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Elite college proposed for Queenstown

Trust to run feasibility study for internationally respected school for young leaders

Graeme Kennedy

New Zealand could have its own United World College for elite students with potential to become future global leaders if organisers can raise more than \$140 million to establish the institute.

UWC Trust chairman Tony Baldwin said an initial \$283,000 was needed to carry out a full feasibility study, hopefully with funding from community and foundation grants and support from the 95 New Zealanders who have attended the colleges overseas.

The Motueka-based business and public policy consultant said former students included Health Minister David Cunliffe, new Singapore high commissioner Martin Harvey and Melbourne University economics professor George Barker.

Work on the New Zealand project founded by patron Jim Bolger began last year and a solid business plan had been completed, Mr Baldwin said.

"We have a strong engine room, with Arrow International as our project manager, Chapman Tripp our lawyers, Sweeney Vesty communications advisers, Ernst & Young auditors and Terralink providing survey and mapping services," he said.

The first college was set up in Wales 45 years ago and 11 others are now operating in countries including the US, UK, Hong Kong, Norway and South Africa - Nelson Mandela is UWC world president.

"The Queenstown college would have around 240 students aged between 17 and 19 drawn from around the world including New Zealand," Mr Baldwin said.

"The college's two-year course leads to international university entrance exams and those who perform well gain admission to any university in the world - better prepared for both tertiary education and life.

"Scholarships are provided by sponsors in home countries for young people with potential but irrespective of their means or backgrounds.

"Critical to the programme is that it includes a high service component. The primary ethos of the school is seeking to improve the lives of others.

"And we would be in partnership with the adventure and character-building Outward Bound courses - this is all about creating tomorrow's leaders, people with a global view."

Mr Baldwin said that if the college was found to be feasible the trust would seek around \$140 million to set up the school at Paradise near Queenstown where land-owners have given the group a memorandum of understanding for an option on 35ha.

"We plan to make presentations to the government, Trade and Enterprise NZ, private funding foundations and merchant banking colleagues who could take it to investors who might be interested in supporting the project," he said.

"The campus would cost \$50 million with annual operating expenses \$7 million - we want at least five years of those costs in the bank before we go ahead.

"Overseas schools tend to be backed by individual philanthropists and if we can demonstrate we are viable in New Zealand they might be willing to support us."

Mr Baldwin said New Zealand would gain from a UWC through closer relationships with future leaders the institute produced.

"Over many years we have enjoyed the benefits from connections with powerful countries such as the UK and US as strong allies," he said, "but the balance of power is shifting to China, Asia and other emerging economies.

"A UWC would give us a wider, deeper network with connections and a chance to project ourselves globally more quickly."



Tony Baldwin: New Zealand would gain from closer relationships with future leaders