-cycling and their determination to encourage their fellow students to follow their example in the newly founded Enterprise Dilijan. The Peace Garden was extended as more of our students found it a quiet place to think, talk and re-charge their batteries. Fresh produce from the greenhouse is now for sale thanks to the efforts of the Sustainability Group.

Between these covers you will meet many of the characters who help to make the College what it is and begin to understand why living here is such an exhilarating experience.

Our College is still very young, only just completing its fourth year, but already it is demonstrating its commitment to and impact on our local community.

I hope you enjoy reading about our College exploits in this edition of our magazine. With each edition we share with your what a very special place UWC Dilijan is and invite you to visit us whenever you are in Armenia.

This is the last time I will have the privilege of writing an introduction to this magazine, but it will certainly not be the last magazine. I am sure you will enjoy meeting the new Head, Gabriel, in the next edition and I wish him all the joy I have had here at UWC Dilijan.

As usual, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this magazine and to welcome the new Head to his new post.
POWER IN UNITY: ARMENIA'S FIRST INCLUSIVE WOMEN'S DAY MARCH

Dalia
Lebanon, UWCD’18

Women are the essence of the world we live in. They are smart, magical and loving, and have the unique power to give life. Initially, we planned to celebrate International Women’s Day by organizing a week filled with activities to raise awareness about the role of women across the globe. The idea was to continue the initiative we started last year, in 2017, which is “One Billion Rising Armenia”, a movement to fight against violence against women all over the world. It seemed like a great idea to organize a march in Yerevan with workshops on women’s rights in Armenia. We wanted to raise awareness about the situation of women in Armenia and provide insight into how they can lead independent, balanced and healthy lives. Our purpose was to unify people across Armenia in strengthening the voice of women, defending their rights, and redefining femininity. As this was one of the first marches celebrating women’s rights in Armenia, we decided to organize it in the capital city. Our main aim was to get people from different regions to attend the march and the workshops that followed. That is why we invited representatives to the event from all three community centres in Armenia – from Dilijan, Masis and Yeghegnadzor, and from all youth clubs in different towns affiliated to World Vision. Their role was to spread their collective knowledge to the rest of the towns. We also made sure to include the Dilijan community by providing transport and inviting everyone in the town to volunteer in various activities. Nevertheless, in order to organize such an initiative, it was vital to understand the cultural and social context we are living in and to consider these sensitive issues. Thus, we reached out to society by partnering with many Armenian NGOs and individuals who gave us interesting ideas on the content of the event and the workshops. The municipality of Yerevan also approved the event, perceiving the march as a way to "celebrate" Women’s Day rather than as an act of protest against gender inequality. A great number of Armenian organisations and individuals supported our initiative by funding the event or by giving a workshop. These included Society Without Violence, Nuriad Minasyan from FEM4FEM, Tatevik Aghabekyan from The Women’s Resource Center Armenia, Natalie Harutyunyan from the UNDP, and Mariam Movsisyan from the Mama Forum Platform. In addition, the school gave us tremendous support and it wouldn’t have been possible without them. Students formed the #WomenOfHayastan team in a very spontaneous way. A mix of boys and girls took part who had shown a strong interest in women’s rights and were keen on organizing an event for Women’s Day. Women, just like men, should be able to benefit from the same human rights. It is not about competing against men, and it is not about women asking to be equal to men. It is simply about giving women the rights they deserve. Living in a Lebanese household of five women, I am worried about the future of my sisters. In fact, back home, the government fails to uphold basic women’s rights and were keen on organizing an event for Women’s Day. We have a strong interest in women’s rights and as this initiative was not about teaching Armenian society something they did not know already, it was not a way to impose our own ideals. Everyone wants to be treated justly, no matter where they are in the world. This event was like a burning torch for every woman experiencing hardship and suffering. It is essential to remind her that there are always solutions and many ways to overcome injustice. We have made good progress. More needs to be done.

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We have personally witnessed the suffering of women, and this has fueled my sense of revolution. It has driven my passion and inspired my soul to rise up against any kind of injustice. It is not just about women’s rights, it is about the right of every human being around the world to live a healthy and peaceful life, free of oppression, discrimination and persecution. I feel privileged to be an Amal Clooney scholar, and I deeply admire her work. The fact that I have received this scholarship only boosts me further to continue pursuing my dreams and goals. I believe that I have come to this universe with a certain message, and these initiatives are just small acts that constitute parts of a bigger vision, which is to relieve the pain and suffering of everyone I encounter. I can accomplish this vision by simple, daily actions. This initiative was not about teaching Armenian society something they did not know already, and it was not a way to impose our own ideals. Everyone wants to be treated justly, no matter where they are in the world. This event was like a burning torch for every woman experiencing hardship and suffering. It is essential to remind her that there are always solutions and many ways to overcome injustice. We have made good progress. More needs to be done.
'Exito' Art Exhibition to Showcase Diverse Global Work

The traditional end-of-the-year exhibition of the visual arts students’ work opened at the end of March at Dilijan Geological Museum and Art Gallery. This year it was called ‘Exito’, conveying both the Spanish word ‘success’ and the English word ‘exit’. The exhibition showcased works by 17 UWC visual arts students, the class of 2016-2018. Exhibitions are a required part of the IB program, however, the students went beyond merely fulfilling a requirement by sharing their art with the greater Dilijan community. The guests of the exhibition had the opportunity to talk to the artists and discover the inspiration behind the artworks. Using different mediums such as oil and acrylics, ceramics, photography, mixed media and installations, the students’ art also reflected on contradictions and existential values. Prominent Armenian artists including the Director of the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts attended the opening as guests of honour.

DJ Set Masterclass

UWC Dilijan hosted DJ Set masterclass with DJ Anais, organized by Music of Armenia in celebration of “Women’s Musical Month”. DJ Anais – Founder at Sugar Collective, Fashion Editor and DJ at Garden Radio – held a DJ Set masterclass for UWC students and the Dilijan community, after which the evening continued with a beautiful performance by DJ Anais. The outstanding representative of contemporary Armenia talked about DJing as an art and demonstrated the techniques required to manage a DJ Set. Among the participants were visitors from Vanadzor. The event was an opportunity for local youngsters to acquire new concepts and ideas that are not necessarily embodied in the typical vision of life in Armenia.

Entrepreneurial Advice from Noubar Afeyan

Dr. Noubar Afeyan, a founding patron of UWC Dilijan, CEO of Flagship Ventures, technologist and entrepreneur, gave a talk titled “What Do You Need to Be an Entrepreneur?” to the UWC Dilijan community. As an important facilitator in the advancement of technology and entrepreneurship, Dr. Afeyan explained the concept of being an entrepreneur and the steps required in order to be successful in business. Having an idea that can turn into a plan, making friends prepared to take risks and organizing a team to be able to realize the plan were among the main tips given by Mr. Afeyan. The talk allowed students to engage in the topic by asking questions and suggesting ideas. Furthermore, his inspirational talk opened up a new outlook on the concept of being an entrepreneur. Students and the Dilijan community, after which the evening continued with a beautiful performance by DJ Anais. The outstanding representative of contemporary Armenia talked about DJing as an art and demonstrated the techniques required to manage a DJ Set. Among the participants were visitors from Vanadzor. The event was an opportunity for local youngsters to acquire new concepts and ideas that are not necessarily embodied in the typical vision of life in Armenia.

V-Day

UWC Dilijan students joined the V-Day global activist movement that aims to end violence against women and girls. The students performed “A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer” written by Abiola Abrams and directed by Jason Lasky, theatre teacher at UWC Dilijan. The powerful collection of writings is meant to take a stand against any and all violence against women around the world by uniting men and women through this movement.

By performing the piece, the students wanted to tell the stories and create awareness of the forced global silence of those afflicted, as well as to raise money to support the Yerevan-based NGO Society Withstand Against Violence. They managed to raise 50,000 AMD for the organization.

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Inaugural DILIMUN Conference

The inaugural Model United Nations conference at UWC Dilijan initiated and organized by the students – DILIMUN – was held on March 30-April 2. Since its inception in 2014, UWC Dilijan has operated a MUN Club and organized by the students – DILIMUN – was held on March 30-April 2. Since its inception in 2014, UWC Dilijan has operated a MUN Club and organized by the students – DILIMUN – was held on March 30-April 2. Since its inception in 2014, UWC Dilijan has operated a MUN Club and engaged in the development of nuclear weapons, the South China dispute and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were discussed over three days by 13-18 year old youngsters who tried to find solutions to these most pressing world problems. A delegate from another United World College (UWC Mahindra) – Pia, MUWCI’19, from the Netherlands had high praise for the conference and said, “The conference was 100 percent worth the long trip.”
On the 24th April, UWC Dilijan students and teachers organised a theatre performance dedicated to the Genocide Commemoration Day. Together with the girls choir of Vandažor State University named after Hovhannes Tumanyan, they managed to evoke and convey to the audience the pain and suffering of the Armenian people experienced 103 years ago. The UWC Dilijan students from different countries staged historical scenes intertwined with songs, dances and monologues on the massacres, persecution and survival of the Armenian nation. The main theme of the performance was the idea of growing a pomegranate, which became the symbol of survival, taking on the ancestors’ heritage and the continuity of history of the country and its people.

Motivational Meetup with Silicon Valley Residents

Two successful young entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley, founders of several successful start-ups gave a talk to UWC Dilijan students – “Your future in Silicon Valley: How can you turn your idea into a successful project?” Artem Goldman, one of the founders of LegalSpace & Visabot and Arik Ahverdyan, Founder of recruiting company VCV, during an informal and motivational meetup shared with the students where they sourced their ideas, how they make connections, what they studied to reach their goal, and how they passed the selection process for the 500 Startups global accelerator, which is even harder to get into than Harvard University. Their message was that failures happen every day, but they should not prevent students from launching their projects, which they can start even at college. Arik and Artem assured students that it isn’t revenue or profit but the impact on the society that is the only driver for them in their work.

Youth and the Future of Europe

On May 12, students both from UWC Dilijan and from local schools in Dilijan gathered to discuss the future of Europe. They were separated into groups and different topics were discussed within each of them, all of this with the goal of coming up with solutions for the problems that Europe is facing now and the ones that it might face in the future. The event was organized by the French Embassy in Armenia as part of its programme for the Europe Day celebration this year. The topics given for discussion were “EU as a global actor”, “Where is the EU heading? Internal Challenges”, “Education and Cultural Exchange”, and finally “Digital Revolution and the Future of the Economy”. Along with these topics each group had a set of questions that facilitated their discussion so that they could generate feasible solutions to present at the end of the day. Jonathan Lacôte, the Ambassador of France in Armenia, listened to all the students’ presentations and appreciated all the proposals, which, as he said, were really impressive because they brought up topics such as gender equality, transparency, education, and democracy. After the conference, the Ambassador stayed and held informal discussions with the students.
WHAT NEXT?

Denise Davidson

Head of College

As I come to the end of my two years at UWC Dilijan I am constantly being asked “What next?” Apart from the flippant reply “Go home to my grandchildren and chickens”, it’s a question gives me real pause for thought. As I look back across the last fifty years of teaching and learning that question has appeared repeatedly and the answers have brought a myriad of adventures – unplanned and unlooked for.

I was asked a different question when I first arrived – “What brings you to Armenia”. This in fact is the real answer to the question “What next?”. The answer to that question is, a lifetime of being open to opportunity and to accepting challenges. I have been asked to share that lifetime with you so, here goes with a swift gallop back across the years.

1965-1968 Learning – Graduated with an Honours History degree from Manchester University, planning a career in social work; this was at a time when only 5% of the population went to university and only 1% was female. (Oh, and by the way I married Neil).

What Next?

1968-1969 Learning to accept refusal when social work denied as I looked “too young to be taken seriously”. To gain experience with children I taught for a year in a junior school and became totally hooked on teaching. Rachel, our first child, born.

What Next?

1969-1975 Learning with a family – Arrival of four more children Richard, Thomas Clara-Jane and Timothy. Teaching profession put on hold whilst learning the vital teaching skills of motherhood within our family environment. Went to live in a Community with five other families at Little Gidding (of the poet T S Eliot fame) where I learned about sustainability, the need to share and the value of the Earth’s dwindling resources.

What Next?

1975-1979 Keeping in touch with formal teaching: A level History teaching to an adult class. Basic literacy skills to meet my children’s needs and being home with my family teaching car maintenance to car-thieves.

What Next?

1979-1983 Learning to live on a South Pacific Coral Atoll. Teaching my family, ex-pat children and Ministers’ sons. Learning Royal protocol to meet and dine with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the Royal Yacht Britannia.

What Next?


What Next?

1988-1995 Teaching – traditional boys boarding school and then becoming the first Housemistress for girls as the school became co-ed. Learning – “back to school” for me. Completing a master’s degree at Cambridge University.

What Next?

1995-1997 Moving back to roots in Northern England - Deputy Head in a co-ed boarding school, very soon realising that if I wanted to make the ultimate decision I had to take on the ultimate responsibility of being a Head.

What Next?

1997-2009 Head of a girls’ school, Inspector/Trainer, National Education Committees, Governor. Our family all set on their new pathways and lo and behold there were 22 of us. Now learning the joys and rewards of being a grandma.

What Next?

2009-2012 Learning about retirement (for one month) then journey to the South Atlantic Island of St Helena. Advising on local education and a whole new career collecting endemic seeds for the Kew Gardens Seed Bank including Hazardous Cliff Climbs.

What Next?

2012-2016 Second ”Retirement” Governor of 4 schools, educational advisor/consultant and troubleshooter. Setting into my favourite hobbies of walking, swimming, reading and gardening and exploring alternative and innovative education. I learned that life (if you welcome it) will always bring new joy and inspiration and was reminded never to neglect an opportunity and never to say no to a challenge.

What Next?

2016-2018 Head of College in Dilijan Armenia. Three months turned into two years where I have recalled all the skills learned from family caring, community living, school management and the ability of UWC students and the ethos of peace and sustainability. The vision of Ruben and Veronika, one that I would hope never to lose.

What Next?

There are 22 of us. Now learning the joys and rewards of being a grandma.

Although perhaps the most unexpected of my adventures, UWC Dilijan has been a crowning glory. All that I have learned in the past I have shared in the present. I acknowledge and reaffirm that being part of the lives of young people is a lifelong privilege and a joy, and one that I would hope never to lose. The vision of Ruben and Veronika, the ethos of peace and sustainability of UWC students and the aspirations of the Armenian people so recently writ large in their “Velvet Revolution” have all been life enhancing and taught me that learning is as important as teaching; indeed the two are inextricably mixed.

It is my turn now to ask the question –
WHATEVER NEXT?
Third retirement??………..
Hmmmm…..
DILIJAN DIGESTED

Neil Davidson

When it was decided that Denise would become the Head, I was often asked what I would be doing in Armenia – that is after the standard questions of “Where is Armenia?” and “Are you not retired from the Law?” and from the plaintive grandchild who said “How will I visit you and do you really have to go?”. The reply to the question as to what I planned was easier – walking the dog, playing the tuba, writing poetry and helping Denise spend the earnings (not necessarily in that order).

“Dream on Neil”, I say now. Within moments of arrival I was neck-deep in legal issues unresolved in the previous year and since then it has been pretty flat out with international legal complexities that have been challenging in the extreme. I know Denise, when asked about taking the job, joked that they were “getting two for the price of one” but neither of us took that seriously. Or maybe Denise did, and I was the sucker.

Do we regret it? How could we! As we move on from UWC Dilijan: I hope sums up what Denise and I feel

poems including the following which

the stickiest, slipperiest mud in the

And what has been best of all? Three things – students laughing at lunchtime, students studying in odd corners of a wonderful campus, students singing, sharing, dancing. What have we learnt? Well we have travelled the world, lived on a coral atoll, a former East India Company stronghold (St Helena) and followed the principle of basically saying “yes” to crazy challenges like coming out of retirement to be with UWC Dilijan. We have never regretted it and hope if we have left one message to students it is just that – Say “Yes” to challenges and find the truth in the old maxim that the more you put into life and the more you give, the more you are given.

better than history has given.

and, indeed, to love.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH RHIZONE

Flora
Armenia, UWCD’18

Going Global

Just as stated in the quote we – Yuyang, China, UWCD’18, Anahit, Armenia, UWCD’18 and me – started the project Rhizone to move forward and make progress on issues deeply rooted across Armenia. The first important matter is the high number of local families relying on women left with poor prospects due to the labor emigration of their male family members. The second major issue is the level of pollution that results from the improper disposal of plastic bags in public areas and nature.

Rhizone aims to provide a platform for the unemployed women of Dilijan to produce and sell “souvenir inspired” eco-bags in the Armenian market and generate income to support their families. Eco-bags are available and affordable for the public and customers immediately become aware of the concept of recycling.

The name “Rhizone” was inspired by the ancient Greek word “rhizo- zone”, which is the underground stem of a plant that sends out roots and shoots from its nodes. Thus, the project itself was to plant the roots for the improvement of the socio-economic status of local women and change people’s mentality on plastic bag consumption by promoting sustainability in the country.

A Big Town Project Inspired by CAS

During almost two years of our active engagement in the initiative, we have been working with the Armenian grassroots organization named Toprak Petq Chi (Armenian for “I don’t need a bag”) to broaden the use of these eco-bags and increase their scope. We have also organized pop-up events and educational workshops in the local schools of Yerevan and Dilijan, among children aged 12-18, to increase awareness of environmental conservation. We believe that these issues will shape our future.

We have been cooperating with Gnishik Intercommunity Environmental Foundation (Gnishik IEF) by forming an open presentation about the sustainability in the Vayots Dzor region. We also hold workshops with local women and children to share our ideas and production techniques.

To raise awareness and achieve promotion we have completed the preparation stage of the project by working with the Dilijan Community Centre, which helped to locate the individual women affected by unemployment. We achieved the first inspiring success at the beginning of the year, with the first batch of bags sewn by local women being spray-painted by local students at UWC Dilijan.

The project runs simultaneously as a component of CAS co-curriculum activity and our group involves 12 students from 10 countries. We are working on receiving direct feedback from the community through interviews of locals as well as on the new designs of tote bags that might interest local organizations in Armenia. It is hard to estimate exactly how many people from the local community we have engaged since we are working with the Community Center and women with sewing skills that we are in touch with. We have also worked with many local NGOs including UNDP Armenia. On our way to broadening the Rhizone network, we carried out successful market research about the issues of inefficient economic activity in Dilijan. This helped us to identify certain stakeholders interested in purchasing Made by Rhizone tote bags.

We have now become the chain connecting local women to consumers without having any major investment funds. Due to financial issues, we were only able to provide materials and designs to these women by indirectly managing the process of production held in their own apartments. Currently, more than six women are receiving incomes from Made by Rhizone tote bags.

Rhizone is a platform for the unemployed women to produce and sell eco-bags in the Armenian market and generate income to support their families.

A Project Built to Last

The project itself has evolved through several changes and considerations, which is inevitable when ideas meet with reality. We believe in the concept and continue to help fundraising activities. We plan to turn it into a well-established enterprise under which a new sewing factory can be created in Dilijan where 15 local women can find permanent employment in the first stage. This year we have been granted a UWC Go Make a Difference award, which shows our commitment to the UWC ideology and movement. This great feedback reinforces the significance of our project for the region. Due to the long-term nature of our goals and the fact that some of us are going to leave Armenia to study in universities abroad, we plan to pass the project on to the next generation of UWC Dilijan students by relying on the members that are already involved in the project. In future, we are going to continue distant supervision during the academic year and come back to Dilijan during summer.

We believe that even just one permanent manufacturing facility or at least a reduction of the number of plastic bags used can truly make a difference. This will be a fitting tribute to the city of mountain that we have come to regard as our home.
ACTIVE LIVING – VITAL TO EDUCATION AT UWC DILIJAN

Paul Walley
Outdoor Activities and Sports Officer, UK

Endless Opportunities for Personal Growth
Here at UWC Dilijan we are lucky to have an amazing plethora of activities, both on and off campus that allow us to help students develop their skills, fitness levels and also to allow them to grow as a person. The Outdoor Education and Sports curriculums have been specially designed by the Outdoor Education department to allow all students the opportunity to take part in an inclusive manner.

UWC Dilijan has fantastic facilities for sports on campus, such as football, swimming, volleyball, tennis and badminton, and amazing opportunities for outdoor activities on our doorstep. The Outdoor Education curriculum has been designed to make the most of the shifting seasons here in Armenia, with hiking, mountain biking and sailing through the warmer months, and then our winter sports programme through the winter, with Downhill and Cross-country skiing as well as snowboarding.

All of these activities are highly inclusive, and the emphasis here is on students and staff being able to take part in activities and learning new skills. We encourage people taking part in Outdoor activities to step out of their comfort zones, as this is integral to the whole ethos of Outdoor Education and allows people to grow as a person. This aligns with Kurt Hahn’s original ethos of discovering what the person is capable of through experiential education. To do this, we have designed a curriculum to allow us to utilise the strengths of the college’s location and to teach students and staff skills necessary to safely enjoy the outdoors. As such they can learn topics such as navigation, first aid, camping skills, team-work and leadership skills as well as more advanced skills such as dealing with hypothermia and avalanche awareness during the winter months.

We encourage all students, regardless of their abilities or previous knowledge in any sport that they choose to pursue to set goals to ensure that they are able to improve during their time here. We have a wide spread of abilities from complete beginners through to national level athletes and we are able to work with each and every student to ensure that they are able to push themselves forward, and grow as a person. We do not push every student to be competitive, in line with Kurt Hahn’s philosophy of using sport as a means to encourage people to grow. However, competition is an important part of everyday life, and for the students who strive on the competitive side of the sports we have systems in place that allow them to make the most of this. Competition is an important tool when used properly, and we as adults and teachers need to ensure that students are introduced to these vital life-skills in a carefully managed manner.

Motivation comes to different students in different ways, and it is important that they are able to explore these themselves. For some, competition is important as an extrinsic motivator, and for others setting goals as part of intrinsic motivation is the way they need to work. Some of our students will have played sports at a high level in their home countries, and they often come here and teach others how to play their chosen sport. This is extremely invaluable for these students as they will have double benefits from this as coaching a sport encourages the coach to break down and analyse the skills involved before passing the knowledge on to others. As staff we help out as much as possible in providing the necessary instructing and coaching skills for the students who end up leading these activities.

Community Engagement through Sports

All students are fully engaged in sporting activities on a regular basis as part of the IB curriculum. For some students this will be once or twice a day, for others, once or twice a week. Again it is important that students find the right balance for themselves in this area, similar to how they find balance in other areas of their lives. This is another important skill that we as educators must be able to pass on to our students.

A lot of the students who are heavily involved in the sporting activities here will try and pass back their knowledge and skills while engaging with the community. There are after school clubs for football, tennis, swimming and basketball where our students will teach local children how to play the respective sports. We now have between 50 and 60 local children and teenagers coming every week for sporting lessons on-campus, and many of the off-campus service activities such as in Jevan SOS village and in ORRAN Center in Vanadzor will often incorporate sporting activities alongside language skills in their activities. Community engagement and service are important aspects of growing up and maturing as a young person. We have some fantastic NGO’s and charities working in the local Tavush and Lori regions, and this is an amazing opportunity for our students and staff to give back to the local community. In the Outdoor Education and Sports department, one of our main goals this year has been to increase and improve our community engagement, and this year we have been highly successful in doing that. We now need to roll these successes out next year to more sports, and to ensure that we can increase our reach to more and more young people locally.

Our students have taken great initiatives over the last few years in helping to organise sporting tournaments to help bring together our students and local students from Dilijan and further afield through Armenia. These events have been great ways for students to make new friends and build rapport within the community. A group of our students two years ago started a Beginners Football club aimed at providing a safe, positive space for local female students to come and learn how to play football. This was addressing a specific need and came after much research had been done into gender issues in sport here. This club has now grown into one of the most successful clubs in school, and continues to teach football to young females from Dilijan and Margahovit. This has in turn led to the school linking with Girls of Armenia Leadership through Soccer (GOALS) NGO. This is something I’m very proud of as it was amazing to see the students initially struggle through external obstacles in setting this club up, and now the school hosts the female football league for the Tavush region, as well as hosting annual training camps for GOALS, linking with Coaches across continents to provide a curriculum for local coaches to use to empower their students.
Both together with the students and on my days off I’ve explored a lot of Armenia, mainly throughout Tavush and Lori regions, although further afield as well. I love the variety of different landscapes, from volcanoes through to more glacial terrains and the variety of different outdoor activities that are possible as well. The way the landscapes change throughout the year is amazing to me, and it is always great to see so much wildlife in the mountains. It really is an ecologically rich area here, and one of the highlights of my time here in the mountains was seeing a lynx early last year, which was really a lifetime tick for me!

I love the hospitality that is constantly shown to me by local people up in the hills. I regularly get invited in for coffee, homemade cheese and bread, and there’s no way of saying no to these invites! It’s one of the main things that I enjoy about living here, as it’s such a different mindset from back in the UK. People are always so friendly, and are always intrigued what I’m doing in the hills and where myself and students are from. I don’t find the language barrier to be a problem, I’ve learnt some Armenian, enough to tell people I’m a teacher at the college, and generally find that more and more people have heard of the college.

On hiking and mountain biking trips we often bump into an old couple who live in the hills just up above Jukhtakhvank, so relatively close to the school; she was a Doctor during the Soviet times, and he was an engineer. They have invited myself and students in 3 or 4 times now for coffee/cake/bread/homemade honey. They’re the most amazing couple, they live on a small farm, and appear to be completely self-sustained, as they have built a water wheel to provide electricity, and grow all their own vegetables. It’s always a privilege to be invited in and it’s amazing for the students to see such a different way of living to what they are used to.

All of the activities are highly inclusive

Mutual Impact

I grew up in the UK and was heavily involved with Outdoor Activities at school and through the Scouts, taking part in hiking and mountain biking regularly. I then studied Outdoor and Environmental Education at University before moving to Wales to work in and around the mountains there. I have worked in a variety of Outdoor Education roles, from working with disadvantaged youth, through to coaching adults in a variety of settings and sports. After working in Wales I lived in the United Arab Emirates for 6 years working in schools on a Youth Development project teaching local Emirati youth from 15-18 about Teamwork, communication & leadership amongst other topics.

It’s amazing to be able to pass on to students and staff the opportunities that I had when I was young that allowed me to get out and enjoy the outdoors. I’m always thankful to the teachers that took the extra time to do activities such as these. The school is lucky in that its location here is ideal for Outdoor activities and it’s always interesting being able to get out with students to see new corners of Armenia.

I think that UWC Dilijan is still finding its feet within the region, and that the full potential of what we can give back to the local and regional community is still being explored. We have made great strides in engaging with the local community and being accepted within Dilijan over the last 4 years, and now we can push this forward even more in the coming years to ensure that Community engagement is one of our strongest facets.

We have some fantastic NGO’s and charities working in the local Tavush and Lori regions, and this is an amazing opportunity for our students and staff to give back to the local community.
DILIJAN ARTS FESTIVAL – RENEWING THE TOWN’S FORMER GLORY

Helen

South Africa, UWCD’18

The Idea

My first impressions of Dilijan were of a rich palimpsest of culture and history, growing out of a spectacular natural environment. The architecture of the town comprises a curious mixture of old and new, form and function, beauty and disrepair. Beneath the surface, though, I began to discover the history of Dilijan as a home for artists, musicians and poets. A place for creatives to find inspiration, reflect on the past and present of the land, and meet and develop together. Central to all this is a location that ties all of this history and culture together: the Dilijan Amphitheatre.

The Planning Process

At the beginning of my second year at UWC Dilijan, I was inspired to make use of the CAS programme at the college to initiate a community-based project centred on my field of interest – the arts. A musician myself, I recalled a memorable experience when I had spent a weekend in a small town in South Africa at a classical music festival. Combining my memory of that experience and my vision for the Dilijan Amphitheatre, the idea of the Dilijan Arts Festival was born.

The Planning Process

I assembled a team of students from across campus – first-years and second-years with diverse skills and interests, from the arts, to marketing, to event management, supported by two UWC Dilijan staff supervisors. We split into smaller teams focused on the planning process: recruitment and event management, logistics, and marketing and media. At the start, we faced several difficulties owing to our inexperience – we had to go through a lot of “trial and error,” constantly adjusting our festival plans as we learned more about event planning. We held meetings to discuss ideas, keep track of progress, and troubleshoot any issues that arose.

Our first step was to get in contact with local cafes and restaurants in Dilijan to propose our idea and negotiate hosting events at their premises. We wanted to hold events in different venues to encourage visitors to see more of Dilijan, and to support local businesses. The owners and managers of Café #2, Caffeine Brew Lab, Carahunge Café & More and The Flying Ostrich by Dolmama all agreed to host our events. We also organised a meeting with representatives from the Dilijan Community Centre early on to discuss how our vision for the project could align with the projects for development of the town. The next phase focussed on recruitment of artists to perform at our festival. We weren’t sure about funding so contacted local Armenian artists who would be willing to perform for free in support of our cause – to develop tourism in Dilijan and raise funds for the local Community Centre. This was a challenge, but with a lot of hard work on the part of the Armenian students on our team, we managed to secure several promising young musicians. We also found talent and enthusiasm among UWC Dilijan students and staff, and organised several events showcasing the musicians, dancers and actors of our very own college.

With the festival plans laid out, we moved onto the logistics. This involved creating a precise event schedule, ordering sound equipment, and purchasing necessary materials. Perhaps the most challenging aspect was the complicated transportation schedule – we had to arrange buses to bring artists coming from Yerevan and Vanadzor to Dilijan, to move sound equipment, and to ensure that students and organisers were able to attend events on time.

Throughout the process, the marketing and media team worked on creating a logo for the festival, designing posters and flyers, writing a press release for local news outlets, and social media activities on Facebook and Instagram. In the last few weeks leading up to the festival, posters were printed and posted around town, frequent social media posts were made, and festival brochures were printed.

I was inspired to initiate a community-based project centred on my field of interest – the arts.

Hayastan is the Armenian name for Armenia.
The morning of Saturday 7 April dawned early for the organisers of the festival, who were up hauling the mountain of equipment into buses to be transported to the Opening Ceremony. Several hours later, the team, performers, and audience (both local people and college students and staff) gathered in the bright spring sunshine to kick off the festivities. Performances from the UWC Dilijan Dance and Soundpainting groups as well as from Yerevan musicians, The VanillaRice and Tatev Glastyan, made for a fun and enthusiastic start to what was to be an incredible weekend.

The day continued with events around town, including the exciting DiliWorld Show – featuring students from a vast diversity of cultures at UWC Dilijan, held in the atrium for an audience of locals, tourists and our guest of honour – Ambassador of the United States to Armenia. As the sun set, the first day rounded off with an exquisite concert by the Otri Trio from Yerevan – a trio comprising a violinist, flautist and violist. This was followed by a party at The Flying Ostrich by Dolmama, creating a free space for students, visitors and locals to have fun together.

On Day 2, a morning concert was performed by the UWC Dilijan bands and Liam Goodacre, Philosophy Teacher and Sound Designer. Visitors then headed down the street to Carahunge Cafe and More to enjoy the original sound of Tiezerq band. Theatre showcases presented in the UWC Dilijan Black Box then took place, while plans were underway backstage for the Closing Ceremony, involving many acts from around Armenia, held in the Dilijan Amphitheatre.

That afternoon, my vision came to life: UWC Dilijan students and staff, locals and visitors gathered in large numbers in the amphitheatre, soaking up the afternoon sunshine. The audience, team and performers danced, cheered and chatted together until sunset while enjoying the music on show.

For me, this festival was a realisation that with a vision, a strong team and lots of hard work, incredible things can happen. This year’s festival was far from perfect: our marketing strategy could have been more sophisticated, our logistical planning less last-minute, and we could have done more had we taken steps to acquire more funding for the festival. But it was a very solid start to a long-term project that I hope to see grow to greater heights from year to year as it is passed down through generations of UWC Dilijan students.

There are so many thanks to be given to all the people who made the festival happen: support from staff at school, the venues that hosted us, the Dilijan Community Centre, the artists and performers, and of course to the dedicated team that I have been honoured to work with over the past year. As my own graduation approaches, I can be confident that the first-years will take the experience and learning from this year to create an even bigger and better event next year, and cement this project as a long-term initiative between UWC Dilijan and the Dilijan community for years to come.

One day, I believe that Dilijan can be restored to its former glory as a cultural hub for the arts in Armenia – and the Dilijan Arts Festival is just one way in which our college can play its part in making that happen.

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HAYASTAN, OUR UWC HOME

PROJECT WEEK – SPRING 2018

Street Art Dilijan

Street Art Dilijan or Art in the Community is a project that started in 2014 and has been running for 4 years. Every autumn and spring a certain place is chosen in Dilijan, which at the end of the project becomes a new landmark for the city. Under the supervision of the most experienced and talented teachers of UWC Dilijan, Kevin and Sian, the students manage to turn dark and forgotten places into bright tourist attractions. This year, the team members created a #WingsOfDilijan near the popular Café #2, where both locals and tourists can take photos and enjoy the sunny summertime weather. Moreover, the pillars of the cafe became beautiful Armenian blossom berry trees and vineyards, and the collection of already painted books was replenished with new editions.

Owing to the current political atmosphere in the country, the ORRAN project in Vanadzor was postponed, and we shifted our attention to helping the local Dilijan community. The students and teachers went to the local hardware store, picked up supplies, and went to a nearby neighbourhood that was in need of some gardening and painting. The highlights of these two days in the community included repainting some elderly ladies’ fences and gates and a small outdoor house for kids, and giving a much-needed facelift to a family’s bedroom and outside windows. The students walked away with a great sense of accomplishment.

Neighbourhood Helping Hands

Sailing in Sevan Lake

In a remote area on the East Side of Lake Sevan, the students and teachers spent five days with Samvel Rostomyan at his camp to learn how to sail. We practiced in Lasers, one-person sailboats, and a small 4-person yacht and set out from the beach every day. The balance of the boat, the combination of steering and powering the sail and orienting yourself on the water with respect to the wind are the key aspects of sailing. To accommodate the learning curve, the students needed good wetsuits as Lasers have a tendency to flip over when you get it wrong! The team spent the evenings recovering from their long day on the water around a campfire eating delicious food. After only a few days, it was amazing to see how well people had mastered their boats.
New Hiking Experiences

During the recent Project Week, students hiked a four-day section of the Transcaucasian Trail, starting at Drakhtik near Lake Sevan, then camping for three nights to return to Dilijan via Kalavan, Goshavank and Parz Lich. This Project Week brought the students to villages, valleys, mountain-tops and offered them views on a landscape which they would have never explored without this Project Week. It is amazing how differently you get to appreciate Armenia once you leave the cities and people behind and explore the incredibly beautiful and impressive Caucasian region. The feeling of being woken up by the sun, taking a shower in the ice-cold stream and then having breakfast with a view over the wide valleys and untouched forest... where else could you get this feeling as a group other than on this amazing Project Week? It’s something that most of us have never experienced before. All the participants in this Project Week learned so much not only about the Armenian nature (thanks to our amazing supervisors Paul Walley and Elena Gallego) but also, enjoyed the experience and are left with incredible images imprinted on our minds that will last for a lifetime.

New House and New Achievements

For this project week a great team of builders approached the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia. The students worked on the future house of the Chobanyan family. The result of the project is clear – now the family has proper isolation and concrete in their house. However, this isn’t all that was achieved. The students have seen the smiling faces, heard the kind words of thankfulness and felt the sincere happiness first hand. All of this provides an incredible feeling of pride and satisfaction as well as drives our energy, readiness and commitment to make this world a better place by making small, but important contributions.

Creating a More Sustainable Environment

The goal of the sustainability Project Week was to improve the peace garden for coming generations of our school, and to further the development of sustainability at UWC Dilijan. Since the first day of our project, the students, working under the supervision of teachers, have worked very hard planning out every action and gaining some unexpected support that exceeded their expectations.

The expansion of the Peace Garden involved the creation of new paths, designing a sculpture commemorating the Armenian Genocide, planting new flower beds, and learning the process of composting and the general inner workings of the greenhouse. Most would say that the best part of the Project Week were the snack breaks, where students and teachers would reflect on what we had done during the day and enjoy the company of friends in the warm and cozy atmosphere of the greenhouse that we had been constantly working on, not to mention the fresh food they ate. This was an enormously valuable experience where the students learned co-operation, dedication, and hard work, besides of course, the chance to create a more sustainable environment both in our school and within the community.

Amazing Caving Experience

A group of students under the supervision of the outdoor instructor, Gor Hovhannisyan, undertook a project combining cultural, sporting and caving aspects. They visited the 13th-century Noravank monastery complex, went down to Areni-1 cave and Magel cave which is 1800 m deep in the rock and is full of many narrow passages and tunnels, as well as some bats, stalactites and traces of prehistoric ancestors. While in the caves, they studied the basics of archeology and geology and learned how to find their way out of the cave, so in the next cave – Mozrov cave – they already found their way about on their own. During this Project Week, the students slept in the tents in a limestone canyon and cooked all their own food. It was an amazing experience both for supervisors and the students.

Working on Clay Souvenirs

Working in the Ceramics workshop was one of the most exciting Project Weeks. The students and staff under the guidance of the Head of the Arts Faculty, Yaro Zabavskiy, learnt how to make pomegranates out of clay. These pomegranates, which symbolize Armenia, are to be presented to the graduates during the graduation ceremony. The participants learned how to mix clay, how to build a pomegranate by hand, how to attach the crown of the pomegranate, and then finally how to glaze it and attach a photo of the school to the end product. The students achieved fantastic results in preparing more than 100 souvenirs for the graduates.
A HOME FROM HOME – MAKING UWC DILIJAN A HAPPY FAMILY

Madhuchhanda Banerji
Science Teacher/Senior Residential House Parent, UK

Passion for Science

I started my career as a research scientist in the Department of Zoology, University of Delhi. Science has been my lifelong passion and it was only natural for me to take this path. I was spending nights in the labs conducting experiments with great enthusiasm and excitement for my thesis on the Genetic Basis of Aging in one species of Bandicoot rats. I never felt tired or exhausted from those sleepless nights because scientific pursuits always motivated me in life.

After I became a wife and mother, I took my career in a different direction by delving into teaching. During my career in education, I have worked in various schools in the UK and in Africa motivating young people of diverse backgrounds to become passionate about science and pursue a career in this awe-inspiring field. While on my teaching career, I had always wanted to work at a UWC. Firstly, the UWC movement is based on a mission and vision that is so very important in today’s world where national identity is becoming more valued than developing a global outlook. This tends to limit our holistic vision and brings about a negative impact in our development. It is a privilege to teach UWC students, who are specialists in breaking those barriers of ultra-nationalism and take a leadership role in making this world borderless, where there is a valued understanding and celebration of diversity, be it in the field of culture, languages or in the realm of ideas.

Secondly, the whole concept of International Baccalaureate (IB) was developed in UWC; I wanted to come to the heart of IB as an experienced teacher and interact with quality professionals to shape in turn the lives of some of the most talented and gifted students globally. Some of the colleagues here have been involved with this innovative curriculum for years. It is amazing in many ways to be a part of the team and help broaden the students’ minds and skills. The experience is truly inspiring.

Pastoral Care

At present, we have two residential blocks – Mountainside and Riverside – with two Houses or Toons, as we call them in Armenian, in each of them. Mountainside has Maymekh and Vardenis toons named after the Armenian mountains, and Riverside includes Debed and Arpa houses named after the Armenian rivers. Each toon parent runs his or her toon independently and in different individual styles. Toon parents, assistant toon parents and tutors together form a pastoral team of their particular houses. I have my own toon but also remain responsible for coordinating all four toons to ensure consistency of approach in accordance with the college guidelines.

Pastoral Care in a residential college like ours is to provide an environment where each one of us becomes part of a safe and happy community. Everyone in the pastoral team is responsible for creating a place, which students can call their home away from home, where they look forward to returning, be it after holidays or after they leave the college permanently.

Toon parents are like a glue, bonding all students in the toon together as a family unit. S/he in turn makes the family members feel responsible for each other. Through this bonding, everybody remains happy and secure, complementing and helping each other out in their daily lives. Since students come from different backgrounds, sometimes they do not always get along with each other well to begin with. If a toon parent remains strong as an anchor to hold on to when needed, students gain the confidence to live together in harmony. As a Senior Toon Parent my job is also to see that all these happy families come together to make a happy community, where mutual respect and care become a part of everyone’s daily life.

A toon parent is like a glue, bonding all students in the toon together as a family unit

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The most common challenge in daily pastoral work is when sometimes as adults we fail to see that this is not only a school but also a home for two hundred plus teenagers. We need to change our hats quite often to become a teacher or a guardian by turn. Students also often forget to see that distinction between school and home and making them aware of that divide is important but can be challenging as well. The only way to deal with it is to model the behavior that I expect from others and make the students aware of their surroundings from time to time.

The other problem is to get the work/life balance right for our students. We tend to forget that our environment here in college is different from a day school setting and this can be demanding on both staff and students. To deal with this problem, I become the students’ guardian when I am in the residences and take on a parental role instead of being a teacher, where they know they are not assessed and therefore can share their happiness, anguish or any other emotions without reservation. This is crucial in order to be successful in the role. If they know someone cares for their wellbeing genuinely, they will respond positively. My background in science helps me in my residential duties. As a scientist, I always look for logical and evidence based answers. This is what the young people are also looking for. They have a questioning mind and seek explanations with an urge to know and understand. With me, providing an explanation is a natural trait and so it is easy for me to interact with them. Also to find answers we need patience and perseverance. Scientists cannot be successful without both these qualities. These are qualities that my academic training helped me develop, which is extremely handy when dealing with young people. Sometimes there are situations when we have to part with students who fail to fit into the UWC Dilijan family. This is not a unique problem. Students that come here are determined individuals. They come from various backgrounds and with a range of expectations. It is natural that sometimes a few will not find this place suited to their needs. When that happens, we assess the needs and either make provisions to meet them or have back up plans for finding suitable places for those we can’t provide for.

The fresh ideas from these young people help me look at life with a different perspective. Nothing can be more rewarding than being able to nurture and feed my mind with the feelings and ideas of young adults from every corner of the world. My message to students is, “Always be yourself and be truthful to yourself. Take personal responsibilities to become a change maker!” That’s the true road to success. Do it with poise and calm, without fanfare. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore: “Let your crown be the crown of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul!”

Let your crown be the crown of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul!
THE PAST OF THE FUTURE

Georgiana, Mexico, UWCD’17 decided to come back to Armenia for an internship at the school this spring and summer. This way she was able to see her first years and the place that became her home for two years once again. As part of her internship, she got the chance to sit and have an amazing conversation with Zoya, Russia, UWCD’18, who is one of the students graduating in May. The following article is the result of their conversation.

According to Zoya, after moving to Russia she felt like an outsider for one of the first times in her life. Previously, she had always been surrounded by a community that had her same origin, and that had transformed in the same way as her, and so she had always felt part of a bigger group to which she could identify. But now, coming to Russia she was facing stereotypes that were imposed to the returning Circassians, thinking of them as uneducated or less civilized than the people who stayed in the homeland. However, all these stereotypes were broken by the cultural connections that they shared; things such as the way she pronounced words in their language, or the similarities between their dances, and even the way she would greet an adult when coming across them in the street – these were all cultural connections that allowed her to feel integrated with this new community to which she now belonged. In the case of Abkhazia, now that she was closer to the region she was able to visit her family there, and yet again she was surprised by how, without noticing, she was able to fit in because she had been brought up with this culture as her own. She recognized Abkhazia as “not a home, but a home feeling” because she could see that she belonged there to a certain extent. After the events that took place in Syria forcing her move back to Russia, Zoya realized that in order to change the world and what was happening around her the first step she had to take was to show that she cared about these issues, because nothing would change if no one cared for them. She realised that the importance of her story could have, her experiences, her culture, the way she sees the world and how this can help change ideas and break stereotypes based on prejudices. It is through this path of thought that Zoya was led to find herself in Armenia, studying at United World College Dilijan, and being surrounded by lots of people from different countries and with different perspectives, all of whom shared the same principles. They are change seekers that deeply care about the issues of the world and humanity. Zoya says that she now recognizes that she has an obligation to tell her story and to share her background freely and to let people know about these groups and the challenges that they face and still face to this day. Her connections to Armenia are stronger because of the cultural similarities, she could feel that she belonged to a certain extent because of her Caucasian roots, and now that she has been able to live here for two years, she has come to the conclusion that her only regret is not getting to know more parts of Armenia while she had the chance. Furthermore, she is happy that more people from her region have been inspired, and a spark has been lit encouraging teenagers keen to apply to UWC and to represent their culture. She says that when she was in Russia, the ignorance from others towards her background made her shut down, but that she was able to come back by showing her culture and recovering her past because this gave her an identity. Thanks to her experience in UWC Dilijan, Zoya is now inspired to continue sharing her culture and raising awareness about the challenges that her community faces. She looks forward to being able to make a change to the world by creating cultural connections and breaking the stereotypes that are imposed on them.
I was raised in a family of scientists and doctors where everyone used to argue about ‘which science is more important and beneficial for society’. When I was 9- or 10-years-old there were a lot of discussions on this topic. My grandpa was sure that without physics humanity could never dream of modern technologies, my grandma had no doubt that biology is the future of science, and I just wanted to play games and resolve puzzles. Eventually, everyone agreed that I must become a doctor (surgeon more specifically) but when the day came I applied for a biological physics course without even consulting my family about it. Everyone was mad with me but I was happy and my family supported me eventually. I loved biology and physics and without even knowing much about the discipline, I applied for the course and got funding for my university studies.

I always found natural sciences both challenging and very fulfilling. During the university years, I met with some wonderful professors and scientists who reinforced what my parents used to tell me when I was a kid, ‘Knowledge is the only thing that no one can take from you and at the same time it has no value if you won’t share it with others.’ My family supported me eventually. I loved biology and physics and without even knowing much about the discipline, I applied for the course and got funding for my university studies.

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These days I’m obviously not an active researcher and I’m quite often being asked by friends, colleagues and students do I ever regret that I’m a science instructor rather than a scientist. My answer is always no. I believe that you must find the thing in life that matches best with your personality and that thing must inspire you to do the same every day with equal motivation.

Explaining science and engaging students emotionally appeals to me more than research that is why students called my method of teaching science ‘unsciencely’.
Part of learning science and biology in particular involves conducting experiments. This is what I like most about IB and UWC Dilijan. Usually, in the national educational models, there is no big emphasis on lab work but IB not only encourages lab work but expects the students to have lab skills. We are privileged to have the equipment and facilities that we have and we as a faculty make the most of it. Apart from writing high-standard lab reports and executing lab investigations, once in a year, students have a big event called “Group 4 Project” where students taking different sciences do collaborative science group projects under an umbrella topic that the Science Faculty decides in advance. This is not only a perfect way to test how the scientific method works but also a great chance to improve soft skills such as communication, team-working and planning skills.

Throughout these years we have had a lot of interesting experiments. For example, research on how many potatoes it takes to provide electricity to a regular household in Armenia, or making a model of a perfectly shaped fan for the turbine of a hydroelectric station, or finding a cheap way to insulate the house using plastic and many other materials. What I always encourage students to do is conduct an experiment about something that they are curious about or that is important to local or global issues. Twice a year we organise field trips for our students during which students learn how to measure biodiversity, how to assess the environment, how to distinguish the habitats and in between that they learn more about Armenia. Students are always amazed by how different but small Armenia is, how many climate zones and how much biological variety it has.

First, we go to Dilijan National Park, then to Khosrov Forest State Reserve, which is a unique place where we always find a fossilized mollusc that is a couple of millions years old. Students also love to observe from a distance and see the traits of some endemic species of the South-Caucasus region such as an Armenian Mouflon, Syrian Brown bear, Bezoar goat, Bearded vulture, Caucasian Leopard, Caucasian Lynx or Armenian viper. During such trips, we organise meetings of students with Armenian researchers, professionals and experts from scientific institutes, and from international organisations who operate across the borders to protect the environment.

Second, we organise a visit to mountainous South-Caucasus region. There is such an amazing diversity of climate zones that students can see small signs of change. One of my concerns has always been how science subjects are taught in the public schools of Armenia. It is quite common to have one teacher from the educational and economic point of view. And every year one can see small signs of change.

One of my concerns has always been how science subjects are taught in the public schools of Armenia. It is quite common to have one teacher from the educational and economic point of view. And every year one can see small signs of change.
Sylvan landscapes, healing mineral waters, historical and architectural monuments, fascinating mystic caves and so much more... this is what makes life at UWC Dilijan so wondrous and awakening. For the UWC Dilijan community, the surrounding Dilijan National Park and its diverse nature, which lies at the heart of Caucasus, is a never-ending source of fascination and continual discovery.

Dilijan National Park occupies the basin of the Aghstev River upspring, covers a territory of 24,000 ha and has the largest number of forests in Armenia. It is significant for its rich and specific biodiversity, mesophotic forest landscapes, scientific-educational, health and recreational values. The distinctive species of plants and animals in the park, some of which are on the edge of extinction, attract both hikers and researchers. Through its size and rich ecology, the place is a heaven for those who are in constant exploration of nature, a group in which many UWC Dilijan students count themselves. Weekly hiking and caving trips, and the study of the flora and fauna of Dilijan National Park has already become an inseparable part of UWC Dilijan life.

Dilijan National Park is particularly special for its forests, where one can meet Caucasian wolves, brown bears, rabbits, foxes, roe deers, badgers, wild cats, lynxes, and other kinds of animals that have vanished from many other parts of the world. Moreover, the ancient rocky caves that are yet to be studied leave one in admiration and mystery about life. Among them is also the “Ice Wall” that was formed during the ice age. UWC Dilijan students have had the chance to go on expeditions to many of the caves and with every visit they have discovered new caves, underground ones, as well as caves with unusual characteristics. On one visit, the students found a cave that opened to a fascinating view through its manmade balconies on the rock. According to them, the evidence showed that people lived there around Stone Age. Another one of the discoveries was the ice cave, where even with dazzling sun outside one can still freeze inside the cave.

Besides caving explorations, students are also interested in observing the wildlife. Together with UWC Dilijan outdoor instructor, Gor Hovhannisyan, students have been learning how to identify and track the footprints of different animals. “They consider various factors such as recent rainfall, heat or wind, they can understand whether for example a bear was running. The students are very curious, and whenever we manage to track animal footprints, they get excited and happy. I always see them taking pictures of footsteps and sending them to their friends with such enthusiasm on their faces,” says Gor.

Along with its astonishing nature, Dilijan National Park is famous for its historic and cultural attractions dating from the 10th-13th centuries. The Hagharstsin Monastery complex, Monastery of Gosh, Matosavank, Aghavnavank and many other treasured temples from Armenia’s history are situated within the park. With hikes through the nature leading to valuable architectural sites, students have also been able to discover Armenia from many different angles. Recently, their occasional hiking trip has led them to discover the remains of a settlement, about which it turns out – no one has any information. They say the constructions were made from basalt and with no cement or other material that can bind and strengthen it, which means that it is a very ancient settlement. The students felt like real explorers, as they found no traces of other people around, only the paths of animals.

UWC Dilijan students are lucky to live and practice experiential learning in such beautiful and complex surroundings such as Dilijan National Park. The green wildlife and ancient history that has been perpetuated in the monasteries will always leave the students in awe about the many wonders of life.

Dilijan National Park is a never-ending source of fascination and continual discovery and an inseparable part of UWC Dilijan life.
I left Dilijan in May 2017 and went straight back home for a few months. I volunteered there for 6 months in an NGO for disabled people in Córdoba, Argentina. After that, I decided to go back to a more international environment and came to an international school in Israel called EMIS. The school has a mission that resembles the UWC movement and fosters education and peace specifically in the Middle East. Here, I am working in the Admissions and Marketing team while taking a part in the daily life of students by providing support and tutoring. It is very exciting and challenging to see myself on “the other side of the coin” now, as a staff member that gets to see and have an input into an educational process similar to the one I had back in Dilijan.

Life is as blissful as you make it. These are the words that echoed in my mind as I took on a gap year. During this year, I have been volunteering at Waterford Kamhlaba UWC SA. It is undoubtedly different being a member of staff and being a student at a UWC. For starters, you have more liberties, justifiably so as John Stuart Mill alluded. It is, however, similar in that we are ALL at liberty to live up to the mission statement and values; we are all at liberty to make an impact on anyone we cross paths with. This lingered in my mind as I took on being a teacher’s assistant for the form one class; we, the TAs and form ones, reflect on the UWC values and linking the value with activities happening in the week e.g. focusing on “Celebration of Difference” during the week leading to UWC Day. I have also had the privilege of assisting in the Swazi NC selection process as well as working with diligent and passionate people, like John Storer. Without a doubt, my interim year has been eventful, packed with excitement and a dash of reality.

Moving from UWC Dilijan to London leaves one with a strange sense of personal identity. During my first year at UCL, while skimming through the multiple student societies that I could join at UCL and thus the different identities I could adopt, I found the UCL Armenian Society, and the recent heart-warming memories contributed on the development of Armenia through talking about their different projects, organisations and initiatives which, ranging from the fields of education to business and politics, work towards the future of Armenia. Belonging to the UCL Armenian Society and organising events like the Armenian Symposium is one of the best experiences I have had so far in my university life. Not only does it allow me to develop as a person, but it also keeps me connected to the UWC Dilijan community, to Armenia, and it allows me to find a place to keep developing my Armenian identity and somehow bring back to the place that has made me who I am today.
Haneen
Lebanon, UWCD’16

My time at McGill has been enlightening, to say the least. My studies alone have given me a new perspective on how I can make an impact back home. Within the nuances of psychology research and controversy, I find myself drawn to the prospect of integrating what I have learned here to my understanding of the Middle East. I have wanted to study psychology since I was young and to be living my ambitions is incredible. I am also working as a Floor Fellow (the closest thing to a toon parent I could find). This job entailed supporting first-year students in residence with their academics, mental health, emergencies and being a person of resource. My time at UWC Dilijan really prepared me for this job. It taught me how to be independent much earlier than most college students do. It helped me understand what encompasses internationalism and the challenges many students face when coming from abroad. I have also been involved with a theatre company here at McGill. I co-directed a play that commented on issues such as body image, mental health, politics and campus issues. UWC Dilijan truly helped me to pursue my passion in theatre and further opened my eyes to its potential to foster change, self-esteem and community.

Marva
Israel, UWCD’17

About a year ago, I saved a day on my phone’s calendar as: “It’s been a year since you left Armenia”. I didn’t even remember I did that. Now it has been a year, and I can say that I’ve thought a lot, felt a lot and missed UWC Dilijan a lot, most of all its people. I am currently doing a year of volunteering in a high school in Jerusalem for teenagers from diverse and difficult backgrounds, that couldn’t find their place in the ‘normal’ education system in Israel. In this high school (Hashen), the students study to become either a professional cook, photographer, sound engineer or beautician. The school aims to give them tools to reintegrate into Israeli society, and works on making them experience a feeling of success in a school environment for the first time. After these two years in UWC Dilijan, which I felt have revitalized around my growing as an individual, I knew I wanted to channel what I’ve gained into doing and giving. This year has been very challenging, but knowing and seeing my relationships with my students and how I am able to help and be a part, even a little, in pushing them up, is so rewarding and meaningful to me.

Emma
UK, UWCD’17

After my UWC Dilijan graduation I decided I was moving to Morocco. First, I started working in a school in the historic city of Fez, teaching Moroccan students and settling in. We enjoyed painting the walls, sharing cultural differences, dancing on buses, haggling at markets and discovering the oldest Medina in the world. After that, I spent 2 months travelling around the country exploring its different climates. From the sandy Sahara Desert to the snowy tops of the Atlas Mountains, we trekked, photographed, and got to know the country. From its Berber languages and tents to its modern touristic cities and its beautiful coastlines, we lived different lifestyles but always ate tagine and couscous. I’ve been lucky enough to learn the language, feel the generous and hospital culture and share stories with people from all over the world. Now I’m excited to start university in August but will always remember the values and lessons I can learn by travelling and meeting new people. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here, and hope to come back soon. Inshallah.

Katya
Russia, UWCD’17

Gap years are good for making you feel both powerful and powerless, big and small, in control and at the utter mercy of the world spinning around you. Life does that to us regardless, but gap years do it in a special way. I needed a job before I could pay for my travelling adventures, so I worked as a tutor for about 5 months, and as an assistant to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Department in a British school in Moscow. The latter is what began to shape my gap year, and inadvertently, this year began to centre on education.

One goal I set for myself this year was to run a half marathon, I picked the Great Wall Marathon in China in May. I thought if I was going to go for this crazy marathon I wanted to run to fundraise for a school called Kovcheg (the Ark) in Moscow, that was the first, and remains one of the only, schools in Russia to comprehensively support inclusive education. The last few months have been full of writing letters to sponsors, training, and fundraising all of which have held many bitter disappointments, but have also made ‘The Inclusive Education Project’ a reality, and the result of countless people’s help and support. Now, with about a month to go until the marathon, I’ve learned a couple golden rules: sometimes you need to embrace the pain for good things to happen, and plans are absolutely made to be broken.
ARMENIAN FUTURE OF TWO UWC DILIJAN ALUMNI

Cedric | Misha
Germany, UWCD’17 | Russia, UWCD’17

When we first came to Armenia, it was inspiring and exciting to explore beautiful landscapes and inhale fresh mountain air. But upon discovering places off the beaten track, which we thought hadn’t been visited by many other people, we found trash laying around everywhere. We visited different cities and villages and continued seeing more and more problems with waste management. So we thought it was something that needed to change. That is when the idea of Re-apaga was born. “Apaga” means “future” in Armenian and we wanted to change its course. We were still first year students at UWC Dilijan and only 17 years old, but believed that we could inspire real change and make a difference. That is why we founded the Re-apaga Charity Foundation. Thinking about it now, we realize how transformational the UWC experience is. Before coming to Armenia, neither of us had ever imagined starting such a project.

From the start, we aimed to change the mindset of local people and teach them why nature conservation and sustainable development are important. So Re-apaga launched raising awareness campaigns in the Tavush and Lori regions, mainly working with the youth community. We organised flashmobs, lectures, workshops, and many other events attended by thousands of people. It was very interesting to grow our initiative while still being students. But we learnt important lessons from it every day. The more we were working on the project, the more we learned about the global recycling industry. We had to constantly adapt and develop our business model, struggled to find funding to continue our work, and had to solve various daily challenges of work and life. But it gave us a clear understanding of how our work should be pursued in order to expand our activities.

“Apaga” means “future” in Armenian, and we wanted to change its course

that at any moment we could get support from peers, college staff and throughout the UWVZ Network. In essence, the college became a great project accelerator for us. And we learned life changing lessons during this time and it is definitely worth all the effort.

As we continued working on the project and our time at UWC Dilijan was almost over, we considered the next step in our lives. It was good to raise awareness, but we still had not solved the problem. That is why we decided to stay in Armenia to launch the implementation of a real solution: the creation of an electronic waste, aluminium and plastic bottles recycling and dismantling facility – the first of its kind in Armenia and the whole Caucasus. Thus, we came back to Dilijan in August 2017 and focused our work on that. We decided to establish a working structure so that one of us focuses on developing strategic planning (Cedric), while the other is responsible for operational management (Misha). This was a completely new life for us. It took a while to adapt and learn how things actually work in the country. It was not easy and still isn’t, but we learnt important lessons from it every day. The more we were working on the project, the more we learned about the global recycling industry. We had to constantly adapt and develop our business model, struggled to find funding to continue our work, and had to solve various daily challenges of work and life. But it gave us a clear understanding of how our work should be pursued in order to expand our activities.

The impact we achieved so far is great, but there is so much more to be done. So far, we have raised the awareness of over 20,000 people and launched recycling production at the Re-apaga’s Impulse Recycling factory, which created 12 permanent jobs for local people. Currently, we sort and shred plastic bottles as well as dismantle electronic waste in 33 output fractions. Dismantled e-waste provide essential raw materials, which become more and more scarce on our planet, and prevent extremely harmful mining for raw materials, which become more and more scarce on our planet, and prevent extremely harmful mining for

Working with Zig Zag, the largest chain of electronics shops in Armenia, on the implementation of an electronic waste take-back system. We are also now cooperating with Coca Cola HBC to establish a sustainable plastic bottles recycling system throughout the country. By the end of 2018, we are going to expand Re-apaga activities across the whole of Armenia, create 38 permanent jobs, recycle 562 tonnes of waste annually, and raise awareness of over 75,000 people on sustainability. It has really been a great journey so far, but a hard one. It changed us a lot and allowed us to grow personally and professionally. We are committed to continue working on the project to create an even more sustainable future for Armenia. Everything will be possible if we are able to solve our financial difficulties and find investments for the expansion of the enterprise. In future, we also want to pursue our studies. We would like to study economics in Germany, where the educational system is very flexible and will allow us to combine university education with our work in Armenia.
REVIEWS OF 20TH CENTURY PHILOSOPHICAL FICTION

Lizi

UWCD’19, Georgia

The Unbearable Lightness of Being

by Milan Kundera

This book impressed me most of all those I have read. It is a philosophical novel depicting several main characters and their lives, and features various love stories and other plots. The characters are very impressive and I think it would be possible to write an entire novel about each of them. The book wonderfully describes the year of 1968, an important period in Czechoslovakian history, known for the Prague Spring. Censorship, identity, love, jealousy, loyalty and selflessness – all themes are included. Throughout my reading of the novel, I had the feeling that it was mirroring my own thoughts and feelings. A great movie has been made of this novel, starring the brilliant actors Juliette Binoche and Daniel Day-Lewis. This book is highly recommended and at an average 393 pages, it is easy to digest and enjoy.

Three Comrades

by Erich Maria Remarque

I first read this book when I was fourteen so I may have forgotten some of the details but the overall impression remains. I remember how much I wanted to be a part of this group of friends and their world. The story takes place in 1920s Germany. It features three friends, all incredible characters with a bohemian lifestyle, and describes their devotion to each other with plenty of drama. It is both the saddest and happiest book I have ever read. I remember how I stayed up all night to finish it. I don’t often get affected in such a way but I remember how much I cried and laughed. Remarque is a genius author.

Lolita

by Vladimir Nabokov

This novel is one of the most controversial in history. A middle-aged literature professor falls in love and is obsessed with 12-year-old Dolores Heiz, nicknamed Lolita. Although it may be a weird and challenging story, I think the key is the way the author tells the story. Nabokov manages to describe it in such a beautiful and aesthetic way that I don’t remember once feeling awkward about the topic. There are two movies based upon the novel “Lolita”. The most recent movie is my favourite.

The Sea

by John Banville

A story told by Max Morden, the main character. The novel has no specific plot because it consists of very beautiful fragments from Max’s present and past life. Everything happens by the sea. The author beautifully describes his experiences as a teenager, as a father, and as a husband. The language is simple but brilliant. I was rather disappointed by the movie so cannot recommend it, but the book is definitely worth a read. It is very tranquil and soothing, and easy to read at 200 pages.

My Michael

by Amos Oz

This book is about the love and marriage of a couple from Jerusalem. It takes place in 1950. The girl, called Khana, narrates the story about her troubles. Her personality is really beautiful and mysterious. The most remarkable thing is that the author is a man, but you would not know it simply by reading. I was amazed so many times how the author knew even the tiniest details of a woman’s life and wrote so naturally about it. For example, his handling of mental problems during pregnancy, and troubles that women have as mothers but never share etc. Must-read book!
ALWAYS MOVING

Noubar Afeyan

An inventor, entrepreneur, CEO, university lecturer, philanthropist and Founding Patron of UWC Dilijan talks about his life and 30-year career in science-based innovation

Deeply Rooted and Rootless

I was born into a family of immigrants in Lebanon. My father’s family had moved there from Bulgaria where they had ended up after the Armenian Genocide and World War One. From the beginning of my life, I was not native to the place I lived. I am an example of a rootless Armenian, but like many others never had enough time to fully adapt and lose my roots as I moved from one place to another. Although, in my case this turned out to be a huge advantage. This is a feeling shared with the students of UWC Dilijan who flourish when they are far away from home and detached from the roots they have.

Adapting to a New Life

Montreal is a beautiful city but very different from Beirut, although English and French are spoken in both cities. Until I was 13 years old, I lived in a Mediterranean climate in a seaside location about 200 meters above sea level and I never saw snow. But in Montreal it snows from November till April. A shock factor was bound up in my early memories – the shock of snow, of big buildings, airplanes and new surroundings. This might sound trivial, but it’s not – wars and migration are not trivial. They do affect you. I’m not sure how I’d have turned out if life had been steady, conservative and with my family all living in one place. So I think the psychology of wanting to do new things was triggered in me by my movement from one place to another.

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On the Move

In Lebanon, the school system was quite advanced. We were taught four languages: English, French, Armenian and Arabic every single day, and the math and history were of a very high level. When I moved to Canada, they put me in a higher class. In Montreal, I did well in my high school and college years and got a professional degree in chemical engineering. In 1983, I ended up trying to figure out what field of engineering I should get into. I started feeling like I should do something that was cutting edge. I took a leap of faith and after finishing McGill University I applied to MIT to do a PhD in biochemical engineering, which was a brand new field at that time. No one from my school had ever applied to go there to do a PhD, so I really couldn’t figure out what it would be like to go to the USA, a new country. So I moved again. And just as when I moved to Montreal and the other times when going to a new place, I had no idea how this place would condition me, not just from the lessons it would teach me but by the exposure to life in a new community.

In 1983, I arrived as a graduate student in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I was 21 and completely overwhelmed, because it was clear that this university had some of the world’s best minds in just about every field.

UWC Dilijan students flourish when they are far away from home and detached from the roots they have
While studying at MIT I had a chance meeting. In 1985, I happened to participate in a conference organized by the National Science Foundation in Washington DC as part of my PhD programme. The conference was about technology competitiveness, quite a new and field of study in the US. And the conference organizing committee invited me as one of the few MIT graduate students who were doing something in a new technology field – Biotechnology.

I showed up at the conference completely out of place. I sat next to somebody who was about my father’s age. I got enough courage to ask him what he does, and he started describing to me that some 35 years ago he and his friend had started a company. They represented a new breed of engineers that were going to need new instruments. So they started producing these instruments – for example, they had invented the first oscilloscope – and started generating revenues from that. These were the early days of electronics.

I found this story fascinating and finally I asked him “who are you?”, and it turned out that this man was David Packard from Hewlett-Packard, one of the leading technology companies in the world. Just listening to David Packard telling me how two ordinary electronic engineers started an extraordinary company, I realized that there were so many opportunities, and that this is something that I want to do, and I started to think how I might harness my experience and use it another way.

What is a company? It is an amazing leadership and management challenge. In the business, I was mostly reacting to immediate needs as opposed to thinking about what was going to come a few moves ahead. In this situation, education becomes lifelong because if you plan to do all these things without education, it will lead to uncertainty especially in advanced fields.

After that period, I became interested in exploring a second professional life. I started to think how I might harness my experience and use it another way. Unlike most people who do startups for a living, I wanted to see how a new venture might be done in parallel with my existing work. I came to think of being an entrepreneur as a dedicated role or profession like becoming a doctor or an architect. This is a daring thought – the very act of conceiving, creating, launching, and protecting an idea is a very different thing when you are leading an existing company.

In 2000, I started teaching at MIT on the subjects of innovation and entrepreneurship. When I grow up, I thought such a topic wasn’t teachable, but then I became convinced that it may be learned. I asked myself “what are the things I wish I knew about this before I started doing it” and there were many answers to my question. I took a different version of the conventional way of teaching and it proved effective.

The academic side of this got me thinking more about how a future student would prepare for a life of innovation and creating new products and solutions that may change society. How do we prepare for things that never existed? This is something that fascinates me: how do we unfold the future without a cautious incremental approach, but jump into the future as safely as possible to “create value”. How can we dive in with an optimistic perspective of where the sunken treasure is located.

We use a very specific approach to how we think about utilizing what might be unprecedented technology. We do not take what exists today but we imagine non-existent ideas and try to bring them into existence in the context of problem solving.