

# Reflections on the Year 2020

*The year 2020 was unprecedented and more than what we had planned for. The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the world and Bhutan was no exception. Under the benevolent leadership of His Majesty the King, the government has taken timely and largely successful measures to limit the effect of the pandemic as much as possible in Bhutan. These measures have ensured some sort of normalcy in the country at the time when the global scenario was worsening. With the closure of schools for almost the whole of 2020, students were among those worst affected by the situation and educational institutions had to grapple with a sudden shift to e-learning as the only mode of teaching for months.*

*Despite all these challenges, the Royal Thimphu College has had a productive academic year that was successfully completed in a timely manner. Tackling the uncertainties and moving forward with lessons learned and best practices adopted has made us more resilient and capable to face unexpected situations in the future.*

**Class of 2020** – 314 students successfully graduated from RTC this year in RTC’s 9th cohort of graduates. They were celebrated for their resilience, adaptability, and personal responsibility during these unprecedented times.



**RTC community continues to grow** - RTC welcomed 430 new students to its nine different programmes, out of which 57 students joined the college on various scholarships offered by RTC and its partner agencies, 6 of them were on the RTC Academic Scholarship, 1 on the RTC-Bhutan Football Federation sports scholarship, 6 on the RTC-Bhutan Olympic Committee scholarship, 2 on the RTC-Youth Development Fund scholarship, 2 on President’s scholarship, 28 on DAHE scholarship, 3 on RTC-WWF Train Legacy Scholarship, 3 on Loden-RTC Need-based scholarship, 2 on the SEISA Group scholarship and 4 on the Office of the Gyalpoi Zimpion scholarship.

## **Loden-RTC Need-based Scholarships Initiated**

Royal Thimphu College signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Loden Foundation to jointly provide need-based scholarships to students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue undergraduate programmes at the Royal Thimphu College. Through this initiative, 3 students joined the Nursing and Midwifery department for the 2020 academic year.



## *Transition to Online Teaching-learning*



Based on the recommendation from the Ministry of Health and the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), face-to-face classes were temporarily discontinued starting in early March, as a result of the necessary precautions related to the COVID-19 virus. The college strengthened its virtual learning platform and immediately initiated e-learning for its students, ensuring continuity of classes and keeping the academic progression on track. RTC was able to successfully conclude the academic year of 2020 in early December, with only a week's delay.

## *International Opportunities!*



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## *International Students on Campus!*

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RTC continues to welcome an increasing number of international students on campus either on full-time study or through its study abroad programme option. This spring, we welcomed 12 international students for the study abroad programme.

***RTC students study abroad*** - RTC students also continue to gain exposure in international colleges around the world, both through short term exchanges and through study abroad programmes. This year, before the travel ban due to the pandemic, 10 students had the opportunity to visit SEISA, Japan and 4 students went to the US on a short term exchange programme, 12 students participated in the Erasmus+ exchange programme in Europe and 2 students participated in an exchange programme in Japan.

## *Erasmus+ Projects for Capacity Building*

RTC, in collaboration with three other colleges in Bhutan, submitted a project proposal and was awarded Project HAPPY (Qualitative Research in Higher Education Teaching Approaches for sustainability and well-being in Bhutan). RTC will be closely working with Sherubtse College, College of Language and Cultural Studies, Norbuling Rigter College (Bhutan), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Netherlands), Leiden University (Netherlands), University of Ljubljana (UL), Slovenia to carry out activities on sensitization, enhancing the capacity of the relevant stakeholders in Qualitative Research Methodology, among other things.



RTC will also be working with Gedu College of Business Studies (Bhutan); FH Joanneum (Austria); University of Alicante (Spain); Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Finland); Tribhuvan University (Nepal); Global College International (Nepal); Souphanouvong University (Laos); National University of Laos (Laos) on a project for Entrepreneurship Knowledge Centers to Foster Innovative Entrepreneurship Practices in Education and Research (Project ENCORE). The project will focus on analysing the current status of entrepreneurship and building the capacity of experts in the field.

## *Microfinancing to Support Persons with Disabilities*

The Royal Thimphu College, in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, England and the University of Minnesota, USA, awarded microgrants to youth with disabilities as a part of the ESRC-GCRF Project. 6 SEN students of Tendu School were clubbed to receive a microgrant of Nu.100,000 worth of assistive technology. Similarly, 3 students training in Multimedia at Changangkha School have been clubbed to receive assistive technology worth Nu.70,000. All other 10 candidates were awarded funds according to the viability and scope of their anticipated business or skills training, as seen by the evaluators. Of the 19 recipients, 6 received their microgrants from the Honorable President of the Royal Thimphu College on 24th September 2020.



## *Distinguished Guest Visits to RTC*



***His Excellency, the Education Minister of Bhutan, graced the annual prize award ceremony -*** Lyonpo Jai Bir Rai awarded certificates to the recipients for their excellent academic achievements during the ceremony. His Excellency toured the campus and had a short interaction with the students, faculty, and staff of the RTC community.



***Her Excellency Sowai Lyonpo Dasho Dechen Wangmo visited the Royal Thimphu College.***

Her Excellency visited the campus for a short interaction with the faculty and the students. They were sensitized on the measures the government has put in place with the COVID pandemic and some issues related to preparedness for the first lockdown. Lyonpo also reiterated the tireless effort of His Majesty the King and spoke of 'Our Gyenkhu' initiative introduced by His Majesty, stating that it was time for all of us to respond to the call of the nation and that individual responsibility must come from within oneself.

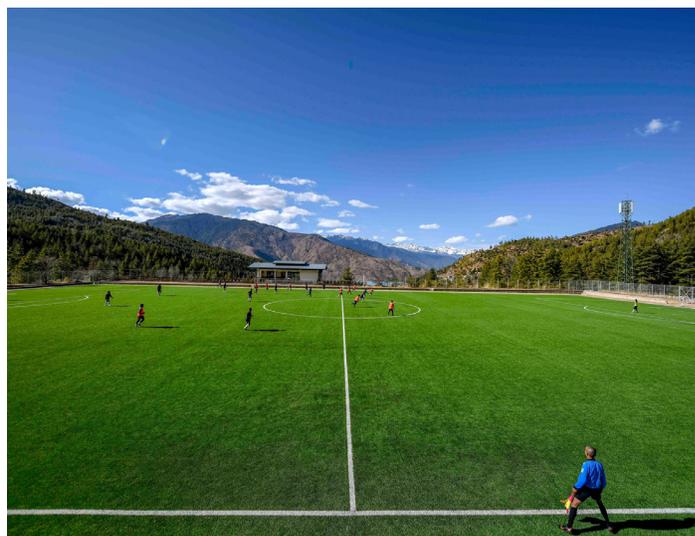


***Vice Chancellor of Royal University of Bhutan visited Royal Thimphu College.***

After in-person classes were resumed after the first lockdown, Dasho Nidup Dorji, accompanied by the Registrar, Aum Karma Tshering made a visit to RTC to oversee the COVID protocols and guidelines put in place. Dasho interacted with the college management and the programme leaders. Dasho visited some of the classes and interacted with the students about the challenges of online classes.

## *In Other News.....*

***RTC Contributes to the National COVID19 Fund*** - Driven by the desire of many of our employees including faculty, staff, management, and support staff to contribute to the nationwide response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a combined Nu. 250,000 of voluntary contributions was doubled by the management to Nu. 500,000 to represent all our constituents. This amount was handed to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan on 16th April 2020 on behalf of the entire RTC community for the government's COVID-19 response fund.



***The new Artificial Turf football field*** at Royal Thimphu College was officially inaugurated on 28th February 2020 by the President of Bhutan Football Federation (BFF), Dasho Ugyen Tsechup Dorji, and the Founding Director of RTC, Dasho Tenzing Yonten. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed between RTC and BFF to encourage the growth of sports as an integral part of the academic experience.



***Bhutan Dialogues*** - Royal Thimphu College in collaboration with UN Bhutan and Loden Foundation, hosted a Youth Dialogue on the theme 'The Future We Want' on 12th November 2020 at the RTC auditorium. Jurmey Choden Rinzin, a final year BA Political Science and Sociology student of RTC was a panel member at the event. This special edition of Bhutan Dialogues was focused on bringing together young leaders and thinkers to a young audience and reflect on the past, present, and the future we want to accept.



**Mekong Business Challenge** - A team of three RTC students took part in the competition this year supervised by Mr. Gagan Mongar (Faculty of Business Studies). The team designed an audio guide tour app that displays all the cultural sites of Bhutan in multiple languages and has been aptly named as “Thunder Guide” to align with the ‘Land of the Thunder Dragon’. The team came 2nd in the competition winning a cash prize of \$3,000 USD, which they want to invest in launching the app in the market. A total of 11 university teams competed in the region’s business model competition including teams from Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

**Extension of the Academic Block B** has been completed as of 12th December 2020. The extension is to cater to the requirement of additional classrooms and specialized BSc Nursing Lab setups for the additional programmes. Specifically, the Block will have a Nursing & Midwifery Lab/Birthing Centre and Nursing Skills Lab which will be a mini-replica of a hospital setup including an emergency & Trauma Management setups. In total, the additional Block will have 11 classrooms inclusive of 4 smaller sized-classrooms which are conducive for micro-teaching or for catering to the smaller class sizes.



**RTC Disaster Management and Contingency Plan** - The 2nd college wide mock drill for disasters such as earthquake and fire was conducted in November with a separate night mock drill held for those who live on campus. Respective teams have been put together under the plan who will continue on with this very important initiative annually.