

KEYS TO A PROSPEROUS FUTURE



THOMPSON RIVERS  UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 2014

On behalf of the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Board of Governors, welcome to Kamloops. Thank you for coming here to participate in a public discourse on the opportunities and challenges facing British Columbia.

BC's history proves that post-secondary education is one of the best long term investments that we can make in our children and our communities. For the province, it is also the best assurance that the people of BC will be ready to thrive in a rapidly changing, globalized, knowledge-based and entrepreneurial society.

The sixties and seventies saw rapid growth in the province's colleges and universities which enabled a generation of young people to achieve advanced education. Many of those graduates were the first in their families to attend a post-secondary institution. The return on this investment has been phenomenal. It is the foundation of BC's prosperity.

In the first decade of this century, BC was the only province to recognize the need for a "second wave" of growth when it created innovative universities like TRU to serve a new generation of students. The result is a differentiated yet integrated post-secondary education (PSE) system like no other in the world. The envy of provinces across Canada, the BC system continues to build our province's prosperity. Yet, significant changes are taking place.

As BC grows, its demographics—including the number of retirees—is shifting. At the same time, BC's dynamic economy requires skills and training that traditional careers may not be able to meet. This has created gaps between the demands of the economy and the supply of highly qualified college and university graduates. Fortunately, BC's PSE system is the most capable in Canada of meeting this challenge.

However the past seven years of austerity have jeopardized BC's PSE system.



Redefining the Modern University

In 2005 BC created TRU by merging University College of the Cariboo and the British Columbia Open Learning Agency, thereby redefining what a modern university looks like. Centered in Kamloops, with a campus in Williams Lake and five regional offices, we serve a vibrant campus community of over 13,000 students with another 13,000 students taking advantage of TRU's flexible learning options to study online through the Open Learning division. We offer trades programs and undergraduate and master's degree programs in addition to diplomas, apprenticeships, professional certificates, continuing studies and ESL.

As a leader in Canada's new generation of universities, TRU is dedicated to serving the next wave of non-traditional students including those who are caregivers, who work, who are from Aboriginal and immigrant communities and families and who are mature learners. We have almost 2,000 Aboriginal learners on campus or online. We are also highly internationalized with more than 2600 students from 78 different countries. TRU focuses on the individual student experience with small classes, accessible faculty and experiential learning via research opportunities for graduates and undergraduates, co-op work terms, community engagement, field schools and study abroad opportunities where students can earn a global competency distinction. In September of 2011 we opened Canada's first new law school in 35 years; a historic step in serving the needs of Canadians.

We redefine the modern institution by providing our learners with useful trades and academic programs both on campus and online and by offering our communities access to relevant problem-solving, knowledge creation and innovation. TRU has an excellent track record of partnering with the diverse communities, businesses and industries in our region to serve their needs with trained graduates and useful research. We are also entrepreneurial; for example we have built four buildings worth over \$100M without any taxpayer-funded debt. We have embarked on the next phase of our capital development with the University Village project which will further enliven our campus and generate a non-taxpayer-funded revenue stream to support university activities.

2013/14 Space utilization

Campus average **104%**
 Health programs **147%**
 Trades & Technology **200%**

Trades & Technology

In 2012/13 18% of TRU credentials awarded were in trades and technology

Graduate employment rates

Baccalaureates: **94%**
 Certificate and diploma: **92%**
 Apprenticeships: **92%**

Alumni

60% of TRU alumni live in the Interior of BC, contributing back to the local economy.

TRU's impact

- TRU earned top grades from our students in the 2012 Canadian University Students Consortium (CUSC) survey.
- TRU's economic impact on the provincial economy is more that \$650 million, generating nearly 10 times our provincial grant of approximately \$65 million, with just over \$355 million – or more than 5 times our grant – directly benefiting Kamloops and region.
- Over \$110M can be attributed to our outstanding internationalization programs.

Community Solutions Through Innovation

TRU's new Strategic Research Plan is our commitment to ensure research at TRU continues to respond to the needs of our community, region, province, and nation. In carrying out our legislated mandate to conduct research we have chosen to have direct and useful impact for our communities through our Canada Research Chairs, Regional Innovation Chairs, our research centres and groups. We recognize that "tomorrow's problems are not in today's textbooks" and we conclude that the best way to graduate problem-solvers is by means of a research-informed education.

For example, Dr. Rod McCormick, TRU's BC Regional Innovation Chair in Aboriginal Child and Maternal Health, leads an interdisciplinary team of TRU researchers working with members of our local First Nations communities to identify and respond to current needs in maternal and child health, helping to strengthen Aboriginal communities across BC. This work would not be possible without the support of the Province, which invested \$2.5 million through the Leading Edge Endowment Fund and other sources to fund the Chair position. Most recently TRU facilitated a historic gathering of health researchers and leaders of this region's First Nations communities.

TRU's Research Partnerships and Enterprise Creation office delivers programs, develops talents, and engages students and faculty in entrepreneurial and innovative activities. In partnership with the Kamloops Innovation Centre, Western Economic Diversification, and the BC Innovation Council, TRU secured \$96,000 toward a new venture acceleration facility—"The Generator"—that will provide work and meeting space for applied and industrial research collaborations; support pathways to commercialization of research-derived innovations; provide a vehicle

for technology transfer and knowledge mobilization; and enable industry partners to access TRU research resources. The Generator will develop entrepreneurial talent on our campus and in our region, and act as an entry point for established and start-up companies in BC to engage with TRU researchers and form collaborations.

TRU is currently engaged in discussions with the other Interior universities UNBC and UBCO to explore opportunities to foster greater integration in areas related to research, innovation, and entrepreneurship that respond to the social and economic needs of the region.

Advancements are being made through initiatives like these. However, research opportunities that benefit our broader communities are being missed due to inadequate funding.

Increasing BC's Capacity for Innovation

TRU's graduate students are on the forefront of community-driven research. From new antibiotics to sustainability solutions for industry, graduate research is a crucial source of the innovations our society needs. We need graduate students engaged in knowledge creation full-time but many students find the cost of graduate studies beyond their reach because, in contrast to some other provinces, BC does not have a provincial graduate fellowship program.

Further, while TRU is mandated to provide master's programs and to conduct research, and has over 100 of the Province's original target of 450 FTEs, it receives no government funding for graduate student seats.

We ask the Province to introduce a provincial program of graduate student assistance, and to fund the mandated graduate student seats at TRU. This will increase the opportunities for advanced

research education for Interior students and build capacity for research and innovation for the benefit of people in Interior communities.

Increasing BC's Capacity in Trades and Technology

TRU is requesting a capital grant to partially fund a new Industrial Training and Technology Centre at our Kamloops campus. This facility, located close to the existing Trades and Technology Building, will increase TRU's capacity to train highly qualified personnel in high demand occupations related to trades and technology by 50% and alleviate the strain on the existing building, which is being used at twice its designed capacity.

BC's history proves that post-secondary education is one of the best long term investments that we can make in our children and our communities.

The provincial government has emphasized the urgent need to develop highly qualified personnel in the trades. TRU is uniquely positioned to respond quickly to put a project in the ground. A new Industrial Training and Technology Centre aligns perfectly with ministry priorities, TRU's institutional priorities and the needs of BC's employers and labor market.

Increasing BC's Capacity in Health Education

TRU is requesting a capital grant to partially fund new space for TRU's School of Nursing and other health programs. The new wing of the existing Science Building will increase the building's overall size by 36%. This expansion is necessary to bring the Nursing program's facilities up to current standards and permit us to continue to innovate in health care delivery.



Currently, the School of Nursing enrolls students in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program (400 FTEs) and the Health Care Assistant program (100 FTEs). As well, over 60 Open Learning students use the nursing clinic simulation lab over the course of the year. An additional 160 students from TRU's renowned Respiratory Therapy program also use the Nursing labs on a weekly basis. The demands for modern teaching labs are barely being met. TRU programs such as Human Service and various specialty groups such as paramedics also need these teaching labs—but TRU can no longer accommodate these additional requests.

TRU is actively working to close the skills gaps that challenge BC's future economic prosperity and to create more knowledge and innovation through research to serve the needs of people of the region and the province.

The Present Challenge: Ensuring the Promise of the Future

BC's funding for PSE has been effectively static since 2007 due to the recession and slow recovery and the resulting austerity measures of the provincial government. This, along with escalating costs, threatens to slowly undermine the capacity and quality of BC's outstanding PSE system, thus threatening the promise of the future.

TRU is delivering on its provincial mandate to provide access to excellence in learning and research for the benefit of people locally and globally. We will continue to be an educational, cultural and economic driver in the province, and continue to work with the government to serve the people of BC. TRU is determined to reinforce our tradition of finding innovative external funding sources and internal efficiencies.

It is important to plan for success; there will be recovery. It is even more important to plan for the recovery.

We urge the government to plan for the recovery by setting priorities for future investments in the development of BC. As stated at the start of this submission, the history of BC suggests that reinvestment in its PSE system is not only a crucial step in ensuring long term prosperity. It is the best investment that the Province can make. Investing in our colleges and universities, our students and our innovators is in the best long term interests of the people of BC.

Alan Shaver
President & Vice-Chancellor

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Board Chair



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