

Address at the Duino 20 year Reunion 3 July 2010

It's a pleasure to speak to you this evening to update you on recent developments at the college and to offer my impressions of where we are going in our future.

But before I begin, I should probably introduce myself a bit more fully. My name is Peter Howe, I am 47 years old, married to Sally for 21 years, 3 kids – Nikolaus - 16, Beatrix - 12 and Oliver - 8 – one each in the local Liceo Scientifico, Scuola Media and Scuola Elementare. I arrived in Duino 5 years ago as the IB coordinator, head of Economics, and residence tutor at Pala. In January 2007 I was appointed Director of Studies and Deputy Head and in August 2008 took over as Rettore. My background is eclectic and includes an undergraduate degree in Commerce (Finance and Economics) from Queen's University in Canada, a Masters Degree in Art History from the University of Toronto and four years of Ph.D. studies in architectural history at the University of Toronto. In between degrees, I lived and studied in Europe for three years and worked for Proctor and Gamble for two. So how did I get into high school teaching and involved with UWC you ask? Well the answer to the first question is relatively straightforward. While working on my dissertation and lecturing at the university my wife and I discovered that we were expecting our second child and my fellowship and teaching assistant's salary suddenly seemed very small. So I began teaching at a newly minted IB school in Toronto teaching IB Economics and History. The plan was that I would complete my dissertation in my 'spare time' and return to the world of academia and a tenure track position when it was done. But a funny thing happened that year. Of course, spare time simply did not exist, particularly with a second child in tow and the demands of IB teaching. But– more surprisingly – I realized that I really enjoyed teaching the IB diploma age group. At the university, in a good year, I might feel I was directly impacting a handful of students. At the high school level, with the increased contact hours and idealism of the age group, I found this number multiplied many times over. It was an exciting age group to teach.

So how did UWC come into the picture? Well other than Manuel serving as my team leader as an IB Economics examiner, my contact with UWC came by the way of the World Arts and Cultures course that was begun at this college as a SBS. It was 2001 and the IB was looking for courses that they could call 'transdisciplinary.' World Arts and Cultures was seen as ideal. A world curriculum team was assembled and I was invited to join thanks to my Art and Architectural History background. We met in Vienna and in addition to falling in love with the course (which I introduced to my old school) I was intrigued by the idea of the UWC – which of course was new to me. It is a sad truth of the UWC movement as a whole that it is not universally known. I grew up in Canada – in Toronto – and yet I had never heard of Pearson College. As Tina Honkanen, head of the Finnish National Committee has remarked – the United World College Movement is one of the world's best kept secrets and that was certainly the case with me. But once I learned of UWC I was hooked. I wrote to all the heads looking for openings, I corresponded with David Sutcliffe about working at Mostar and I staying in touch with Henry Thomas who was one of the founding fathers of the World Arts and Cultures course and a teacher here. In March 2005 I came to Duino for the first time as part of our curriculum development work, met the Head Marc Abrioux, and

was offered a job. And so here I am and as enamoured with the idea of UWC now as I was when I first learned of the movement.

Recent Past

I don't know how much you know of the challenges that the college faced in 2008 and I don't think this is the forum to go into to many details. Needless to say it was a difficult period. When the President of the Council and the Rettore are in serious conflict the governance system of the college cannot work. The outcome of their conflict was an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Administration on 29 August 2008 when both were asked to tender their resignations. It is a credit to both Marc Abrioux and Michele Zanetti that they accepted this recommendation with grace and put the interests of the college and its future first. Ambassador Facco Bonetti as deputy-President of the Council and me as deputy-Head were asked to step into the roles of President and Rettore respectively. The Ambassador also recommended the appointment of Rag. Giorgio Pontoni, the founding administrative director of the college, and a retired senior civil servant of the region of FVG, as Secretary General. This is the management team we have in place today. When Rag. Pontoni completed his review of college finances at the end of September 2008 the situation was dire. Rather than the modest deficit that had been anticipated when the preventive budget was prepared under Abrioux and Zanetti, our new preventive budget showed a projected deficit that approached a million euros. Our work was cut out for us. With Amb. Facco Bonetti's contacts in Rome, Giorgio Pontoni's in the Region and my work with national committees and the support of my teaching and admin staff colleagues, we were able to find additional revenue sources and cut expenditure (through careful tracking of all budgets) to the point that we were able to achieve a balanced budget by the end of the academic year for the first time in over a decade with no significant cuts to programming (**Slide 1**). Even more impressive, this small surplus was achieved despite the Scuola Superiore Internazionale di Musica da Camera del Trio di Trieste running a deficit of 60.000 € in celebration of its 20th anniversary. I am happy to report that this year as well we are on track to balance our budget or to run a small surplus. But times remain tough. Our current budget, in real terms, is at 75% of the 1999/2000 budget level - and that number is based on official Italian inflation numbers (ISTAT) which most Italians will tell you are understated. How is this possible? Well we have 10% fewer students and we have had to end our partnership with many external collaborators including language tutors for all but a handful of languages. Whenever and wherever possible our activities and services are run 'in-house' by faculty and staff members. Nevertheless, we dream of returning to the days when you were at the college.

The Present

So I would describe the period at present as one of continued consolidation and renewal. We are closely examining current practices and moving resources into areas of need. An example is the appointment of Colin Thompson as the first Director of the Office of Alumni Affairs in January of this year from his former position as Administration Director. For the first time we have someone whose full-time job is to build our relationship with you - our alumni - so that we may maintain better contact between ourselves. I hope if you haven't done so already that you will join the

Linkedin group that he has established and that you will notice a greater level of communication. We have also appointed Valentina Bach, one of your classmates, as our first Director of the Office of Communications and Development. The new web site is a result of her efforts. In the great tradition of UWC Adriatic, we put together a team of students under Valentina's direction and challenged them to get it done. The result is light years ahead of what we had before. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for the site and we would very much welcome your stories to include in our graduate profiles section. Valentina Bach is also a tireless pursuer of European funds, which I will touch upon later, and which are central to our strategic plans for the future.

While you would recognize many of the administrative support staff as those who were here during your time, and over half our teaching staff have been here more than a decade (and a handful since your time at the college), we also have an incredibly talented younger cohort of teachers. This balance is essential in my view, particularly as we move from a model of hard working individual teachers doing good work but often in isolation, to one where all staff are a highly collaborative group of mentors aligned in their commitment to the UWC movement. This same spirit of collaboration must also be in place, in my view, between the colleges. While the distinct nature of individual UWC's should never be questioned, that does not preclude a high level of cooperation on those aspects that we share. I am happy to report that this level of cooperation has never been higher, and by all reports from the veterans of the movement is unprecedented. For the past two years, the heads of school have been holding 'retreats' – meetings of 2 to 3 days – every 6 months. The first is always held in advance of the International Council meeting held in the fall at one of the various campuses and the second is held in proximity to a Regional National Committee meeting and/or International Board meeting. Such meetings have allowed the heads to identify and begin to address issues common to our colleges whether it be pastoral care, national committee issues, the UWC model of education, scholarship allocation, etc. We are also committed to bringing together members of our staff with special expertise or interest in particular areas so that they may share best practices. At Pearson College this past October, those responsible for pastoral care joined us to hold their own meetings during our council meeting. At Singapore this coming October, it will be the turn of Finance Directors to share their expertise. Working with such groups of like-minded individuals within the movement is one of the most stimulating aspects of my job and we as heads are convinced that such opportunities need to filter down through the 'ranks' to teachers and support staff. Teacher exchanges are part of this strategy as well. We currently have 3 teachers on staff who worked at Atlantic College and one from Costa Rica. Next year, we will host a teacher from Nordic on a one year exchange. And our new Director of Studies has 8 years experience at the Singapore college. And of course, we have the example of Mark Sylvester who in addition to his foundation role at Mostar has served at numerous other colleges. We can only benefit from such cross-fertilization.

I am happy to report that our college and its personnel continue to play a unique role within the movement in support of selections and national committee development. A key aspect of the UWC Strategic Plan is to better resource national committee development and it is here where we are taking the lead. When David Sutcliffe and others established the contacts in Eastern Europe and the Balkans that we work with to this day, they tended to deal with Ministries of Education or

other government agencies. This was important in giving the UWC movement legitimacy in a world that did not know of the movement and where recognition was important in getting students out and allowing them to return. The world, and this region in particular, has changed immensely in the past 28 years. We are now looking for national committees to do more than just interview students for selections. We want them to promote the movement as well as scholarships, to reach out to minority groups, to identify students of promise and potential through diverse assessment practices, to fundraise! For such a commitment the involvement of alumni is essential and so we have been meeting with ministries of education to persuade them of the advantages of including alumni on their selection teams and in the national committee. And we have built national committees from scratch in new countries such as Kosovo. In the past year, I, and my senior colleges at the college, have participated in selections in Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Turkey, Morocco, and Abu Dhabi. We are the only UWC that is involved in selections outside of our home country and our experience is proving essential in the national committee development work that is taking place at the international level. In addition, I sit on the task forces for the new Spanish UWC project, the Abu Dhabi project and the Scholarship Allocation programme. I am convinced these roles serving the movement as a whole only strengthen us as a college and gives us influence despite our relatively small size in guiding the future direction of UWC international. Such work is time consuming but incredibly rewarding and for the past two years these activities have been fully funded by the International Office.

So what about the students? Are they the same as you were when you arrived 20 odd years ago? Well, we no longer have 200 students. This past year we were at 180 and hope to hit 186 next year with a more efficient refurbishing of some of the rooms. Why the lower number? Because we no longer place students in hotels such as Aurora or Villa Susi where we had to pay. All our students are now housed in regional buildings that are provided rent-free. If the old address books are anything to go by we do have greater national diversity than 20 years ago. This past year 83 countries and territories were represented (vs about 60 in your day), an increase of 8 from the year before. Of course the breakup of Yugoslavia and the USSR has helped to increase those numbers. Our Italian presence is 15% of the student population, while 20% come from the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Annual scholarships are awarded to each of the Balkan states including Kosovo. In trying to bring the tensions of society to our school, we have also focused on socio-economic and cultural diversity as much as national diversity. So next year, we will have an Arab and Kurdish Iraqi for example and Sahwari refugees alongside a student from Morocco. Such targeting of specific groups is carried out by working with other partners in collaboration national committees and is a central part of our mission to make education a force for peace.

One of the areas to which the heads have turned their attention is to the UWC Model of Education and to develop a profile of an ideal UWC candidate to assist national committees in their selections work. After 5 years at our college I think I am beginning to understand the 'magic' that happens here (and from what I hear, at other UWC's). When I arrived what struck me immediately was the incredibly supportive nature of the student body on the whole. Students genuinely care about each other and in this atmosphere, trust is established. This trust, in turn,

allows for intellectual and emotional risks to be taken. Talents are developed but perhaps more importantly new talents are discovered. Personal identities are 'unpacked' and rebuilt as new identities are established. The college transforms. This notion of 'friendship' was one observed by Eva Biaudet when she visited our college last year, and one she wrote about in the May 2009 edition of the Finnair magazine – 'Bluewings.' Eva Biaudet is the OSCE special representative for combating trafficking in human beings and a former Finnish minister of health and social services. She was at the college as part of our international affairs speaker series and had not previously visited a UWC. Under the title 'The importance of friendship' she wrote of her visit to the college describing our students as, "young optimists [who] clearly felt that they were needed in shaping the future." She went on to argue in favour of an approach for all schools that honours friendship. She continues, "But let's be open-minded. While providing children with academic skills, why not at the same time create for them an environment of belonging that takes joy in their strength to build friendships, bridges divides between people and let them have fun while learning? When you experience a community like the United World College in northern Italy, you become encouraged because you see that it's possible to work together and solve problems, be they personal or global." A pretty impressive take on the school for someone who was only here for an afternoon. But her experience is not unique amongst our visitors. I do not think we can underestimate the power of these friendships to our mission and what better testimony than the number of you have returned this weekend 20 years after your experience.

The Future

So where do we go from here? David Sutcliffe, in his address to the 10 year reunion class last weekend, noted the challenge of 'progressive' schools. If they are unsuccessful they are dismissed as failed experiments but if they are successful then their methods are taken up by other schools and their position as education leaders may be threatened. Alex Peterson's book Schools Without Frontiers which chronicles the foundation of the first UWC's as well as the International Baccalaureate programme underscores the contribution that the Atlantic College curriculum made to the early IB. The success of what has now come to be viewed as the 'IB approach' – with an emphasis on creativity, action and service alongside a rigorous academic programme – grew out of the experiment that was Atlantic College. We, the UWC's, have continued to support the work of the IB through the development of school syllabi which often become full IB offerings including Environmental Systems and Societies, Peace and Conflict Studies, World Studies, World Arts and Cultures, Marine Biology, World Religions and others, and many of our teachers are senior examiners or deputy chief examiners within the IB. But it is now the IB that is recognized as the progressive institution. We remain little known outside the inner circles of international education. [When our school was founded in 1982 we were IB school #0197. New IB schools today are assigned a number in the three thousands!]

As David Sutcliffe recounted, the early conception of the colleges was as 'workshops for educational experimentation.' We must refocus on this vision. We need to bring the pioneering spirit not just into curriculum design but into our classrooms. We have a unique opportunity with our student populations for our classrooms to be laboratories for pedagogical research. For with

the students of promise and potential that we have, we can afford to get it wrong once in awhile in our effort to get it right - because our students have the resiliency and spirit to overcome whatever setbacks occur. In my first year at the college as IB coordinator one of my first tasks was to present the IB results at the opening staff meeting. When I reviewed the numbers, I was very impressed – an average over 37, 25% of the students above 40, etc. And this despite that fact that 80% of our students are non-native English speakers. And yet when I did a more detailed breakdown of the numbers, a curious statistic emerged. The subjects with the highest overall averages were the self-taught languages in which the students were left on their own. Could it be that students would do even better if they had no teachers for any of their classes? (No that is not an experiment that I would propose we run). Such an expectation to experiment with different approaches should not be seen as a threat but rather as an opportunity to carry out action research. Much as ToK asked you all those years ago 'How do you know what you know?' the question we would ask of all UWC teachers would be 'Why do you teach the way that you teach?' And then, after the effectiveness of the lesson is assessed, is there a better way to achieve the learning outcomes. The best experienced teachers approach much of what they do intuitively – they teach in a certain way because they know that it works. With a more deliberate approach, we could publish and share these approaches and methodologies and in turn reclaim our territory as progressive workshops for educational experimentation. Such an approach should extend into service learning, expeditions and activities as well. This in turn would allow us to develop a UWC diploma, in collaboration with the other UWC's, that recognizes all components of the student's experience at the college as part of a holistic education. We would then have a clearly identifiable UWC model of education that we could use to generate support for the college, and to share 'best practices' with the rest of the world. We know that this can work. World Arts and Cultures, the school based syllabus developed at this college, which provides a methodology for exploring issues of cultural identity, has been at the heart of our recent successes in securing EU project money, including the PACE project of Jan 2007-May 2010 (Project Agency Cooperation Education), the CHERI project of Dec 2009-May 2011 (Challenging Education for Roma Inclusion) and our current submission ASAP (Adriatic School Authorities Platform) which would bring €1.5m to the College over 3 years and €800.000 to our sister college in Mostar. All of these projects involve collaboration with regional partners including ministries of education, education agencies, schools and teachers. In November, we have been invited to present the course to the EU in Brussels.

A further outcome of such an approach is that it would allow us to make a case for the secondment of teachers from ministries of education to our schools. We currently host a seconded teacher from Austria and one from Italy but why not more? We could also recruit visiting teachers from like-minded schools for fixed term appointments, particularly those interested in carrying out research. Such a strategy would not only support developing best practices build we effectively spread the UWC mission around the world.

And last but not least – an update on our facility aspirations. We are currently working on a plan to build a gymnasium in the village. We define ourselves as unique in many ways within the UWC movement but our lack of athletic facilities is not one I'm proud of. We need resources both physical and financial for this to be realized. We have the plans prepared and a site selected (on

regional lands across from the AGIP on the costiera highway (near Palazzine) and the Regional Minister for Sport from the Region will be visiting the college next week for a second discussion. Such a building would serve not only our College but the village as well – it's just the matter of finding 3.5m euros.

We are also in desperate need of a renovation of our school building. It's probably little different from when you attended the college twenty years ago (although the shutters were removed as they were at risk of falling off!) For the past two years we have been negotiating with the Comune to hand over ownership to the Region and we are very close to success. As soon as this takes place, the Region is committed to carrying out a complete renovation - estimated cost – one million euros. We also need a serious injection of funds into our IT infrastructure. We have begun to lay fibre optic cables through the village and this project continues as funds are secured. But time is ticking. And for our teachers to be their best, we need to provide them with the tools to take advantage of the latest developments in IT for education.

And finally, we need to continue in our efforts to make the school more 'green'. This year we introduced composting at every residence and Mensa and thanks to our new sustainability group the Bioplot behind Ples was born. A student initiative also led to our participation in an EU scheme for financing photovoltaic cells and we will be having cells installed on three of our buildings (Lucchese, Scholz and Ples) in September. We have pushed the regions in their renovations of our residences to introduce push button showers and lower flow toilets. So slow but steady progress is being made on the sustainability front.

So that's about it for me. Apologies for the length of my address this evening. I hope you have a better sense of where the college has been, is, and will be in the near future. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have and thank you wholeheartedly for returning to the college to celebrate your 20th reunion. We hope you keep in touch and that we will see you again soon.