

THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY  
PLANNING COUNCIL FOR OPEN LEARNING  
MEETING OF APRIL 5, 2006

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Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Council for Open Learning, held in the CN Boardroom of the Clock Tower Building, Kamloops, B.C., commencing at 9:30 am.

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ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
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<b>Planning Council Present:</b>	M. Evered, Chair C. James D. Noakes M. Young J. Keller B. Daly I. Rich-McQuay D. Loblaw (Teleconference) D. Stanley (Teleconference) J. LaBrie L. Jacques L. Krohn A. Tucker	<b>Planning Council Absent:</b> J. Gaskell D. McBain
<b>Executive and Others Present:</b>	J. Sparks, Associate Vice President, Legal Affairs D. Sproull, Secretary, Academic Governance	

**CALL TO ORDER**

M. Evered chaired the meeting. The meeting being duly constituted for the conduct of business, the Chair called the meeting to order at 9:38 am.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Planning Council for Open Learning and expressed appreciation to everyone for their time. R. Barnsley, President and Vice-Chancellor of Thompson Rivers University, sends his regrets as he is required to attend an AUCC meeting in Ottawa.

The Chair reminded members that the creation of Thompson Rivers University from University College of the Cariboo included acquisition of the responsibilities for open learning previously assigned to the B.C. Open University. He noted that the legislation creating TRU required that a Planning Council for Open Learning be established as a key governance body to oversee elements of the open learning programs of TRU.

At the request of the Chair, members of the Planning Council introduced themselves.

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### **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

*A motion was adopted to approve the agenda as amended to include "Falling Student Enrolments in the Open Learning Division" after agenda item 8a.*

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

J. Keller reviewed the history of Thompson Rivers University which included the following highlights:

- In the 1960's six school districts cooperated to form the Cariboo College.
- The current campus site in Kamloops opened in 1971.
- In 1988 the government approved degree completion at Cariboo College in partnership with the three universities: Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia and University of Victoria.
- In 1995 the government approved University College status, establishing the University College of the Cariboo.
- In April 2006, full university status was granted. Thompson Rivers University was created with a mandate to remain comprehensive and open. BCOU was acquired by Thompson Rivers University.

C. James reviewed the history of the Open Learning Division which included the following highlights:

- In 1978 the Open Learning Institute was established.
- In 1980 the Knowledge Network was established.
- In 1988 the Open Learning Agency was established by merging the Knowledge Network and the Open Learning Institute.
- In 2002 the Government announced the closure of the Open Learning Agency with assets to be transferred or sold.
- In 2005 BCOU/OC was acquired by Thompson Rivers University. The open learning aspect is protected in legislation by the creation of the Planning Council.

C. James explained that the definition of open learning is best described in terms of its characteristic practices and principles. The differences between open learning and distance education were defined as follows: open learning refers to an educational policy, whereas distance education describes a means by which instruction is offered.

The Chair thanked J. Keller and C. James for their presentations.

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**WALKING TOUR OF THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY**

J. Keller invited the Planning Council members to join him in a walking tour of the Thompson Rivers University Kamloops campus.

**REVIEW OF THE TRU & UNIVERSITY ACT AND THE BYLAWS FOR THE PLANNING COUNCIL FOR OPEN LEARNING**

J. Sparks, Associate Vice-President, Legal Affairs, highlighted the duties of the Planning Council as described in the *TRU* and *University Act*.

J. Sparks summarized a set of bylaws that he had prepared for consideration of the Planning Council for Open Learning Bylaws. Planning Council members were asked to review the Bylaws with consideration for adoption at the next meeting. Members were asked to review Article VIII, 2.c (ii) of the Bylaws which deals with reporting to their constituents matters dealt with at the Planning Council meetings.

J. Sparks reviewed the Officers of the Planning Council for Open Learning which includes the Chair, the Vice-Chair and, if needed, a parliamentarian. In accordance with the legislation, the Chair of the Planning Council is the Provost & Vice-President, Academic. J. Sparks asked the Planning Council to consider how they would like to appoint/elect the Vice-Chair. It was unanimously agreed that C. James should have this position until such time as the new Vice-President, Open Learning has been appointed and had appropriate orientation time.

***On motion duly made and adopted, it was RESOLVED: C. James to serve as the Vice-Chair for the Planning Council for Open Learning until such time as the Vice-President, Open Learning is appointed.***

In accordance with Article IX, 1a of the Bylaws, the Chair asked the members how often the Planning Council wished meetings be held? It was agreed that the meetings should be held on a quarterly basis, if practical, or as required.

In accordance with Article XI, 1 of the Bylaws, the Chair asked the members if the meetings should be open to the University community and members of the public? It was agreed that the meetings should be public and, if required, portions of the meeting be held in-camera if confidential information is discussed.

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	The terms of the appointments for the Planning Council members were discussed. The nominated candidates and the term of appointments were determined by the President. The Chair will seek clarification of this matter.	M. Evered
	The Chair asked Planning Council members to send comments regarding the proposed Bylaws to D. Sproull who will consolidate them for discussion at the next Planning Council meeting.	D. Sproull
	The Chair thanked J. Sparks for his presentation.	

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE OPEN LEARNING DIVISION**

D. Stanley, a senior tutor with the Open Learning Division raised concern with the declining student enrolment in the Open Learning Division. Possible causes were discussed.

The Chair expressed the need to be very strategic with planning and the need to make tough decisions given limited resources. Some of the enrolment concerns are not unique to the Open Learning Division. The ABE programs are experiencing declining numbers throughout the province. As Thompson Rivers University is a new entity, it will be important to brand a reputation and look at different approaches to best meet the learners' needs in the province.

C. James agreed to present data on enrolments and to discuss recruitment efforts at the next meeting. C. James

**EDUCATIONAL MANDATE OF THE OPEN LEARNING DIVISION**

D. Stanley expressed concern over PLAR and other admission processes.

C. James reported that admission requirements are determined by program areas. The issue of admission requirements for new programs (traditional and open learning) will need to be debated.

Currently, open learning programs are identified as such on the student transcripts. Discussion ensued on whether having "open learning" identified on the credential might lead to a perception of being a 2<sup>nd</sup> class degree.

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The Chair noted the unique challenges Planning Council is going to face when considering the standards for admission and residency requirements.

**PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS**

Council discussed its level of involvement in decision-making, whether at the course and program level or in developing principles and general guidelines. Members from other institutions noted possible conflicts of interest in approving courses and programs that could affect their own institutions. Concern was also raised about the potential for delays in approvals, as the Planning Council only meets on a quarterly basis. It was agreed that Planning Council would operate at a policy, principle and guideline level.

The Chair explained that TRU is currently reviewing its academic decision-making process and that the Planning Council's operations should also be considered in this context.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

The Chair, on behalf of the Thompson Rivers University, thanked the members of the Planning Council for their participation and assistance. He said that he looks forward to working together collegially to ensure that the open learning needs of B.C. are served.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

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Planning Council Chair

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Planning Council Vice-Chair