

President's Report to the Board

For the period from Feb. 4 to March 17, 2021
Submitted to the TRU Board of Governors
By Brett Fairbairn, President and Vice-Chancellor

Executive Priorities for 2021/22

At the February board meeting, executive provided an update on the 2020/21 priorities. Attached for reference are the executive's goals for the coming fiscal year. Given the events of the past year, pandemic recovery for TRU and our communities are top of mind and are reflected in our plans. Included is our Return to Campus initiative and how we bring students, faculty and staff safely back on campus in the fall.

Our priorities also reflect our planned action from the Vision Statement and its four ten-year strategic change goals of: eliminating achievement gaps; honouring truth, reconciliation and rights; leading in community research and scholarship; and designing lifelong learning. After a long year of pandemic changes, we look forward to renewing our focus on TRU's vision: being that university that boldly redefines itself as a place of belonging—Kw'seltnéws—where all people are empowered to transform themselves, their communities, and the world.

Pandemic Recovery:

A fall return to campus—On March 8, planning for the fall term became much clearer as Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry provided direction to university and college presidents to plan for a full and safe return to campus for September. This was exciting news for us, and for many of our students who have held off making plans for the year ahead. Indeed, following the announcement, our Enrolment Services office received a flood of inquiries from students. Still, we know there may be some hesitancy among students, faculty and staff about returning to campus. Like other post-secondary institutions, we will be working with the PHO, our Ministry, and other partners to update the *Go Forward Guidelines* for the sector to support a safe return for everyone this fall.

Marketing activity is ramping up to ensure students—both domestic and international—are aware and can make their plans for the fall.

Our Return to Campus initiative as established in January, continues and has now shifted focus according to the provincial direction. The committee is also preparing alternate scenarios should there be an unexpected shift in the pandemic.

Enabling Strategies:

Integrated Strategic Plan—As noted with the inclusion of a Green Paper in this month's board agenda package, the Provost and a project team are gearing up in a

substantial way to begin the process for developing an operational and implementation plan for TRU's new vision and 10-year strategic change goals. Under the working title "Realizing Envision TRU," this project will culminate with a presentation of a strategic implementation plan for endorsement to TRU's governance bodies in a year's time. There are many important reasons for undertaking such a process, as outlined within the Green Paper, one of which is overarching alignment of units across the institution towards our mission, vision and strategic priorities. The executive is excited to start this journey with our university community; such planning requires a collective and holistic approach to ensure that what we *plan* to do, we actually do.

Government relations activities—Post-secondary institutions are working more closely than ever before because of the pandemic. One way we do that is through our provincial and national representative bodies—the Research Universities' Council of British Columbia (RUCBC) and Universities Canada (UC). Both groups bring the sector together and advance sector concerns and priorities with governments. This has been reflected provincially through RUCBC's engagement with government regarding the impact of the pandemic on universities, our students and communities. At the national level, UC has kept our concerns about the needs of international students front and centre. As we plan for the fall term, our aim with UC is to reduce barriers for international students so they can return to campus with us in September.

Limitless Campaign—We are thrilled that after a year of great uncertainty, TRU's broad community of supporters are pulling through as we near the end of our largest-ever fundraising campaign. We've surpassed the \$49 million mark and look forward to achieving our \$50-million goal. Since the launch of the public campaign one and a half years ago, the campaign has generated more than \$8 million in gifts. Considering the times we are in, this is both humbling and gratifying. More on the campaign and current status can be found on the Limitless [website](#).

Strategic Change Goals:

Lead in Community Research and Scholarship—TRU has a history of partnering with communities on community-based research projects and we are pleased to see this taken one step further with the recent appointment of Dr. Cheryl Gladu as Researcher-in-Residence with the City of Kamloops. Dr. Gladu's appointment is the start of a three-year pilot project involving TRU, the City of Kamloops and jointly funded by Mitacs. Supported by five research interns, Dr. Gladu will work closely with the city to identify annual research projects that have a direct impact and relevance to the community. Anticipated areas of research and policy development could include pandemic economic recovery, response to vulnerable population needs in the community, and future planning for the cultural sector.

Other Updates:

Leadership appointments—TRU has completed its search for a new Associate Vice-President Students and Dean, Faculty of Student Development with the recent appointment of Teaching Professor Chris Adam. Chris has held the role of Dean of

Students, Faculty of Student Development since joining TRU in 2010. The role of dean had been reevaluated and found to no longer align with similar roles across other institutions. Hence, a national search commenced for this revised and expanded role in fall 2020. The search committee was unanimous in its decision to appoint Chris.

Chris has led a wide range of academic and student services while at TRU, and led initiatives such as the Sexualized Violence Policy Consultation and the President's Task Force on Mental Health. She is passionate about supporting university students in the pursuit of their personal and professional goals.

University Highlights

Universities are places of knowledge creation and transfer and achievement. We have much to celebrate. Below represents a short listing of some of our recent activities and achievements. Much more can be found on [TRU's Newsroom](#).

- Federal grant supports EDI initiatives—TRU is one of 12 colleges and universities nationally to be awarded an [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Institutional Capacity-Building Grant](#) from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). The \$400,000 grant will be used to create an EDI office at TRU. The office will gather data that provides an evidence-based approach for the development of a more diverse, inclusive and equitable learning and working environment, and will also act as a hub for EDI initiatives at TRU.
- Genomics research receives big boost—An \$850,000 grant from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation will enable TRU to establish a world-class genomic research lab. This lab will advance the understanding of microbial ecology and climate change, while also supporting diverse training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students studying genomics and bioinformatics. For more on this research, please see the March 3 [news release](#).
- Nursing students help with COVID-19 vaccinations—Nursing students will have the opportunity to support BC's vaccination rollout plans, from wayfinding to actual immunization as plans begin to take shape for Kamloops. For more on this, see the [media interview](#) with School of Nursing faculty member Steven Ross.
- ESTR pop-up market proves a success—The pandemic hasn't stopped students in TRU's [Education and Skills Training \(ESTR\) program](#) from gaining the hands-on skills they need for employment. After successfully launching a first-ever online, virtual pop-up market this past Christmas, the virtual market was back for the spring. This offered the university community an opportunity to purchase home-baked goods and locally-crafted artisan products, but more importantly, provided ESTR's students—students with diverse abilities—with experiential, hands-on training in the program's kitchen, retail and trades career streams.