



ACADEMIC PLAN

Access to Excellence

Approved By TRU Senate December 19, 2011

Acknowledgments

The academic vision of Thompson Rivers University includes the recognition and celebration of the location of our main and regional campuses in the traditional territories of Aboriginal people: the Kamloops campus is situated in Tk'emlups territory; the Williams Lake campus is situated in the T'exelcenc; the 100 Mile House regional centre is situated in Tsq'escenenc; the Ashcroft regional centre is situated in the Ashcroft First Nation, belonging to the Nlaka'pmx Nation; the Barriere and Clearwater regional centres are situated in Simpcw territory; and the Lillooet regional centre is situated in the St'át'imc Nation, which includes Bridge River (Nxwisten), Pavilion (Ts'kw'aylacw), Cayoose Creek (Sekw'el'was), Mt. Currie (Lil'wat), Seton Lake (Chalath), Lillooet (T'it'q'et), Fountain (Xáxl'ip), Anderson Lake (N'quatqua), Douglas (Xa'xtsa), Skatin and Samahquam. Thompson Rivers University recognizes the need to include learning opportunities for all Aboriginal students, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learners.



Cover Image:

John McEwen's sculpture is positioned in a loping stride towards the rising sun, on the northeast rooftop corner of the House of Learning. Constructed completely from bent and rolled Corten Steel stars, the body of the coyote suggests an energy or imagination of both the earth and the sky.

Ann Pollock, Curator & Faculty-OL

Introduction

TRU's Academic Plan — Setting the Stage for Our Future

It gives me great pleasure to provide a brief introduction to our new Academic Plan that articulates the aspirations and vision of our faculty, staff and students as well as our many external stakeholders and the communities we serve. The creation of this plan has been truly a collaborative effort of a large number of individuals on campus and of the countless friends and supporters we have in the City of Kamloops, the First Nations communities and in organizations with whom we partner in educational and research initiatives. This Academic Plan is a shared and joint vision of what constitutes the heart and soul of TRU, namely to provide access for students of all ages and backgrounds to an excellent and inspiring learning experience.

Let me take this opportunity to thank in particular the members of the Academic Planning Steering Committee for their outstanding work. The Committee designed and carried out a consultation process that can serve as model for inclusiveness, and drafted a plan that reflects the ideas presented to them in a comprehensive manner, thus enabling TRU to bring a joint vision to life in the years to come. I cannot speak highly enough of Dr. Katherine Sutherland, the Chair of the Academic Planning Steering Committee and driving force behind the development of this plan, whose leadership, enthusiasm and energy is mirrored in the final version of this plan.

I would like to call on all of us here at TRU to become part of moving our Academic Plan from paper to our classrooms, hallways and offices, from words on a page to innovative pathways to student success and support for all of our learners, from abstract ideas to concrete initiatives and new opportunities for students of all walks of life. Let us work together as a campus community on implementing this Academic Plan for the benefit of our students, faculty and staff. If we are all engaged in achieving the vision articulated on these pages, the future of TRU looks bright indeed.



Uli Scheck, Provost and Vice-President Academic

To learn how this document was developed visit:

www.tru.ca/academic_plan

Destination TRU

Thompson Rivers University boasts a forty-year history of providing innovative and responsive post-secondary education with a range of educational experiences – including skills upgrading, vocational accreditation, and academic undergraduate and graduate degrees – delivering programs on campus, on-line, or through a blending of these modalities. Our university takes particular pride in providing access to all learners while maintaining a high standard of academic excellence. Additionally, our engaged and scholarly faculty prides itself on creating intellectually challenging environments. Academic excellence and social mobility are equally important values at TRU. Graduates of Thompson Rivers University's programs reflect these strengths: whether pursuing graduate studies, training in professional schools, or entering the workplace, TRU alumni have a track record of success. The TRU Academic Plan lays the foundation for maintaining these strengths and guiding TRU's future growth across all areas of the institution.

Over the next five to ten years, TRU will establish itself as a Destination Campus for local, regional, national and international students by providing a standard of educational excellence in the context of: attracting and supporting academically high achieving students; supporting the social mobility of our students; providing access to learning for a wide variety of students, including mature/returning students, first-generation learners, and students at our regional centres; providing flexible and alternative learning models and opportunities; and fostering excellence in undergraduate and graduate education. The Academic Planning Process is critical to achieving these goals.

Approximately 14,000 students study on campus at TRU-Kamloops and TRU-Williams Lake, while another 10,000 students enroll annually in distance and online courses and programs. Another 1,100 take courses through TRU's five regional centres in Ashcroft, Lillooet, 100 Mile House, Clearwater and Barriere. 45% of TRU students on campuses are between the ages of 19 and 24, while the average age of a TRU-Open Learning student is 30. On campus, the male/female student ratio is almost 50/50, while at TRU-OL, two-thirds of the students are female. TRU-OL survey data shows that 73% of OL students work either full or part time, and 29% report having children living at home. Aboriginal students make up 9.2% of the student population on our campuses, with 2,378 Aboriginal students registered. TRU has 1,600 international students, the top ten countries of origin being: China, Saudi Arabia, India, Taiwan, Japan, the Russia Federation, Nigeria, South Korea, Hong Kong and Germany. Also, there are currently more than 1,000 students enrolled in TRU programs delivered at partner institutions in China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

TRU Student Services recognizes the different needs of local, regional, international, intergenerational and intercultural learners. It is critical that student service providers at all TRU sites, on-line and on-site, are consistent in the level of service and quality of support provided to all TRU students. Student services include: recruitment and advising, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid and Awards, the Library, Counseling and Career Education, academic support services, services for students with disabilities, and engagement activities, such as leadership and peer mentoring. TRU Student Services engages in a wide array of activities and actively supports: intercultural understanding, health and wellness, leadership development, student orientation, and career planning support.

Academic Themes



SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SKILLS IN SOCIETY

POWER, POLITICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND LEISURE

ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SKILLS IN SOCIETY

Thompson Rivers University has strengths in undergraduate and graduate research; interdisciplinary studies; and academic, applied, vocational and trades programming, and thus is well equipped to provide students with a critical education on the intersections of science, technology and society. A broad scientific perspective is needed to build knowledge and address complex issues in the 21st century; this depends on interdisciplinary methods and studies in the contexts of both physical and social sciences.

Future development should include:

- › Interdisciplinary pedagogies and programs in science, technology and applied skills in society that span faculties and schools

- › Links between academic, applied and vocational programs in science, technology and applied skills in society and sustainability and the environment, such as programs on watershed issues, sustainable energy and transportation
- › New interdisciplinary and graduate degree options that link to social and community needs for knowledge and practice in the context of science, technology and applied skills in society



POWER, POLITICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

As a university with a regional mandate coupled with a focus on internationalization, TRU is uniquely positioned to examine critically how power, politics and social justice impact communities and individuals in multiple ways and multiple jurisdictions. Development of this theme involves conceptions of citizenship based on mutually beneficial goals and community-based education on a variety of issues, including race, gender, persistent poverty, access to health care and education and other public goods.

Future development should include:

- › Enhanced undergraduate and graduate programming exploring power, politics and social justice in Aboriginal, local and global contexts
- › Interdisciplinary approaches, courses, programs and research exploring power, politics and social justice in Aboriginal, local and global contexts
- › Enhanced local, national and international partnerships, including programs created with external partners in Aboriginal communities, industry, government and NGOs

I would like to see

...experiential courses, hands-on and field courses, courses that emphasize partnerships with the communities so we can work on actual cases, get real feedback, see our ideas put into action. *TRU Student Survey*

HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND LEISURE

Health within the university refers to physical health, emotional stability and clear, creative and transformative thinking; well-being refers to students' adaptation to personal, interpersonal and other challenges at university; and leisure involves engagement in activities beyond the usual demands of an academic life that includes freedom of choice, self-discovery and growth. The health, well-being, leisure and cultural activities of students influence student learning, achievement and retention and enhance students' resilience and confidence to influence their world. In the context of interdisciplinary and interprofessional approaches, programming that explores public health policy and practices, particularly programming reflecting community and population health needs, should be enhanced and developed.

Future development should include:

- › Recognition and promotion of the relationship between learning and health, well-being and leisure
- › Enhanced professional health programming, particularly reflecting community and population health needs
- › Enhanced intramural sport, recreation and wellness activities for Aboriginal students
- › New and enhanced academic programs in the context of health, well-being, leisure, tourism, creative and performing arts and sport culture
- › Enhanced relationship with the City of Kamloops in the Tournament Capital context

I would like to see

...more festivals, pep-rallies or team spirit events for our Wolfpack. *TRU Student Survey*





ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL & CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

University operations and programs should be informed by the values of the four pillars of sustainability—environmental, economic, social and cultural—particularly in interdisciplinary contexts. The term culture is intended to encompass both shared social learning and creative learning, expressed through visual and performing arts, creative writing, new media and other creative media.

Future development should include:

- › Enhanced and interdisciplinary programming in business, sciences, geography, tourism, trades, visual and performing arts, social sciences and economics on the theme of environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability
- › Potential articulation of a credential which recognizes the accumulation of credits in the field of environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability
- › Interdisciplinary approaches, courses, programs and research in environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability

I would like to see

...more courses geared at green and healthy living. *TRU Student Survey*

Academic Foundations



INQUIRY-BASED AND CREATIVE LEARNING

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

ABORIGINAL, LOCAL AND GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPTIONS

LIFE LONG LEARNING

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The identity of Thompson Rivers University will be developed through a coordinated approach to academic and personal student engagement in the social, cultural, creative and intellectual life of the university, through a wide array of program, delivery and service innovations and through structural change where the transformation of academic offerings requires it. Particular priority will be given to those developments that generate interdisciplinary connections between the academic themes.



TRU STUDENTS WILL ENGAGE IN INQUIRY-BASED AND CREATIVE LEARNING

Graduates of Thompson Rivers University will face an increasingly complex and multidimensional world. Regardless of the discipline or fields of study that students have chosen, the creative use of the knowledge and skills they have acquired will distinguish TRU's students in the global workplace and society.

Developing a focus on creative problem solving will require that academic units be committed to building experiential, creative and collaborative learning into curricula at all levels and through all modes of delivery.

Existing inquiry-based and creative learning models should be enhanced, including:

- › Undergraduate research experiences in applied, creative and curiosity-driven projects (UREAP)
- › Increased offerings of service learning and directed studies courses
- › Active learning through participation in competitions, events, performances, shows and demonstrations
- › Faculty development in transformative teaching, group study and inquiry-based learning models
- › Increased Honours and Graduate-level research with disciplinary and interdisciplinary concentrations

I would like to see

...more Aboriginal sports and intramural teams, more Aboriginal cultural events, art, activities. *TRU Student Survey*



Future development should include:

- › Increased faculty engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning
- › First-year seminars integrating introductory academic content and academic skills development
- › Review and/or revision of curriculum offerings to increase the frequency of project and problem-based learning and case studies
- › Team-taught courses that cross traditional disciplinary lines and create classrooms of learners with diverse backgrounds
- › A dynamic Centre for Teaching and Learning that is at the leading edge of developing and assessing the effectiveness of new educational techniques and approaches
- › Clearly defined and measurable learning outcomes for all TRU courses across all delivery modes
- › Ongoing and systematic faculty development to support teaching excellence, particularly in the context of inquiry-based and creative learning
- › The application of principles of universal instructional design not only in formal classroom settings but also in co-curricular programming
- › Coordinated and systematic development of academic engagement strategies across all programs

I would like to see

...small, closely-knit, foundation year programmes—an introductory year that is designed to prepare students for the academic and lifestyle demands of university. *TRU Student Survey*





TRU STUDENTS WILL ENGAGE IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

A theme that emerged repeatedly throughout the academic planning consultation process was the need for well-articulated, university-wide interdisciplinary studies approaches and programs. As Joe Moran writes, interdisciplinarity is not “the simple juxtaposition of two or more disciplines”; rather, “interdisciplinarity is always transformative in some way.” A re-conceptualized institutional structure that enables the offering of interdisciplinary studies should be developed to support all TRU faculties and all TRU campuses in the incubation of innovative learning and teaching strategies, including: multiple and flexible delivery modes; non-traditional courses and programs; academic student and faculty engagement; and interdisciplinary methods and curriculum. Interdisciplinary Studies options should be re-conceptualized as university-wide, and thus mechanisms must be developed to accommodate interdisciplinary methods and programming across and between all university faculties and disciplines.

I would like to see

...a Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies to make possible a number of multi- and interdisciplinary learning opportunities. The Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies would work to develop competencies in areas such as sustainability, global studies, and gender studies. We strongly believe these developments would provide TRU a flexible tool for providing unique learning opportunities.

TRU Student Union Survey Submission

Existing Interdisciplinary Studies learning models should be enhanced, including:

- › The development of Associate and Baccalaureate Degrees in Interdisciplinary Studies to be offered jointly between Williams Lake, the Regional Centres and the Kamloops campus, particularly in the contexts of the 4 core Academic Themes identified in the Academic Plan
- › Further development of interdisciplinary offerings with domestic and international partners, particularly in the contexts of Aboriginal, local and global student awareness and the 4 core Academic Themes identified in the Academic Plan

Future development should include:

- › The articulation of an university-wide Interdisciplinary Studies approach and increased flexibility for students to combine credentials and programs
- › The articulation of an institutional structure that enables interdisciplinary programming across all programs and between credential levels, including the development of mechanisms that enable faculties to overcome institutional barriers to interdisciplinary programming
- › The development of a university-wide Interdisciplinary Studies Masters degree
- › Fully articulated Interdisciplinary programs for each of the 4 core Academic Themes identified in the Academic Plan
- › The development of fully articulated Interdisciplinary programs that blend trades, vocational, creative and academic learning
- › Experiential tours of different program areas for first-year students

I would like to see

...more 3rd and 4th year offerings in Williams Lake and the Regional Centres. *TRU Student Survey*





TRU STUDENTS WILL ENGAGE IN ABORIGINAL, LOCAL AND GLOBAL CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

TRU recognizes and values the diversity of interests and plurality of cultures among its students and staff. Consequently, it seeks to create a safe, participatory environment in which the keystones are mutual trust, respect and integrity of relationships among those various interests and cultures. Educational and delivery models should incorporate intercultural experiences for all TRU students. The development of these learning modes is reflexive, inspiring students and faculty to integrate reflections on Aboriginal cultures and histories into their work, as well as local, national and international frames of reference. Focusing on culturally aware education, practice and scholarship enables the development of a just and inclusive university community.

Every TRU program should encourage the physical and virtual mobility of students and faculty and develop local, national and international partnerships, including options such as double degrees with international partners, direct link transfer of specified academic credits while abroad, and inter-national opportunities in the context of First Nations boundaries.

I would like to see

...much more Aboriginal content across all academic curriculum—to inform and educate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike. *TRU Student Survey*

Existing Aboriginal, local and global learning contexts should be enhanced, including:

- › Increased integration of cultural awareness within curriculum and teaching
- › Increased opportunities for intercultural or international experiences for all students
- › Increased opportunities to study abroad, including field schools, student and faculty exchange programs, service learning project work and research
- › Increased Aboriginal student participation in study abroad through cohort models, in the contexts of Aboriginal field schools, student and faculty exchange programs, service learning project work and research, particularly in the context of international Aboriginal partnerships
- › Increased international student exposure to Aboriginal, local and regional cultural life and activities

Future development should include:

- › Programs and curriculum, including interdisciplinary studies, that make visible the history, traditions and experience of underrepresented groups
- › Additional domestic and international degree options, such as dual-, joint-, and Masters degrees, with partner institutions
- › International virtual or distance projects and collaborations at the research, operational and assessment stages, including distance study with other Open and Distance universities and other institutions offering multi-modal learning
- › Engagement of regional students with the Kamloops campus, including student functions and conferences held in Kamloops, Williams Lake and the Regional Centres
- › Language offerings as required to support new program initiatives emerging from the Academic Plan





TRU STUDENTS WILL ENGAGE IN FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPTIONS

Given its mandate, TRU's educational delivery system, including instructional delivery methods and vehicles across time and space, must support and advance the vision of a Destination University. This destination may be distance or online, through TRU-OL, as well as a physical place to study. At the same time, place-based or regional studies complement a global perspective. An institution's educational delivery system must align with the institution's strategic plan, mission, educational philosophies, values, resource base and research unit (Rowley & Sherman, 2004). TRU values equally community and global awareness; flexible learning options; and academic excellence.

Given TRU's unique mix of expertise and organizational units, including highly developed distance delivery models, new technologies and education principles can guide TRU to embrace new instructional delivery systems and create innovative learning environments for students. Flexible learning options should be re-conceptualized as university-wide, and thus mechanisms must be developed to accommodate these options across and between all university faculties and disciplines in programs delivered on campus and through Open Learning.

Existing flexible learning options should be enhanced, including:

- › Double degrees with international partners across all faculties
- › Flexible instructional environments, including blended/hybrid delivery models, supported distance learning, service learning and field trips
- › Increased supervised/guided work-based experience, such as co-op terms, internships and practica
- › The enhancement of experiential learning models, such as field studies, practica, co-ops and internships

I would like to see

...better linkage between distance courses and on campus courses. *TRU Student Survey*

Future development should include:

- › Flexible semester models, allowing year-round education utilizing a variety of semester models operating concurrently. These models could include:
 - › The existing model of 2 semesters with compressed summer terms
 - › 3 regular semesters (trimesters), each including a reading break.
 - › The compression of regular semesters to enable a one-month ‘mini-mester’ break between semesters, potentially allowing more opportunities for study abroad; career development; service learning; and compressed delivery models, including lengthening the instructional day, adding weekend courses, and block delivery models
 - › The implementation of three year undergraduate degrees, including degrees based on the principles of the Bologna Accord, facilitating the portability of education
 - › Three years + one year honours undergraduate degrees
 - › Team taught, interdisciplinary or mini-sampler courses
 - › Thematic seminar courses
 - › The development of blended learning models across all programs and faculties

I would like to see

...a commitment to career success in all academic processes. This commitment entails the delivery of academic and professional skill development as integral to core curricula. This will require pan-institutional standards, integrated delivery, cultivation of community relationships and dedicated expertise and resources.

TRU Student Union Submission





TRU STUDENTS WILL ENGAGE IN LIFE-LONG LEARNING

TRU students include mature, working and retired learners and other part-time learners, high school and younger students who attend summer camps, and children who attend TRU daycare. Many of these students may access multiple educational resources, including freely available web-based materials, and thus TRU will support the use of open educational resources and remain at the forefront in the use and acceptance of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. Additionally, TRU will support life-long learning by offering a wide array of credentialed and non-credentialed face-to-face, distance and blended learning options for all ages and varying interest levels.

Additionally, the models and operations of new continuing education offerings, summer camps, life-long learning and regional centre offerings should be re-conceptualized and potentially combined; an institutional structure that enables the development of life-long learning programming should be developed to support all TRU faculties and all TRU campuses in the incubation of innovative life-long learning and teaching strategies.

I would like to see

...more academic programming while still maintaining strong trades programs, holding these two parts of the university in equal priority, with more links between trades, vocational and academic programming. *TRU Student Survey*

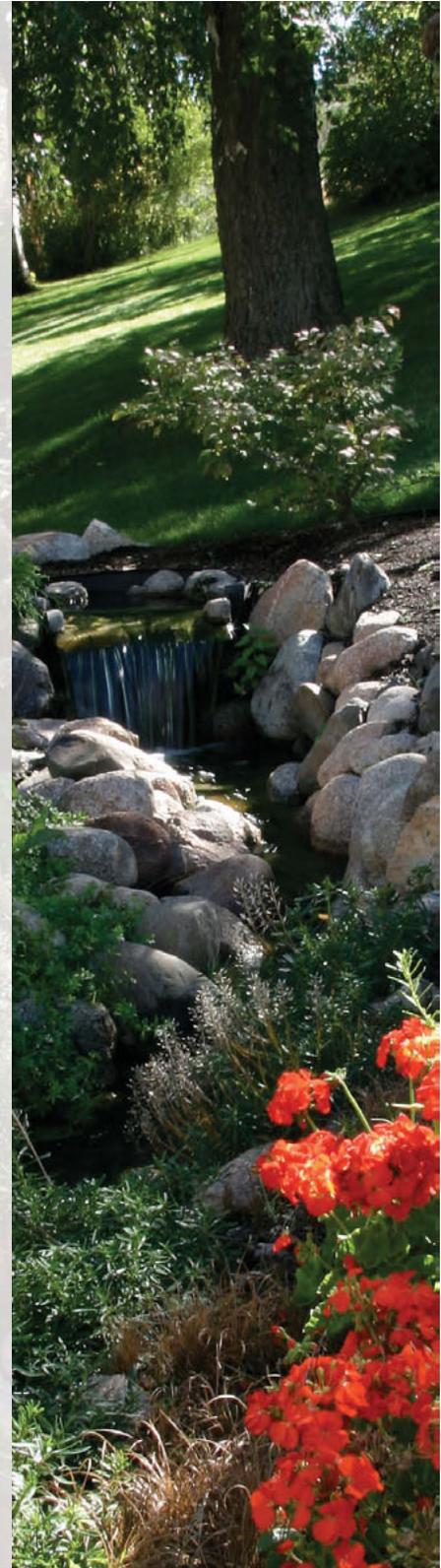
Existing life-long learning programs, while remaining in current units, should be enhanced, including:

- › Sustainable regional offerings
- › Enhanced seminar series, public lectures and colloquia across the university that engage campus, local and distance communities, including enhancement of the existing Cultural Events series
- › Further development of community and university educational and cultural conferences, potentially including a province- or nation-wide undergraduate research conference
- › Continued development of the use/acceptance of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
- › Enhanced commitment to Service Learning within programs
- › Enhanced library accessibility for lifelong and non-traditional learners

Future development should include:

- › The articulation of a university-wide, life-long learning plan embedded in a university-wide, life-long learning model
- › The development of flexible delivery and blended delivery models for continuing education courses and programs
- › New summer institute programs and summer camp programs for each of the 4 core Academic Themes identified in the Academic Plan
- › New summer camps for older teens in all schools and faculties
- › Programs for students who are in their indecisive gap year, between high school and university, including student exchange and Study Abroad programs
- › New non-credit professional development offerings for working, retired and underemployed students
- › Increased course offerings in evening and weekend time slots

...I enjoyed that the campus is so beautifully manicured! I felt proud to show my family and friends the campus. *TRU Student Survey*





THOMPSON RIVERS  UNIVERSITY

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