



THOMPSON RIVERS
UNIVERSITY



ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

SEPTEMBER 2015

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

The history of BC's post-secondary education system's impact proves that it 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.



Our Provincial Mandate

FOR 45 YEARS TRU has taken pride in providing an excellent education to every student that comes to us—from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives, at various stages of the learning journey.

At TRU student success is our priority. We provide a broad range of programs to meet the broad range of our student's needs—from Trades to Law. We offer our students one-on-one access to our faculty, and individualized services when they need support. With both on-campus and online delivery through TRU Open Learning we provide opportunities to apply learning through hands-on research projects, co-ops, international field schools and other experiences that lead to success in careers or further study, and to a lifetime of learning that benefits our communities. We provide an inclusive, open, flexible learning environment where research, creation and innovation thrive.

BC created TRU in 2005 by passing special legislation, the Thompson Rivers University Act, which merged University College of the Cariboo and the British Columbia Open Learning Agency. Centered in Kamloops, with a second campus in Williams Lake and five regional offices, we serve a vibrant campus community of over 14,000 students. In addition,

about 12,000 more students take 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. TRU is a university like no other.

We understand that one size does not fit all of our students, or all of our communities. We offer a highly diverse and thus stimulating student community, which includes traditional students and non-traditional students—those who are caregivers, mature students, working students and students from underrepresented communities such as Aboriginal and immigrant communities and families. Over ten percent of our students are Aboriginal learners; and we are also highly internationalized with more than ten percent of our students coming from 78 different countries.

We redefine the modern institution in many ways including offering our communities access to relevant problem-solving, knowledge creation and innovation. TRU has an excellent track record of partnering with communities, businesses and industries in our region to serve their diverse needs with trained graduates at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and with invaluable research.

We are also entrepreneurial; for example, we have built four buildings worth over \$100 million without any taxpayer-funded debt. We have embarked on the next phase of our capital development with the University Village project to further enliven our campus and generate a non-taxpayer-funded revenue stream to support university activities.

Meeting the Needs of the Province

The government does provide periodic support to TRU for education programs such as funding more seats for health care assistants and trade students, and funding specialty equipment needed, as part of the government's Skills for Jobs Blueprint. This institution regularly answers the government's call for proposals and with that funding, regularly fills the seats needed to alleviate the skills gap for health care assistants, welders, carpenters and electricians.

These instances not only illustrate how the government listens to its constituents but also clearly demonstrate how responsive TRU is to supporting the government to meet provincial needs along with the needs of our direct communities.

An increasing number of individuals and organizations are coming forward to publically endorse TRU, indicating

the communities we serve are clearly in support of the efforts TRU is making in the region. Most recently, local businessman and philanthropist Ken Lepin committed \$2.5 million to TRU and allocated his gift to student

awards, research, equipment and the Wells Grey Science Centre. Support to TRU through private and corporate philanthropy recognizes that investment in post-secondary education is important to the people of BC.

Investing in TRU, a Shared Perspective from Students, Faculty and Staff

The TRU Board of Governors & Senior Administration, the TRU Student Union, and the TRU Faculty Association request a re-investment in TRU to allow us to fulfill our provincial mandate as an institution. We believe that the present funding model is outdated and insufficient. The needs of our region and of our students have evolved, and the fifteen-year-old funding model no longer allows us to offer the necessary services to our students or to offer a full-service university to our region and our province. Areas such as co-operative education, academic advising, math and writing help centres, hands-on and experiential learning opportunities, summer school to reduce the time to graduation and transitions from high school to university to employment all need funding. These additional supports for our students will see them transition successfully into the workforce. Further, such investment would also allow us to invigorate our student assistance program to help students in need, addressing issues of affordability and access. TRU is home to many students who are non-traditional learners; supporting families while studying; working while studying; or accessing education from remote areas. With increased funding to student grants and bursaries we would improve access opportunities to those unable to cover the costs of a life-changing education.

The TRU Board of Governors & Senior Administration, the TRU Student Union, and the TRU Faculty Association also believe that TRU's ability to focus on both teaching and research is currently being undermined by the existing funding model. TRU's graduate and undergraduate students are on the forefront of community-driven research in a range of fields. From new antibiotics to sustainability solutions for industry, research is a crucial source of the innovation our communities and society need. However, despite TRU being mandated to provide master's programs and to conduct research, it receives no government funding for graduate student seats. This is a disservice to both our institution and the region we serve. We again ask the province to invest in funding our graduate programs, and the students that make them successful. Reclamation, optimization, First Nations health, and multiple other areas of research in which TRU is becoming a leader should be as valued and supported as similar programs are in other institutions. We ask that our students and faculty receive equitable support to fulfill their legislated mandate; funding should be based on learning and innovation outcomes.

2014/15 Student FTE Utilization

Institutional **103%**
Health programs **159%**
Skills Gap **100%**
Trades **114%**

Trades & Technology

In 2014/15, 14% of all domestic FTEs delivered were in trades training

Employment rates of those in the labour force (2014/15):

Baccalaureate: **93%**
Apprenticeship: **94%**
Certificate & Diploma **93%**

2014 NSSE Results:

- 8 out of 10 engagement scores for 1st year students were equal or higher than Canadian average
- 10 out of 10 engagement scores for 4th year students were equal or higher than Canadian average

Alumni

60% of TRU's 60,000 alumni live in the Interior of BC, contributing back to the local economy.

TRU's impact

- TRU's economic impact on the provincial economy is more than \$650 million, which is nearly 10 times our provincial grant (\$65 million), with just over \$355 million (more than 5 times our grant) —directly benefiting Kamloops and region.
- The economic impact of our outstanding internationalization programs is calculated to exceed \$113M.



Increasing BC's Capacity in Trades and Technology

TRU's trades building is rated for 1,000 students, and we are teaching 2,000 students and there is a waiting list to get in. We are in the process of applying to the government for a capital grant to partially fund a new Industrial Training and Technology Centre. We appreciate the Ministry of Advanced Education's guidance through this process. Located close to the existing Trades and Technology Building, this facility 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 and reduce the waiting list.

The concept plan will be complete by the end of September, and the business plan will be ready by the end of November, at which time we hope to advance to the next stage of funding approval so we can complete this project within two years. Once completed, TRU's Industrial Training and Technology Centre will contribute to building the province's economy.

Increasing BC's Capacity in Health Education

Advances in health care and the aging population emphasize the need for TRU to remain at the forefront in order to provide the highly trained and innovative personnel to serve Kamloops and the region. This priority is aligned with both the BC and the federal governments' priorities. TRU has requested a capital grant to partially fund new space for TRU's School of Nursing and other health programs. We have begun concept and business case planning to build a new wing on the Ken Lepin Science and Health Sciences Building.

The new wing will increase the building's overall size by 36%. This expansion is necessary to bring the School of Nursing's facilities up to current standards and permit us to continue to innovate in our health programs. Currently, the School enrolls students in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program (400 FTEs) and the Health Care Assistant program (100 FTEs). In addition, over

60 Open Learning students use the nursing clinic simulation lab over the course of the year, and 160 students from TRU's renowned Respiratory Therapy program use the 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.

This project will help close the skills gaps in health care which has been identified by the BC government as a challenge to our province's economic prosperity and quality of life. It creates more knowledge and innovation through research to serve the needs of people in the region and the province.

In conclusion, BC has built a remarkable and leading edge PSE system but the stagnation in funding over the last decade threatens the future of the province. The previous investments have proved their worth, but reinvestment is badly needed. If not now, then when?

Alan Shaver
President & Vice-Chancellor

Brian Ross
Board Chair