

Provincial Funding Review



Responses to 10 Questions About PSE Funding
June 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) was created in 2005 by merging the University College of the Cariboo and B.C. Open Learning. Empowered by the Thompson Rivers University Act, it directs us to “serve the educational and training needs of in the region specified ..., and (serve) the open learning needs of B.C.”

Since inception, TRU has worked purposefully to develop operational excellence that serve our core purposes. We have always been proud to serve B.C. and its residents in these ways. At the same time, however, TRU has expanded, advanced and risen in prominence in other areas, especially research.

TRU understands the critical role B.C.’s PSIs play in strengthening our province’s social fabric, especially regarding the need to provide skills training that serves the economic conditions and agenda of both individual citizens seeking improvement through education and the elected governments that support this crucial function.

B.C.’s recent Stronger BC plan sets out an ambitious agenda to rebuild our economy after two years of the pandemic. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for “inclusive growth” and “clean growth.” TRU is uniquely positioned to serve these goals, and we look forward to the opportunity to help the government achieve its vision on behalf of British Columbians. We are partners strongly aligned with the vision and mission identified in the Stronger BC plan.

This introduction serves as the backdrop for the information and recommendations provided through this document, which is a response to 10 questions posed to PSIs by Don Wright, chair of the province’s PSE Funding Model Review Committee. Through our responses, we have strived to demonstrate the unique value TRU brings to B.C.’s post-secondary landscape and how stable, equitable, and predictable funding will allow us to better serve our province’s needs and the government’s desire to improve the lives of residents.

TRU campuses are on the traditional lands of the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops) and the T’exełc (Williams Lake) within Secwépemc’ulucw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc. The region TRU serves also extends into the territories of the St’át’imc, Nlaka’pamux, Nuxalk, Tsilhqot’in, Dakelh, and Syilx peoples. Our geographic reach and intimate connection with the B.C. interior and its lands make TRU perfectly positioned to contribute to B.C.’s economic, social, and environmental health.

TRU’s broad scope of programming, from traditional academics to trades and from certificates to graduate degrees, supports TRU’s mandate to serve the education and skills training needs of our local communities and the province. We offer more than 200 programs and provide affordable, high-quality post-secondary opportunities for students across the spectrum. This range and variety of programming are unique within the B.C. post-secondary environment. For example, TRU is the only university with a research and scholarship mandate and a School of Trades and Technology.

TRU offers outstanding student opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Our students apply what they learn in cooperative education, study abroad, undergraduate, and graduate research experiences, field schools, practicums, service learning, and other experiential learning opportunities. We have a diverse student demographic. More than 10 percent of our students are Indigenous, 34 percent join TRU from more than 100 countries around the globe, and 32 percent are mature learners (over 25 years of age).

Key points made throughout this submission include:

- The world is changing. The following 30 years will see rapid economic, demographic, social, and technological change, and historic funding models for B.C.'s PSIs may no longer provide the funding required to meet educational and societal objectives expected by residents, governments, and other stakeholders.
- PSIs today need predictable and adequate findings combined with a clear and understandable rationale for block funding. Historical inequities exist within the system, particularly concerning research and graduate training, and these must be addressed to create an equitable and rational approach for the future. Future systems must account for institutional mandates and provide adequate funding for institutions to meet and advance these mandates.
- Recognizing collaboration across the PSE universe with financial and structural support for shared resources and creative solutions could lead to high-impact teaching, scholarship, and service innovations. To meet the needs of our changing world, the post-secondary system must provide timely, relevant, and innovative solutions. To continue to play this vital role, research and graduate training must be prioritized and supported in a manner that allows for cutting-edge research and development.
- Additional targeted funds must be provided for programs that meet the government's high-priority interests. For example, targeted funding related to Indigenization, mental health, and the climate crisis would assist institutions in moving these priorities forward. Similarly, we recommend increasing targeted funding for existing high-priority areas such as health care and related vocational training.

It's been 25 years since funding models for PSIs have been examined or adjusted. This review is timely and necessary as PSIs confront new realities and expectations imposed by diverse and forceful changes to social and political paradigms. TRU looks forward to the results of this review, hoping that future funding adaptations will allow our institution to continue a progressive trajectory designed to meet the changing needs of our ever more complex world.



QUESTION ONE — What are the most important contributions your institution makes to the economic, social, and environmental health of British Columbia (BC)?

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF BC

— TRU’s biggest impact on the economic health of BC is through the skills and knowledge of our graduates. A 2019 impact study by an independent economic consulting firm revealed that TRU contributes an estimated \$705.3 million annually to the regional economy and \$1.5 billion to the provincial economy. Moreover, for every dollar invested in TRU, taxpayers receive over \$3 in added tax revenue and public sector savings over the course of the students’ working lives.

The StrongerBC Economic Plan identifies several “future-ready” priorities for “helping today’s workers upgrade their skills and train for new jobs” (p. 20). TRU has a long history of providing professional and trades programming that prepares graduates to enter high- quality careers in line with those identified in the plan as major industries projected over the next decade.

As the only member of the Research Universities Council of BC (RUCBC) with a School of Trades and Technology, TRU is uniquely positioned to offer student-focused, results-oriented programs that respond to changing social, economic, and technological circumstances through innovative practices, interdisciplinary approaches, and applied research.

TRU is also well positioned to offer skills training for students leading to immediate and meaningful employment. For example, the number one industry identified in the plan (as referenced in the 2021 BC Labour Market Outlook Report), is Health Care and Social Assistance, with a projected 142,900 job openings over the next decade. We offer several programs that prepare graduates within this industry, for example, health science, nursing, and social work.

TRU’s diverse programs and unique approaches to delivery helps to address the talent shortage in BC. For example, TRU provides students with the opportunity to complete a Bachelor of Business Administration with eight different options for majors in the areas of



accounting, economics, entrepreneurship, finance, human resource management, international business, marketing, and supply chain management.

TRU also seeks partnerships that create real-world opportunities for students. As an example, funding from the Canada-BC Workforce Development Agreement allows TRU to offer trades training to Indigenous students closer to their homes and with needed supports in partnership with Indigenous Youth Development Canada, Industry Training Authority of BC, and FortisBC.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIAL HEALTH OF

BC — TRU values community-mindedness and is committed to honour and grow our local connections and relationships. For example, in February 2021, TRU and the City of Kamloops created a \$495,000 three-year researcher-in-residence pilot program that will see TRU faculty and students provide expertise on city initiatives, including changes to city policies, bylaws, and processes, as well as new services, programs, and partnerships. Focal points of the research have included unhoused populations and impacts of opioids.

Specific partnerships like these reflect broader institutional commitments. Through our Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), TRU is ensuring that every graduate has competency in intercultural understanding and Indigenous knowledge. Our graduates are important contributors to B.C.'s social health.

In specific fields such as Social Work, Education, Nursing, and more, our faculty teach and mentor students to champion their own rights and those of previously marginalised communities.

TRU has established strong linkages within the local community and beyond to address human rights and social justice issues. TRU is committed to providing opportunities for students to work with non-profit organizations, government, industry, health authorities, and the larger community to wrestle with the most pressing issues of our time and to prepare graduates to address future challenges.

TRU's recently approved Master of Arts, Human Rights and Social Justice program demonstrates this commitment.

As the only institution in the BC interior with a Faculty of Law, TRU operates the Community Legal Clinic (CLC) which provides free legal assistance and advice to those who would otherwise be unable to afford legal assistance.

The expansion of our Bachelor of Education program also contributes to social health. TRU received \$340,000 as part of a broader initiative announced by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills, and Training (AEST) in June 2019, which invested \$2.7 million in Indigenous teacher education training across BC. With this funding, an Elder and a mentor supported a cohort of TRU Indigenous students as they progressed through the program with the guidance of a St'át'imc Nation cohort coordinator and instructor.

The pandemic's impact on the health of British Columbians highlighted the value and contribution of TRU Respiratory Therapy graduates. TRU is a national leader in respiratory therapy education and the only university in BC to offer a diploma in Respiratory Therapy. The program prepares graduates for a high demand career in health care, specializing in cardiopulmonary care — one the most important health care professions throughout the pandemic.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OF BC

— TRU has the theoretical and experiential expertise to contribute to BC's environmental goals. We lead by example and are recognized as a world leader in sustainability (one of our core values) and have been named Canada's first platinum-ranked sustainable university by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). We are on the cusp of achieving carbon neutrality with our planned District Energy System.

TRU's scope of programming, geographic reach, and economic, social, and environmental impact is deep and wide-ranging. Our most important contributions include environmental research, professional training, and service to local community, which are the result of collaborations and partnerships with the private and public sector, as well as community members.

TRU hosts the Alliance for Mountain Environments Research Group, an interdisciplinary national team of



researchers investigating issues unique to mountain communities and culture, such as sustainability of mountain ecosystems, economic development, development of economic opportunities, tourism and leisure in mountain areas, and other governance, social justice, and legal issues.

TRU is a hub for environmental research. For example, the Wells Gray Education and Research Centre within Wells Gray Provincial Park — known for its globally unique biodiversity — provides a wheelchair accessible centre with considerable teaching and research potential.

Over the past 25 years, researchers from across Canada have visited the site to study these rich habitats. Another example: TRU hosts an NSERC Industrial Research Chair who brings together mining companies, First Nations, and others to reclaim and restore land harmed by mining.

TRU has programs that offer depth of training in environmental practice and theory (such as Natural Resource Science and Environmental Economics), but also students across all programs can earn an Sustainability competency designation by learning and volunteering in environmental work.

The StrongerBC Economic Plan (2022) identified the need for a thriving tourism industry that promotes Indigenous tourism, and ethical practices by building

resilient communities. TRU is home to the Critical Tourism Studies Network , a team of international scholars investigating the impact of tourism on the developing world, including rural and remote communities in BC. In addition, TRU hosts a Canada Research Chair in Rural Livelihoods and Sustainable Communities and NSERC Industrial Research Chair in Ecosystem Reclamation.

TRU also offers several graduate degrees that promote environmental education, including the Master of Science in Environmental Economics Management, Master of Environmental Economics Management, and Master of Science in Environmental Science.

In line with the Clean BC Roadmap , TRU aims to increase public climate education. TRU works directly with community members and industry partners to customize programming to address local environmental issues.

For example, TRU's Adventure Studies program provided an opportunity for students to collaborate with the Simpcw First Nation to create mountain bike trails .

Additionally, the project involves the BC Aboriginal Youth Mountain Biking Project group to establish the community as a world-class destination for riding and outdoor recreation.

QUESTION TWO — What is your institution doing to promote Reconciliation with Indigenous People and First Nations?

TRU's core vision as a university publicly embeds our commitment to honour truth, reconciliation, and the rights of Indigenous peoples. TRU serves a high percentage of Indigenous learners — approximately seven per cent of students self-declare as Indigenous at the Kamloops campus, 20 per cent in Williams Lake, and five per cent through Open Learning across an extensive geographic region.

TRU is developing a strong infrastructure and capacity to promote truth, reconciliation, and rights of Indigenous peoples. Several initiatives, such as Cplul'kw'ten Centre, Coyote Project, Knowledge Makers Program, All My Relations Research Centre, Indigenous Mentors, Elder in the House, and draft Secwépemc Nation Research Ethics Guidelines contribute to confronting and dismantling barriers that Indigenous students face in pursuing higher education.

The Coyote Project (named after a Secwépemc story about the role of Coyote as a powerful transformer) is focused on addressing recruitment, retention, and completion issues for Indigenous students. TRU also employs ten Elders including members of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Métis Nation, Hustalen and Cheslatta Carrier Nation, as well as a Special Advisor to the President on Indigenous Matters, an Executive Director of Indigenous Education, a Secwépemc Cultural Advisor, Indigenous counsellors, Indigenous education coordinators, Indigenous faculty and an Educational Developer in Indigenous Teaching and Learning.

STUDENT SUPPORTS FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

— Faculties and schools offer many support services that assist Indigenous learners, including:

- assistance with students' transition to TRU (e.g., summer science camps, orientation events),
- pursuing educational opportunities through the Early Alert program,
- health and well-being services, recreational offerings, peer mentorship programs,



- academic advising,
- counselling, and
- supporting learners' preparation to enter the labour market through career services and experiential learning opportunities.

Cplul'kw'ten is a culturally safe, friendly, and inviting centre for Indigenous learners on the Kamloops campus that includes a weekly soup circle, wellness circle, recovery group, an Elder-in-the-House program, healthy snack program, assistance applying for bursaries, scholarships, and funding applications, academic supports such as tutoring, and library outreach, to name a few.

TRU recently created a \$1-million endowment to support Indigenous student awards, with the first awards being available in summer 2022. This endowment is part of the agreement between the university and Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc to provide funding for Indigenous students in the Kamloops and Williams Lake regions and beyond.

TRU will continue to develop and implement services that are designed to enhance Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc students' postsecondary experience philosophically, politically, linguistically, socially, and academically — with exceptional consideration for Secwépemc worldview and belief system. One way in which TRU meets this commitment is by working with Indigenous scholars to develop a competency framework which allows students to submit their prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) competency portfolio orally.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PEDAGOGIES EMBEDDED INTO CURRICULUM — In 2019, to support student success, TRU identified eight institutional learning outcomes that all baccalaureate degree students will achieve as part of completion of their degree, including outcomes related to Intercultural Awareness and Indigenous Knowledges and Ways. These learning outcomes ensure students will graduate with a well-rounded base of knowledge in a variety of areas in addition to the specialized knowledge they acquire in their degree.

Students will learn from people from diverse cultural backgrounds how to recognize and understand policies that currently and historically incite

discrimination. The adoption of these outcomes ensure that all baccalaureate degree students will complete a three-credit academic course in Indigenous knowledges and ways prior to graduating.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND METHODS EMBEDDED INTO RESEARCH — TRU's commitment to honouring truth, reconciliation, and rights is strengthened by a partnership agreement between TRU and Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. We recognize the importance of supporting a thriving Secwépemc culture through a broad scope of programming and respectful actions in teaching and learning, service, research, and scholarship. TRU is uniquely qualified to promote reconciliation due, in part, to hosting four Indigenous Research Chairs, including:

- CRC in Indigenous Higher Education,
- CRC in Rural Livelihoods and Sustainable Communities,
- CIHR Indigenous Research Chair in Nursing, and
- BC Regional Innovation Chair in Aboriginal Health.

TRU recently signed a partnership agreement with Fulbright Canada to establish a visiting research chair, which will bring leading US Indigenous scholars, scientists, and leaders to TRU to build research partnerships with Canadian PSIs.

In addition, the All My Relations Research Centre advances Indigenous community wellness by bringing together regional, national, and international Indigenous researchers. The Centre is also home to the Ombaashi Network, which provides opportunities for Indigenous students to access international Indigenous mentors.

Knowledge Makers, an Indigenous student research network that brings Indigenous students together to engage in research that is of service to our communities, is also organized through the centre. In 2019, Knowledge Makers was awarded Canada's only award for excellence in collaborative teaching in post-secondary education (Alan Blizzard Award).

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION — TRU offers free Secwépemc language classes to faculty and staff to help them learn introductions, greetings, pronunciation, and cultural protocols.

Additionally, TRU updated signage on campus to include Secwépemctsin. Stop signs labelled estil, (Secwépemctsin for 'stop') is a public indicator that TRU understands and acknowledges we live and operate in the heart of Secwépemc territory.

Further, to strengthen and honour relationships with Indigenous communities served by TRU, our vision statement was translated into Secwépemctsin by a group of Secwépemc Elders. TRU also hosts a team of researchers (working in partnership with Secwépemc Elders funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) to preserve Secwépemctsin .

QUESTION THREE — What is your institution doing to promote equitable access for people who come from disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances?

TRU offers a unique model of many pathways “in” for students of all backgrounds and levels of preparation, including those without secondary completion. TRU will credit students’ past studies and life experiences, and facilitate students to transfer or return to convert non-credit learning into certificates, certificates into diplomas, diplomas into degrees.

Many entry options feature in-person learning with wrap-around supports, while experienced learners have additional options to use online learning, practica, and clinical experience to enhance their credentials. In this way students with no family background in postsecondary education can find a meaningful first foothold in higher education and proceed as far from there as they wish over their lifetimes.

TRU has made a public commitment to eliminate achievement gaps and support students of all backgrounds to access and succeed in higher education. TRU’s open access admissions philosophy and long history of open educational practices contributes to the infrastructure, expertise, and educational passion needed to support the closing of societal equity gaps. Our experience as an open access institution serving diverse student demographics can help the BC PSE system solve this larger societal problem.

TRU improves access to post-secondary education across the province through distance education and other open learning methods, and by providing an open learning educational credit bank for BC students. The Credit Bank allows students to receive credit for pre-assessed training from selected employers, private training organizations, and continuing studies programs.

Additionally, TRU boasts an open textbook pathway to a certificate of general studies — a zero-textbook-cost, zero-tuition-fee program available to anyone with access to the internet. TRU faculty have also contributed several open education resources (OER) and faculty and staff have received the BCcampus Award for Excellence in Open Education. TRU’s commitment to open education through open access publishing, open pedagogy, open research, and OER development increases access to affordable post-secondary education in BC.

TRU has demonstrated capacity to develop and deliver programming in rural and remote communities. For example, students in TRU’s Bachelor of Science Nursing program have a unique opportunity to learn principles of Indigenous nursing practice through Indigenous pedagogies while completing their third-year practicum course living and practicing in a rural northern community.

TRU is mandated to provide adult basic education and training, and is uniquely qualified to support the academic readiness of diverse learners through its English language learning and university preparation programs.

The University Preparation program provides opportunities for students to develop knowledge and skills by offering pre-university-level courses across a range of disciplines such as mathematics, English, and sciences. Programing is offered in regional and Indigenous communities making upgrading for university entrance and the British Columbia Adult Graduate Diploma more accessible.

TRU’s Education and Skills Training (ESTr) programs (career exploration, kitchen, retail) provide opportunities for students with exceptionalities to participate in post-secondary education. With a focus on ability, the program has evolved to include ESTr’s Market — an experiential, multi-disciplinary social



enterprise integrated into our Kitchen and Retail certificates. In 2022, TRU was awarded \$200,000 from AEST to develop a Pre-Practical Nursing program — a developmental program intended to enhance students' experience, skills, and comfort with post-secondary systems, while also increasing their academic preparedness.

Upon successful completion of the program, students are eligible to enroll in TRU's PN program without re-applying. TRU has demonstrated capacity to develop and deliver the proposed pre-PN program given our longstanding history of delivering nursing programs at TRU. In particular, the pre-PN program is designed as academic preparation for one of our core programs at the Williams Lake campus.

TRU's Mind the Gap program is a partnership between the university and School District #73 (SD73) that promotes idea sharing between faculty and teachers, while supporting students transitioning from high school into post-secondary. Established in June 2015, the K-16 Research and Development Network brings together teachers from TRU and SD73 to provide

engaging opportunities for K-12 students to extend their learning beyond school and for post-secondary students and instructors to work with school-age students in research and pedagogical initiatives. Examples of projects include:

- Peterson Creek Ecological Monitoring Project,
- TRU Ethics Bowl,
- Girls Exploring Trades and Technology,
- Field Chemistry, and
- Food Sustainability.

A recently established initiative focused on student research and public engagement creates enhanced community-engaged research opportunities and experiences for students in all disciplines and fields of study.

Working through The XChange Lab, which is supported through a partnership with TRU, The United Way and the City of Kamloops, the initiative prepares

and supports equitable access to applied research opportunities locally and regionally.

Through strong and well-established collaborations and partnerships across the regional and provincial PSE ecosystem, TRU has demonstrated the capacity to respond to changing learners' needs by providing access to affordable, high-quality post-secondary education, anytime and anywhere.

QUESTION FOUR — What are your major challenges in enhancing the contribution your institution makes to the economic, social, and environmental health of British Columbia?

HISTORY AND DOMINANCE OF WESTERN

PERSPECTIVE — Honouring truth, reconciliation and rights is one of TRU's four strategic change goals and is a significant cultural commitment of the university. However, despite our strong dedication to advancing Indigenous ways of knowing and being, the historical legacy of Western dominance is observable across society.

Institutional, research, funding and governmental systems exist within this historical context. For example, current reporting requirements necessitate institutions to report disaggregated institutional data without requiring institutions to consider potential systemic impacts of such reporting. Similarly, when applying for provincial or national research grant funding, faculty members are required to complete Western application processes that provide little opportunity to complete such processes through non-Western means (e.g., oral presentation).

MEETING THE NEEDS OF 21ST-CENTURY LEARNERS

— Never has there been a greater demand for nimble and agile educational opportunities that meet the needs of learners. Prior to the pandemic, our 21st-century learners were approaching post-secondary education from a perspective different than previous learners.

Pre-pandemic learners were seeking education that was accessible, interesting, technologically advanced, and responsive. As we emerge from the pandemic, the demand for flexible, customized education has



significantly increased — students and faculty expect education to be available in multiple formats, responsive to changing needs, and to meet the requirements for further training and/or job readiness.

Despite our significant interest in meeting the immediate and long-term needs of our learners, there are challenges that often hinder our ability to be responsive to changing learners' needs. As public institutions, we are responsible to the public regarding quality assurance and financial stewardship. While these are essential aspects of ensuring that BC post-secondary education is among the top rated in the world, quality assurance mechanisms can sometimes prevent timely responses to immediate educational needs of British Columbians.

For example, new program development in BC can often take more than a year to meet various internal and external requirements. Also, public institutions face increasing responsibilities for legal, legislative, and reporting requirements related to our students and programming.

A significant aspect of meeting the needs of current learners includes the requirement for advanced technology and pedagogy. As institutions of higher learning, we embrace the advancement of technology in the educational space, yet the speed of change and related costs of maintaining and updating technological infrastructure and associated skill requirements creates significant human and financial resource needs for our institutions.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS — Funding for BC's PSIs is based upon historical factors that have led to significant imbalances across the sector. In the case of TRU, the current block funding allocation was created based upon an institution that looked very different in structure, function, and mandate.

Specifically, since the original funding allocations were determined, the Thompson Rivers University Act created an institution with significantly expanded expectations, including increased programming, graduate training, research, and scholarship. In addition, the block funding allocation does not take into consideration the creation of the TRU Faculty of Law.

TRU has continued to demonstrate strong financial

stewardship, despite a need to rebalance the resource portfolio to meet the expanded mandate and demand. Our planning is hampered by lack of clarity around how to have conversations with government about possibilities of increased base funding, as well as by short-term one-time funding allocations (for example for Trades, Practical Nursing, Indigenous education – paradoxically mission-critical priorities that end up being supported by uncertain year by year funding). Such impacts are further complicated by increasing demands on the entire system with resulting intensification of competition for limited resources at the provincial, national, and international levels. As well, funding freezes (or near freezes) have contributed to the challenges of budgeting for PSIs.

EXTERNAL FACTORS — Recent natural events have created many significant and unexpected challenges for PSIs, including TRU. In the past two years, the catastrophic impacts of pandemic, floods, and wildfires have been far-reaching. Emerging wisdom suggests that we should anticipate these events as part of our "new normal," especially related to climate events. Institutions will need to plan for ongoing lack of predictability, increased related costs, and increased need for student, staff, and faculty supports as people are faced with distressing and traumatic life situations.

Inflation and the cost of living is primary in the minds of British Columbians. BC PSIs are facing increased pressure on existing resources for costs related to operations and employee compensation. Similarly, the costs of research, student supports, and new initiatives have risen exponentially, with no immediate increase in revenue. Given that government block funding covers specific costs, there is increasing pressure on institutions to meet the significant demands of current inflationary pressures using alternate methods.

The housing crisis in BC is also creating an immediate and longer-term challenge for TRU. It is well-accepted that the availability and cost of housing in BC is creating tensions for individuals and businesses, including our students, staff, and faculty, as well as inhibiting institutional growth. Specifically, recruitment and intake of students has been limited by our ability to find safe and predictable student housing in the BC Interior.



Further, the cost of housing has made recruitment of staff and faculty more challenging, as potential new employees seek opportunities in areas with affordable housing alternatives. Finally, as an institution, the ability to grow and develop new programming can be impacted by the cost of any potential increased need for expansion of campus facilities.

QUESTION FIVE — What are the most significant contributions your institution makes in collaboration with other parts of BC's PSE system?

TRU has long worked collaboratively with other parts of the BC PSE system to provide accessible and affordable education and consistently demonstrated a commitment to community relationships and partnership-building, including through membership in groups such as the Interior Universities Research Coalition (IURC).

Established in 2017, the IURC — a partnership between the University of Northern British Columbia, the University of British Columbia-Okanagan, and TRU — brings together talent and infrastructure to accelerate

research and innovation in the BC interior. IURC provides funding opportunities for research related to seven overarching themes — environment and natural resources, community and cultural engagement,

Indigenous culture and communities, Northern rural health and wellness, education and diversity, technology and optimization, and manufacturing.

Over the past five years, IURC has become a well-developed hub of collaboration and innovation that is nimble to the changing needs of British Columbians.

For example, a team of researchers recently received a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) grant totaling \$683,000 for reclaiming and recovering Indigenous knowledge in graduate nursing education. New IURC-city partnerships put the research power of IURC universities at the service of their host cities and aims to develop think-tank centres to encourage understanding of municipal challenges.

Other significant contributions that TRU makes in collaboration with other parts of the BC PSE system relate to open education, emergency management and wildfire research, and international education and research.

TRU's open education practices (open access publishing, open pedagogy, open research, open education resource development) is one of the most significant contributions we make to the BC PSE system. In collaboration with the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT), BC Prior Learning Action Network (BC PLAN), and BCcampus, TRU leads the way in creating access to affordable, high-quality post-secondary education.

TRU provides an open learning educational credit bank for BC students. The Credit Bank, which includes an extensive list of partner institutions, allows students to receive credit for pre-assessed training from selected employers, private training organizations, and continuing education programs.

TRU is a leading institution in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) providing ample opportunities for students to receive credit for non-traditional forms of learning. TRU's PLAR team continues to strategically and intentionally create opportunities to enhance the collaboration and learning in this emerging field.

Currently, we are working with international scholars to coordinate and host a virtual prior learning research conference in 2023. This includes working with BC PLAN, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) and post-secondary institutes in Ireland, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, and Australia.

TRU offers several bachelor's degrees that recognize prior learning. For example, students with a Red Seal trade designation can receive 60 credits towards the Bachelor of Technology, Trades and Technology Leadership degree, which can be completed online. The program is flexible, self-paced, and ideal for mature working professionals with family obligations.

Similarly, students with a Respiratory Therapy Diploma or other related health science credential can receive credit towards a Bachelor of Health Science degree. Many students have used their TRU degree to catapult them towards graduate studies, including medical school.

TRU is the first university in North America to assess and provide academic credit for an international credential based on free online open education learning. TRU is a member of the Open Education



Resource universitas (OERu) , which is a non- profit network of post-secondary institutions from five continents united in making education affordable and accessible through open educational resources. The OERu is a consortium arrangement of universities that share open-sourced courses that students can take for free and for credit from the participating universities.

In addition, TRU faculty, staff, and students have contributed an abundance of open educational resources (OER) and open textbooks to the BCcampus repository which contributes to affordable post-secondary education as well as dissemination of knowledge and scholarly practice.

TRU is emerging as a centre of excellence in emergency management and wildfire research. In 2020, in collaboration with IURC, TRU received a \$5-million endowment from the provincial government to create a new wildfire research chair position in predictive services, emergency management, and fire science at TRU. In addition, TRU was awarded a Canada Research Chair in Fire Ecology to investigate how wildfires and droughts impact forests in the BC interior.

TRU takes a student-centred approach to international education and engages in international partnerships through collaborative research endeavours. We educate students from more than 100 countries, and approximately 34 per cent of TRU learners are international. TRU has a robust infrastructure to support international learners, and works closely in collaboration with universities and colleges, RUCBC, and the BC Council for International Education (BCCIE) on international education. TRU's interculturalization efforts were recognized by BCCIE in 2019 .

The 2019 Learning at Intercultural Intersections: Toward Equity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation conference hosted by TRU brought together researchers, practitioners, learners, and community to envision and explore the intersections of intercultural learning, internationalization, and Indigenization with a focus on educational approaches to equity, inclusion, and reconciliation. TRU continues to work with other BC partners to form bilateral relationships with institutions around the world.

In addition, TRU has established international partnerships through collaborative research endeavours that bring together regional, national, and international researchers. TRU's All My Relations Research Centre works in partnership with Indigenous communities to identify, research, advance, and build capacity and capability in Indigenous community wellness. Knowledge Makers, an Indigenous student research network brings Indigenous students together to practice Indigenous research that is of service to our communities and is a tangible example of the impact of All My Relations Research Centre.

Lastly, TRU looks for specific ways to partner with institutions to provide custom opportunities. The Bob Gagliardi School of Business and Economics recently developed and assists with the delivery of programs to build business and economic capability for targeted groups of Indigenous students through the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology MBA and Splatins Business Development.

TRU leaders, faculty, and staff also collaborate and share knowledge and expertise routinely with their counterparts across the system. Through RUCBC our leaders participate in communities of practice with their peers, and RUCBC itself actively collaborates with the associations of colleges and of teaching-intensive universities.

QUESTION SIX — What stands in the way of you collaborating more with the rest of BC's PSE system?

HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND LOGISTICS — In BC, PSIs have historically functioned as independent, autonomous institutions, creating little incentive to seek collaborative connections. Institutional policies and procedures often differ substantially (e.g., labour contracts, agreements regarding intellectual property) and can impede the ability of institutions, especially those with different mandates, to collaborate. Similarly, different institutional cultures can impact the capacity for cohesive partnerships.

Unpredictable financial forecasts may also impede institutional collaboration if institutions are disinclined to enter longer-term planning without assurance that ongoing sustainable and predictable funding for such



initiatives will be available.

Geography creates both opportunities and challenges for collaboration. At TRU, we have created close collaborations with both UNBC and UBC-Okanagan, partly as a function of their geographic proximity. Greater geographic distance is a practical obstacle that hinders relationship-building and close collaboration with more distant partners.

INCREASING COMPETITION — Increasing competition on multiple fronts is affecting nearly all aspects of the post-secondary sector. Competition for financial resources from both governmental and non-governmental sources may lead to institutions seeking to “stand out” from others to access an increasing share. Similarly, competition for research funds has increased with observable decreases in funds available relative to the number of applications submitted.

Recruitment of highly qualified faculty is increasingly competitive, particularly for academic disciplines with high-market demand (e.g., nursing, accounting). Recruitment of Indigenous scholars and scholars representing other under-represented groups is also highly competitive, with significant demands put on faculty who are currently in such positions.

Increasingly, faculty and staff positions at PSIs (often

remunerated at rates lower than what can be found in the broader labour market) are finding higher wages elsewhere, forcing PSIs to compete with private enterprises.

Most significantly, perhaps, is the competitive shift occurring in online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to March 2020, some institutions were creating expertise in alternative modes for delivering high quality education. After the onset of the pandemic, nearly every institution globally became proficient at delivering education through non-traditional means. This significant shift has created the potential for globalization of education, a blurring of implied geographic educational boundaries (within the province and beyond), and the explosion of industry into the educational space.

QUESTION SEVEN — What are the key economic, demographic, social, and technological trends that will unfold over the next 30 years that will impact British Columbia’s PSE system?

The next 30 years will see rapid economic, demographic, social, and technological change. Globalization and global instability may create a shift

towards increased immigration as well as an influx of refugees from war- or climate-affected areas.

Social cohesion will be a challenge and will need to be addressed through greater interculturalization, Indigenization, and internationalization of higher education. Lastly, increased internet connectivity in rural and remote areas will create an expectation that students can access education independent of time or location.

There are several other developing societal issues that will impact the BC PSE system over the next 30 years. Perhaps the most far-reaching is the climate crisis, which will have wide-ranging impacts on global stability, immigration, and mental health. It will spur innovations in green technologies while necessitating dramatic behavioural change, such as reconsidering the dominant culture's desire for perpetual growth.

Three economic trends that will affect the BC PSE system over the next 30 years are increased cost of living, talent shortage, and competition from technology companies (e.g., IBM, Google) for delivery of industry-specific training. These trends are intricately connected to technological advancements and increasing expectations from PSE stakeholders that institutions will proactively use assistive technologies and universal design for learning principles.

For a considerable amount of time, cost inflation in higher education – salaries, journals, specialised IT systems, lab equipment and so on – has exceeded general inflation rates, and institutions have responded by slowly squeezing and shifting operating resources. These pressures are likely to become more acute and may go beyond what institutions can accommodate in routine budgeting processes.

As automation and AI increase productivity in certain sectors such as natural resources, processing, and manufacturing, sectors like higher education that are highly reliant on skilled and mobile human talent may face a continuing and growing squeeze.

Measured in purchasing power, talent may well keep becoming more and more expensive, and this will hit higher education in the difficulty of recruiting, rewarding, and retaining faculty and staff as well as keeping down program costs. If automation and

AI were to begin to replace human talent in higher education, this would cause disruption of a different type.

For some time we have seen a growing importance of choice for students in higher education, and this trend is likely to continue as students look for programs of study that reflect their personal journeys, goals, interests, and values.

Students will look for more options to customize their credentials and experiences, and to achieve recognition for skills or accomplishments that are important to them. The pandemic and online learning have also opened up new modes of choice where students can explore options offered by distant institutions, move to access the learning and environment they wish, or stay home and access a distant institution remotely. These changes will open up new dimensions of competition and differentiation among institutions.

Our stakeholders will expect that accommodations are intentionally designed into curriculum rather than as an afterthought for one or two students. In addition, the speed of technological change will result in increased access to data and information, particularly with the recent adoption of the Anti-Racism Data Act. Correspondingly, there will be an expectation from British Columbians that data will be used to inform change and close equity gaps.

We can foresee more forceful advocacy and activism for equity, diversity, and inclusion policies. Furthermore, the globalization of higher education will see the international students we serve today becoming the professors we employ tomorrow. Therefore, the BC PSE system must adapt our conceptions of academia by valuing diverse pedagogies, worldviews, and oracy on par with written communication.

QUESTION EIGHT — How do you think the PSE system needs to evolve in response to those trends?

MEET QUICKLY CHANGING AND EVOLVING EDUCATIONAL DEMANDS — Universities need to play an important and special role in meeting

changing social trends yet are sometimes stymied in this effort by an inability to adapt or realign priorities in a responsive manner. We suggest that efforts to make the PSE system nimbler would assist institutions in being responsive to the communities we serve.

Specifically, reducing administrative burden related to the creation of new programming would assist in advancing the ability to meeting evolving demands. Similarly, fast-tracking options for high-priority programs and providing broad institutional approvals to create programming would increase local abilities to create new opportunities for both domestic and international students.

SUPPORT FOR COLLABORATION ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

— In some instances, institutional competition for students and funding may be detrimental to the health of the overall system. Structurally, the post-secondary environment in BC is set up to encourage competition in the sense that each institution counts its “own” students and faculty and staff, and develops its own systems catering to them. Creating a PSE system that recognizes collaboration could lead to high-impact innovations in teaching, scholarship, and service.

This might be done, for example, by further developing models to share faculty, course content, and credits along the lines TRU already does in Open Learning, where many of “our” faculty are current or former faculty at other B.C. institutions; and many of the course resources are Open Education Resources (OER) developed collaboratively with colleagues elsewhere. Targeted innovation funding for OER has been effective in leveraging change, and similar approaches could support other inter-institutional networks and projects.

Incentivizing collaboration would allow for co-creation and innovation that leverages the diverse expertise and talent from across the sector and increase value and impact of the overall system from a student-centred perspective.

Ways to further increase student transition and mobility could include more accessible recruitment systems shared across a range of PSIs; programs offered closer to home through partnerships of delivering and hosting institutions (something TRU has done at Williams Lake, to bring programs from other PSIs into the community);





or grants that follow students so the funding goes where the activity occurs.

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

— To meet the needs of our changing world, it is the responsibility of our post-secondary system to provide timely, relevant, and innovative solutions. Research universities, like TRU, play a key role in solving some of today's most pressing problems.

The bright and active minds working in the BC PSE system —especially students and faculty working at the cutting edge of their fields — will be our hope for the future as they bring their skills to bear in the communities where they live and work. To continue to play this important role, research and graduate training must be a priority and must be supported in a manner that allows for cutting-edge research and development.

Research experience should start at the undergraduate level and form a continuum through to graduate programs that deliver the highly qualified personnel and specialists that B.C. needs.

RECOGNITION OF REGIONAL EXPERTISE — Our province boasts an incredible variety of ecosystems and environments, including boreal forests, grasslands, and rain forests. The BC PSE system provides opportunities for research and training within

nearly every major ecosystem. Given this remarkable diversity — strengthened by the local expertise existing within local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities — recognition and support of regional expertise should be a priority for the BC PSE system.

Smaller, rural, and remote places and regions pose special opportunities for B.C. These are where many natural resources, extractive industries, and culturally significant landscapes are located; and higher education institutions in such regions face special responsibilities as well as unique challenges of access and cost. We recommend that future funding models recognize the value of continuing to offer strong local educational opportunities that are widely distributed.

RESEARCH ABOUT STUDENTS, LEARNING, AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

— Many of the preceding comments and recommendations relate to rapid change in communities and among students.

Instead of each institution peering only into its own crystal ball, the BC post-secondary system should conduct a larger amount of collaborative, cross-sector research about learning needs of students, populations, and regions including desired and effective modes of instructional and service delivery, EDI outcomes, education gaps related to Reconciliation, and the decision-making processes

and priorities of potential learners.

QUESTION NINE — How does your institution need to evolve in response to those trends?

MEET QUICKLY CHANGING AND EVOLVING EDUCATIONAL DEMANDS

—Institutions have collegial governance processes that require time and effort to negotiate, like external Ministerial approval processes. In response to the need to be nimble and responsive with our educational programming options, we are actively working on increasing flexibility and reducing redundancy so that our response to educational demands can occur more quickly, while maintaining academic rigour and quality.

We will need to refine our internal systems or resource prioritization and allocation to support both new educational needs and also the characteristics of B.C.'s new funding model, when these are known.

TRU boasts a wide variety of programming, ranging from trades and technology through to graduate training, available through both on-campus and open learning options. As such, we are perfectly situated to envision new opportunities within the rapidly transitioning post-secondary environment.

To take full advantage, TRU will be required to adapt our existing structures to meet the needs of tomorrow. Such adaptations will include advancing our open learning programmatic and delivery options, looking toward future opportunities for micro-credentialing and badging for our BC PSE system and working with industry as it begins to move into the post-secondary space.

MORE SUPPORT FOR COLLABORATION ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

— TRU has successfully collaborated with other PSIs to develop research capacity and potential (e.g., IURC). We need to build on this success and more aggressively seek new partnerships.

TRU's foundation is built on collaborations with others, and we look forward to continuing this tradition by strengthening research collaborations with our existing partners and building new partnerships across

the province, as well as nationally and internationally.

We look forward to incentives for provincial collaborations with respect to funding and student opportunities. One of our 10-year strategic change goals — "Design Life-long Learning" — puts the student at the centre of our planning and priorities as an institution.

As such, TRU views student success as a shared social value, regardless of whether the student has graduated with us or from another institution. We need to seek opportunities to partner with other BC PSIs to create shared, open, and accessible options for students that are not defined by institutional boundaries.

A primary goal for TRU is the development of PhD programming, which is an excellent opportunity for collaboration. We see amazing opportunities to create graduate programming with our IURC partners that will allow students to access education and supervision across the Interior of BC. Past successes in collaboration have been driven by networks of peers and collaborators across PSIs and we would look to continue and expand the model of inter-institutional "communities of practice."

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH / GRADUATE STUDIES —

In response to needs, demands, and partnerships in our communities, TRU rapidly developed excellence in community research and training. TRU's external research grants have increased exponentially over the last decade, as well as our number of Research Chairs. As previously mentioned, TRU announced a partnership with Fulbright Canada to develop an annual visiting research chair.

We currently offer seven graduate degrees, with another currently under review. While we have seen significant growth in our research reputation and culture, there is room for us to grow. We will continue to expand our impact in community research, with special priority to natural disaster prediction and response, fire science and ecology.

The Kamloops region is ideally suited to wildfire research and TRU is rising to this challenge. Our expertise in fire science and ecology will be enhanced by the pending creation of a wildfire research hub



housed in a new fire science building. We will continue to develop more comprehensive graduate education, with a focus on offerings that foster and strengthen relationships with our local communities, especially our host First Nations.

QUESTION 10 — Considering the above, what modifications to the funding formula would you recommend?

PREDICTABLE AND ADEQUATE FUNDING — While we are interested in fair and equitable revisions to the funding process across the BC PSE system, we also recognize that continuing to provide predictable funding is essential. As complex institutions that meet multiple demands, an ability to create and employ predictable long-term budgets is vital.

The need for continued funding of wage mandates is imperative, as our existing internal budgets are already stretched to meet other costs besides PSEC approved increases to salary.

CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE RATIONALE FOR BLOCK FUNDING LEVELS — We recommend that the province articulate a clear and understandable rationale to determine block funding allocations to institutions as well as how these can or may change over time, and that this rationale provide for future

changes to institutional focus and priorities.

Historical inequities have existed within the system, particularly with respect to research and graduate training, and these must be acknowledged to establish the fairness and impartiality of the funding system for the future. Institutions, programs, and activities will change further in the future, and a new funding model must be able to adapt to such changes if it is to be sustainable.

REVIEW OF TUITION-FEE MODEL — We recommend a full review of the current model for tuition and student fees to allow for more flexibility by program. For example, it may be appropriate to allow for special considerations and greater flexibility in determining tuition for professional programs.

Other opportunities, such as government enticements to incentivize charitable contribution for student fee support, should be considered. It is not clear why fee increases are capped at a specific level that is not tied to the higher education cost-inflation rate, or why resources for various legacy courses and programs are constrained by anachronistic fee levels.

While the current review is about operating funding for institutions, the nature and fairness of student financial assistance should be considered because student financing reduces socio-economic barriers and indirectly funds institutions.

TARGETED FUNDING — We recommend that additional targeted funds be provided for programs that meet the public's high-priority interests.

For example, targeted funding related to Indigenization, mental health, and the climate crisis would assist institutions in advancing these priorities in a co-ordinated way. Similarly, we recommend increasing targeted funding for existing high-priority areas such as health care and related vocational training.

Updating and improving the structure of funding allocations through SkilledTradesBC (formerly the Industry Training Authority) should be considered a high priority, as current allocations are out-of-step with actual costs and levels of demand. Meaningful initiatives such as women in trades are currently ineligible for external resourcing.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS — BC and Canada will not be able to meet our employment needs over the next decades, and international students can help mitigate the demand. Eighty per cent of jobs in the next ten years are expected to require post-secondary education and BC PSIs can help educate international students to address this talent shortage.

We recommend that institutions that are successful at

recruiting and creating well-supported environments for international students be acknowledged and resourced accordingly. The percentage of students who remain in Canada and fill needed positions is a key public-policy indicator that should be considered.

AUTONOMY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY — Institutions of higher education are respected around the world in proportion to how free they are perceived to be to respond to and focus on learner and community needs. Local engagement, local partnerships, and the autonomy to innovate within an orderly and well-governed environment are central to PSE. We ask to be held accountable for how we use our freedom to innovate and collaborate.

A new institutional funding model should be paired with public reporting on long-term institutional impacts. We can foresee more forceful advocacy and activism for equity, diversity, and inclusion policies. Furthermore, the globalization of higher education will see the international students we serve today becoming the professors we employ tomorrow.

Therefore, the BC PSE system must adapt our conceptions of academia by valuing diverse pedagogies, worldviews, and oracy on par with written communication.

