

Dear UWC Mostar community and friends of the College,

The recent protests against discriminatory injustices around the world have, yet again, laid bare deeply ingrained, long-standing racial divisions, anti-Black racism, and the discrimination faced by people of colour.

We at UWC Mostar acknowledge this to be a wake-up call for our community too and in order to set the right tone for the year and to share the philosophy we would like to follow, we are starting the year with a public statement. We recognise the hurt felt by many members of our UWC Mostar family, especially our students of colour. We understand that many of our present and past community members have experienced discrimination and injustice while attending UWC Mostar. Though this cannot make up for what has happened in the past, we offer our sincere and humble apology to all of our students and alumni of colour, and to anyone who has experienced prejudice or discrimination within our community.

We are fully aware of the fact that mere acknowledgements and apologies are far from enough, thus we would like to show our commitment to condemning racism and discrimination within our own community through action. We aim to cultivate a community that commits to explicit, critical and intentional learning and action on diversity, equity and inclusion. The members of our community and the friends of the College are aware that the reality of the context that UWC Mostar is in contributes additional challenges, especially in the context of regional racial homogeneity. It is in such a context where UWC Mostar can contribute the most by setting an example and taking a more active role in combating the injustices.

We will endeavour to work towards productive actions and effective policies, and have started a detailed review of our policies and practices in this regard.

We already took a small first step forward, earlier this year, in the form of an Anti-Racism workshop series led by Cicely Blain (UWC Maastricht, 2010-2012; and CEO of Cicely Blain Consulting) for all our students and staff. Some of the participants were also trained for facilitating workshops and we will continue our attempts towards race education by ensuring these are done continually at the beginning of the year and followed up by discussions and refreshers throughout the year.

Apart from education and awareness, we will strive to strengthen our support mechanisms. Through the Peer Support Group, a strengthened Tutor System and a mentorship program for students of colour, as well as the renewed focus on student wellbeing supported by the roles of Senior Tutors and a Director of Student Wellbeing, we will work towards creating a safer space for our students of colour as well as those belonging to the LGBTQI+ and other vulnerable communities. We will focus throughout the year on providing each student in our care with a reassuring adult presence.

While these are just very small steps forward, we hope for them to be a positive beginning of a long journey.

The situation with the pandemic will not only impact student diversity in the next academic year (due to travel and visa restrictions) but also deter us from opening up for more inclusive

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hiring. However, when we are able to do so, over a longer period of time, we will commit to bringing on board a more racially diverse staff, as we are aware that there is a lot to be done in this direction.

We will work on training all members of our community so that any incoming staff find a safe and inclusive community.

We are actively working with our faculty on including in our curriculum, especially in Groups 1, 2 and 3, a minimum of one text each dealing with discrimination and racism, as well as texts by writers and authors of colour. We will also actively encourage other subject teachers to explore the possibilities of taking similar steps. Lastly, we will make sure that the UWC Mostar library offers a much greater variety of texts on discrimination and racism, as well as works by authors of colour.

UWC Mostar remains committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all of our students. We are open to engaging in constructive conversations with members of our community, and we recognise that many of our present and former students and staff will have constructive feedback they can share – feedback we will be able to include into our action plans and programs. We would like to invite all such contributions that will help make the experience of all groups in the College, especially students of colour and members of the LGBTQI+ community, a safer and more positive one.

If you would like to contribute, please do get in touch with our Deputy Head, Rodney Olguin, directly (rodney.olguin@uwcim.uwc.org).

We can only heal and grow better together by listening to each other, by having courageous conversations and by cultivating a trusting, empathetic environment where all people feel safe and empowered to voice their ideas, thoughts and concerns.

We will do our best to provide the opportunities for these.
We must do better together – we can and we will.



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