

CONSULTATION REPORT

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INTEGRATED PLANNING & EFFECTIVENESS

www.tru.ca/envision

Participants identify student success as central for TRU; valuing employees and TRU's role in the community emerge as 'hot topics'

Thompson Rivers University is conducting consultations, through [Envision TRU](#), in an effort to inform a new vision for the institution. This process, which aims to be as transparent, inclusive, and authentic as possible, is based on the concept of shared learning. This report summarizes the results of 27 small group discussions that were held between Mar. 28 and May 3 of this year, and were led by volunteer facilitators from the TRU community. Most of the discussions were open to all TRU stakeholders, and there were two consultations specific to students (Pizza with the President and Student Caucus) and four consultations specific to faculty members (lunches).

The discussions were based on seven topics and suggested questions. These topics were chosen based on the interim results of the first ThoughtExchange consultation (input from Feb. 27 to Mar. 13). All topics, suggested discussion questions, and example thoughts are included in Appendix A.

Emergent Themes Resulting from Group Discussions

The results of these discussions are presented in this report (including operational observations and suggestions, which will be referred for consideration in operational planning). Qualitative analysis of the discussion notes, facilitator observations, quotes, and co-generated artifacts (such as diagrams, posters and post-it note clusters) generally confirmed the emergent themes. However, the rich input from these discussions has resulted in a more detailed understanding of each topic and will inform future discussion questions. Centered around **student success**, the current emergent themes (subject to further development) include:

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valuing diversity,
valuing employees,
pursuing Indigenization,
pursuing interculturalization,
confirming who we are (identity),
the role of TRU in community,
programs and courses,
pursuing sustainability,
valuing research, and
supporting student success.

TRU Marketing & Communications Promoted Participation

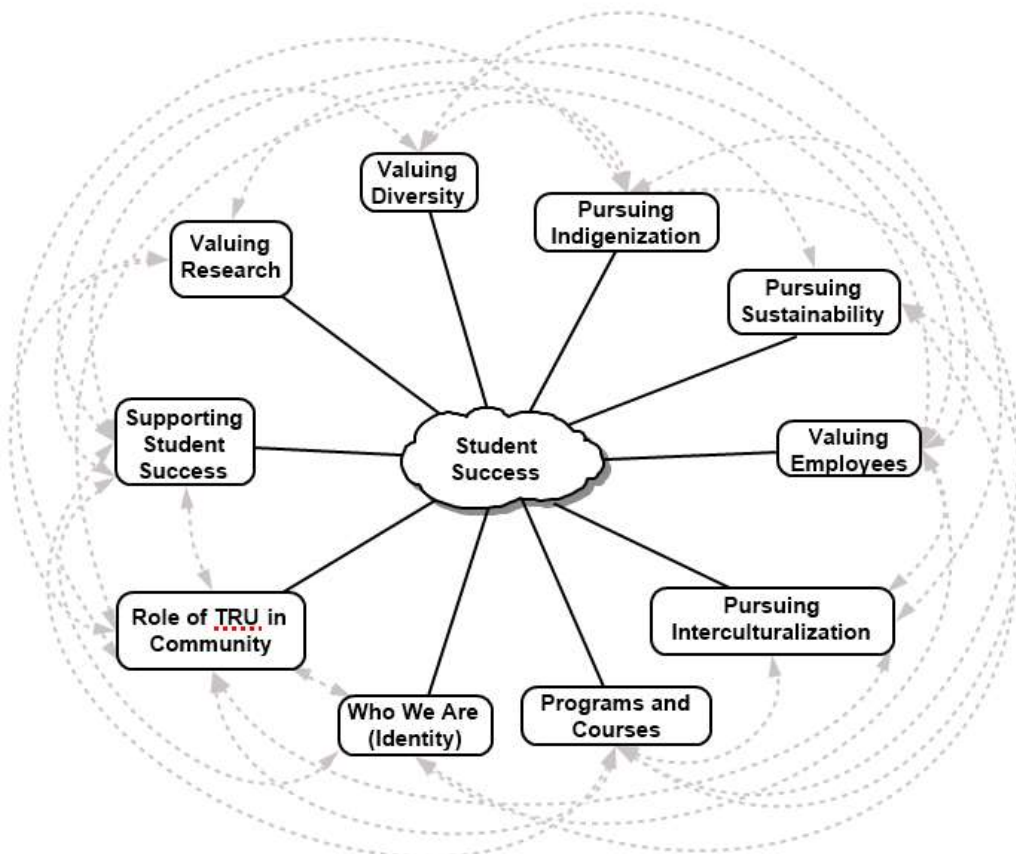


Small Group Discussions: by the Numbers

Discussion Topics	7
Lunch with the President (Faculty)	4
Pizza with the President (Students)	1
Student Caucus Session	1
Small Group Discussions	21
Facilitators	20
Participants (estimate)	254
Data Points (analyzed for report)	1000+

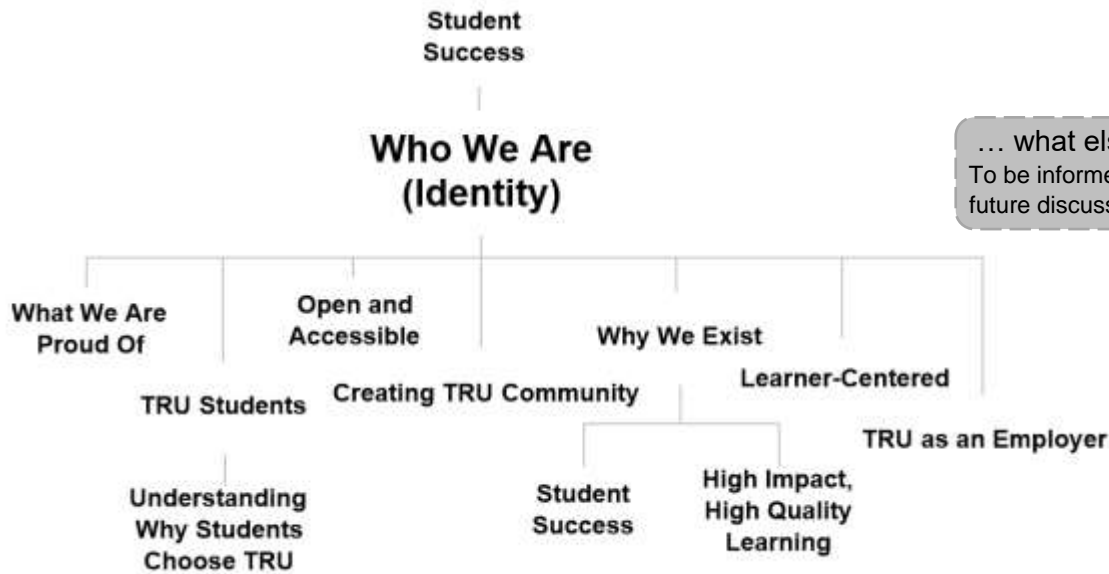
This report contains only the results from the small group discussions, pizza with the president, lunch with the president, and student caucus consultations. As Envision TRU continues, data from ThoughtExchange and additional consultations and will be compiled into an overall themes report. Therefore, the *emergent* themes presented in these interim reports are expected to evolve. The Phase I Emergent Themes Concept Map (below) presents these themes in relation to each other and the central idea of student success. For a complete concept map and text outline, see Appendix B. A brief methodology is included in Appendix C.

Phase I Emergent Themes Concept Map (analysis as of May 2019)



Narrative description of Phase I Emergent Themes Concept Map: The ten themes (‘programs and courses’, ‘who we are (identity)’, ‘role of TRU in community’, ‘supporting student success’, ‘pursuing interculturalization’, ‘valuing employees’, ‘pursuing Indigenization’, ‘pursuing sustainability’, ‘valuing research’ and ‘valuing diversity’) are connected to student success. Each theme that orbits student success is also connected to several other themes. The relationships drawn between each concept and theme (from student success to orbiting themes, between orbiting themes, and between all themes and the underlying foundational concept of community) are not directional in nature, and the strength of these relationships are not included in the present edition of this concept map.

Confirming Who We Are (Identity)



... what else?
To be informed by future discussions

Confirming our identity: learner-centered, open and accessible. Participants pointed out that we need to use the TRU Act and Mission Statement as touchstones in the planning process. TRU was defined as **open and accessible**, and there was strong agreement that TRU is and should continue to be **learner-centered**, which includes listening to students and ensuring that they feel a sense of place at TRU; learner-centeredness was also identified as a source of pride. A personalized, supported experience was identified in the reasons **why students choose TRU**. Other attractive qualities were program choice, location, open access, and small class sizes. Participants also discussed **TRU as an employer**, and that TRU can show leadership in sustainability, inclusivity, and supporting employee success. **Creating TRU community** includes connecting various geographic and functional areas into a universal collaborative environment.



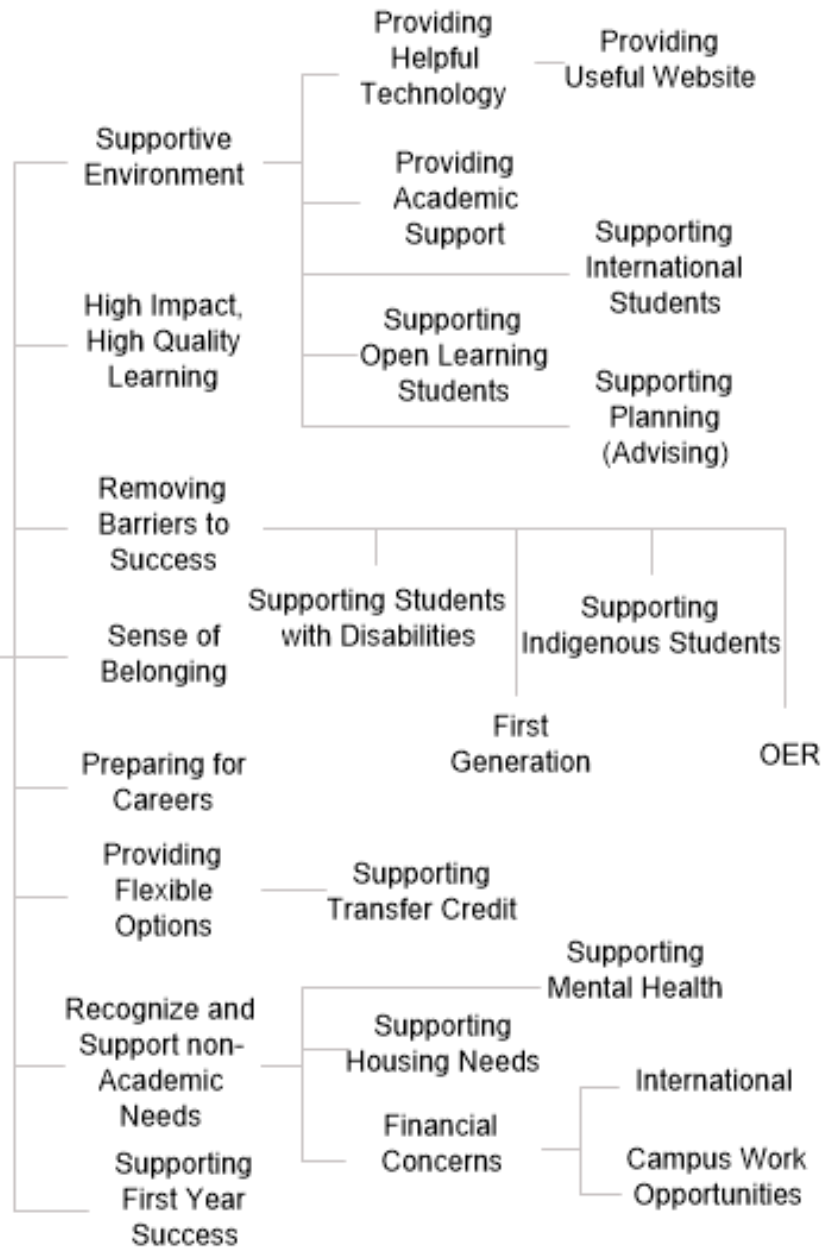
Supporting Student Success

Supporting students: It's who we are. Participants identified several aspects of supporting student success, all of which imply imperatives for TRU. Closely linked to WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY) were topics of **high impact, high quality learning** and **providing flexible options**. The student experience was also emphasized through discussion of a **supportive environment** that includes **academic, technological, and advising** support for a diverse student population.

Removing barriers to ensure access for all TRU students. Discussion highlighted removing barriers to success, whether for historically disadvantaged groups (including **Indigenous students**), **learners with disabilities**, or those who struggle to afford the cost of education. **Recognizing and supporting non-academic needs** includes addressing **housing, financial, and mental health** concerns.

Supporting successful first year transitions for all TRU students. As an open access institution, TRU welcomes learners from many backgrounds and varying levels of readiness for post-secondary education. **Supporting first year success** includes orientation, additional preparation programs, and sufficient resourcing of faculty and staff. Sufficient resourcing was also strongly connected to VALUING EMPLOYEES.

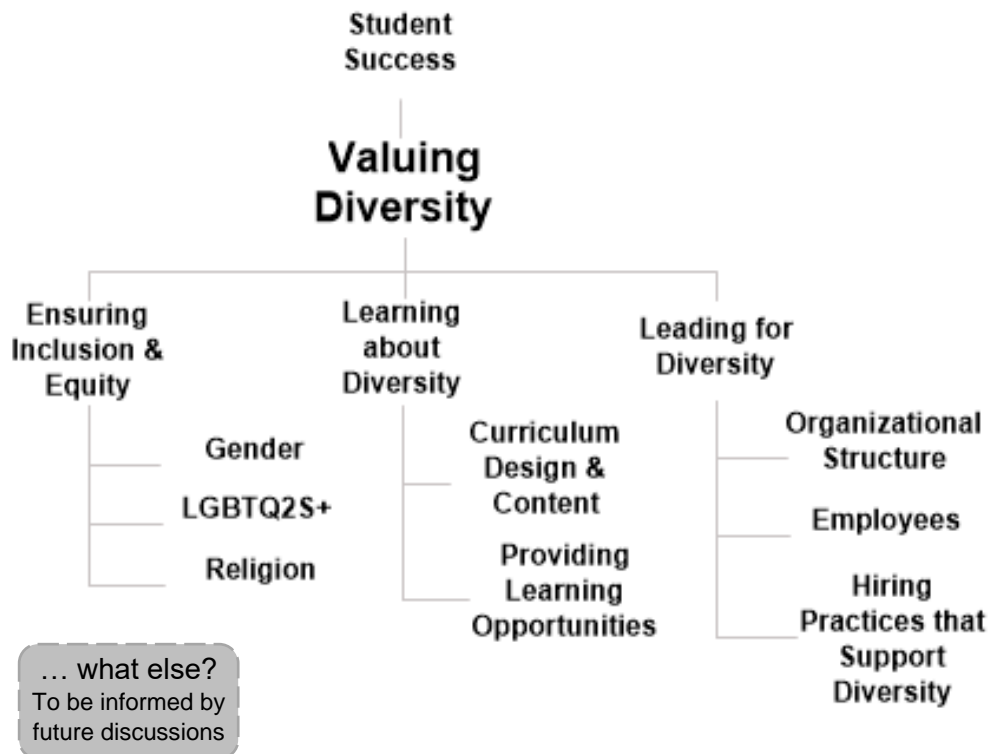
Student Success — **Supporting Student Success**



... what else?
To be informed by future discussions

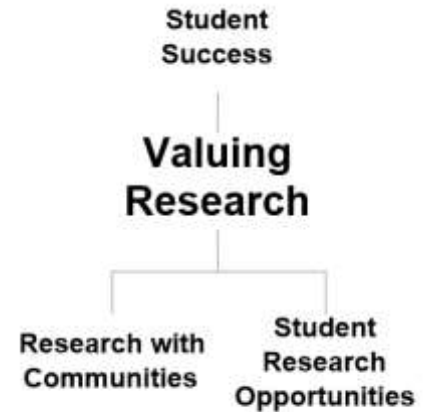
Valuing Diversity

Diversity as a guiding principle. While a state of diversity can result from a variety of personal characteristics, VALUING DIVERSITY was described through the actions that would demonstrate that inclusion and equity are a priority for TRU. **Leading for diversity** means ensuring that equity groups are included in the **organizational structure**, **hiring practices** ensure representation from those groups, and that **employees** themselves are compensated with attention to equity issues. Related to the WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY) discussion, valuing diversity also means educating TRU community members about diversity. Whether through ensuring **curriculum design and content** is relevant to diverse learners or **providing learning opportunities** outside of the classroom, **learning about diversity** was linked to the ROLE OF TRU IN THE COMMUNITY as a leader of positive change and a centre for debate and problem-solving. Specifically, **ensuring inclusion and equity** was mentioned in conjunction with **gender, religion** and **LGBTQ2S+** orientation. Welcoming learners from all academic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds was also highly related to WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY), SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS, and VALUING EMPLOYEES. INDIGENIZATION and INTERCULTURALIZATION were often discussed in conjunction with diversity, and are included in separate sections of this report.



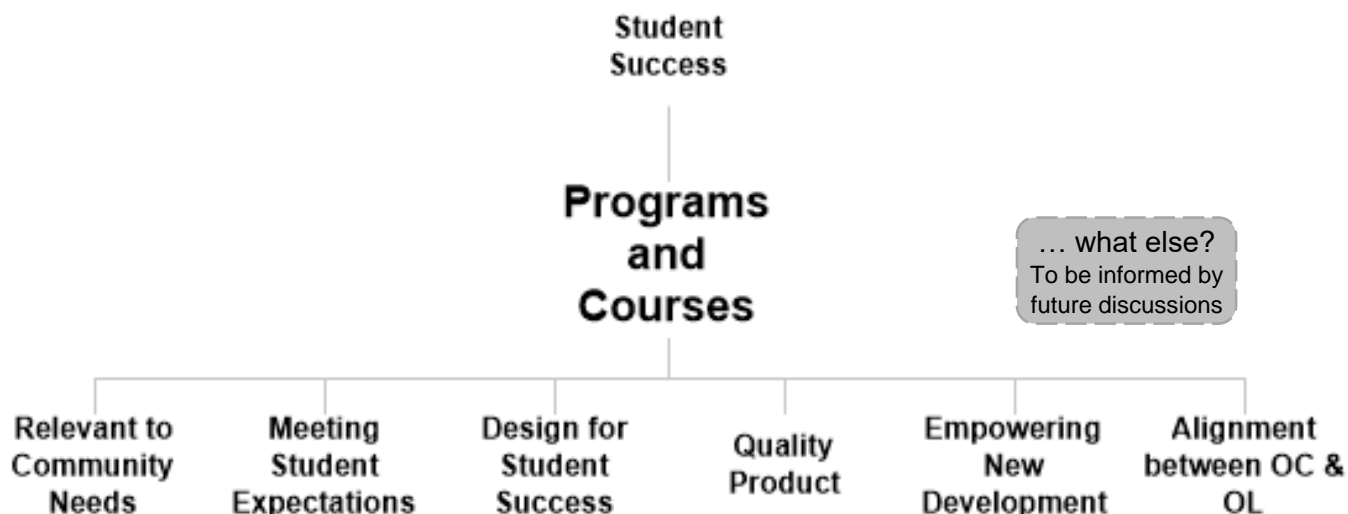
Valuing Research

Research opportunities for students, faculty, and community create positive outcomes. Research was discussed in the context of the opportunities that research activities provide for students and the communities TRU serves. **Student research opportunities** were related to SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS, as well as what we are proud of in relation to WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY). Student research opportunities were related to career preparation, and gaining practical skills through experiential education. Undergraduate research was identified as a source of pride and a unique accomplishment for TRU. **Research with communities** was described as an opportunity for mutually beneficial partnerships, and was related to TRU'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY in creating opportunities for TRU to lead positive change through innovation and reciprocal relationships and to contribute to economic sustainability.



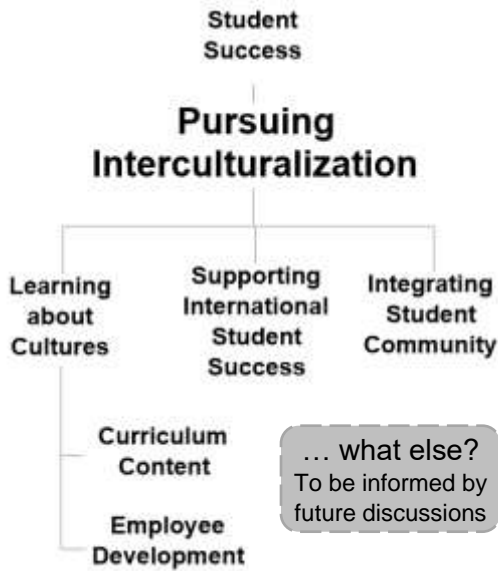
... what else?
To be informed by
future discussions

Programs and Courses



The quality and relevance of the programs and courses TRU offers is central to student success. Programs and courses are the main educational ‘product’ that TRU produces, and they communicate the values and priorities of the institution. Discussion in this theme was centered around improvement, with a focus on the priority of SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS. Participants observed that developing new programs and courses is challenging (**empowering new development**), which was related to VALUING EMPLOYEES. **Alignment between on campus and Open Learning courses** was identified as an opportunity for offering more flexible learning options for students, thereby enhancing access. In addition to the ability to create programs and courses that are **relevant to community needs** (and therefore ensure that TRU is graduating qualified professionals), participants discussed that curricula should also **meet student expectations**. This included **designing courses for student success** by taking into account diverse learning styles, available technology, and relevant content. Curricula discussion was highly related to opportunities to PURSUE SUSTAINABILITY, PURSUE INDIGENIZATION, and PURSUE INTERCULTURALIZATION.

Pursuing Interculturalization



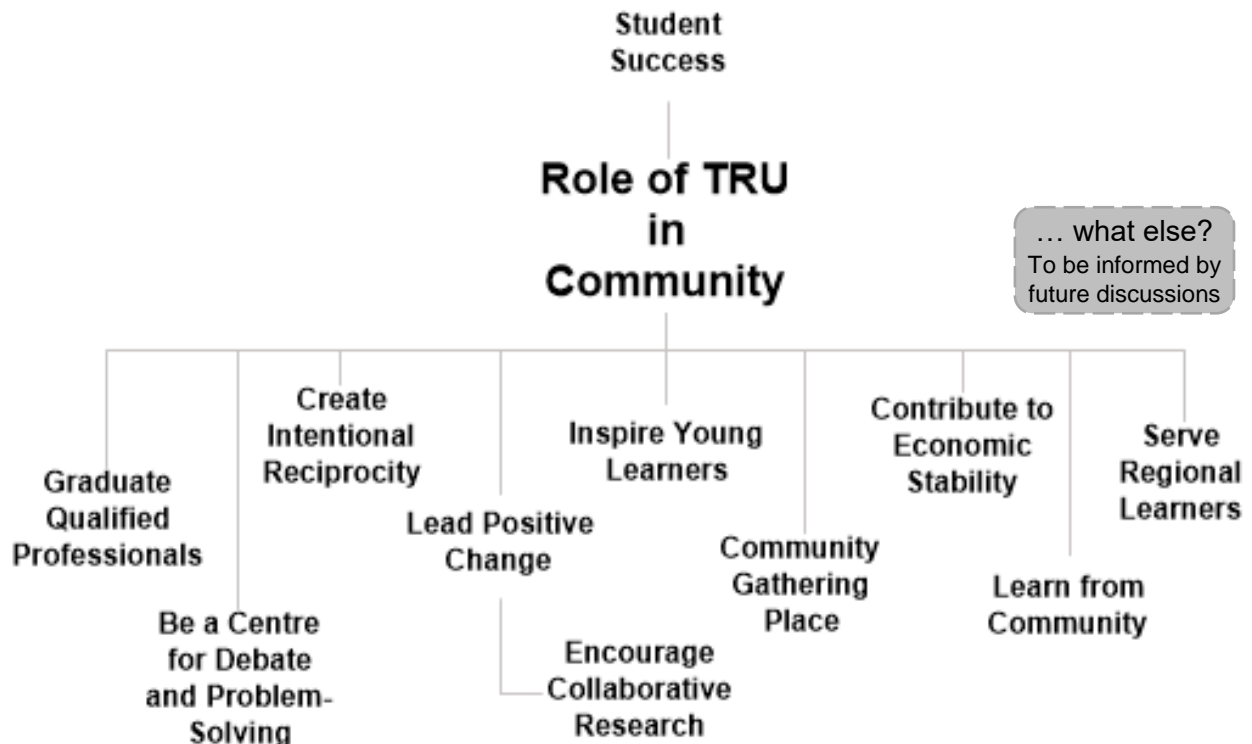
Moving from diversity to inclusion through interculturalization. Participants acknowledged the importance of including diverse cultures at TRU, which increases student success and allows TRU to have a positive impact in the community by producing graduates who demonstrate cultural competency. International students, and **supporting International student success**, was acknowledged as an important aspect of TRU community (including for enrolment sustainability). However, participants also observed that simply having students at TRU was not enough; an important aspect of WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY) and **SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS** is to ensure that all students, faculty, and staff are included, feel valued, and are supported at TRU. Emphasis was placed on **integrating the student community**. Demonstrating the priority of interculturalization also includes **learning about cultures** for **employee development**, students, and external community members. Discussed methods included revising **curriculum content** and providing professional development training to employees.

Role of TRU in the Community

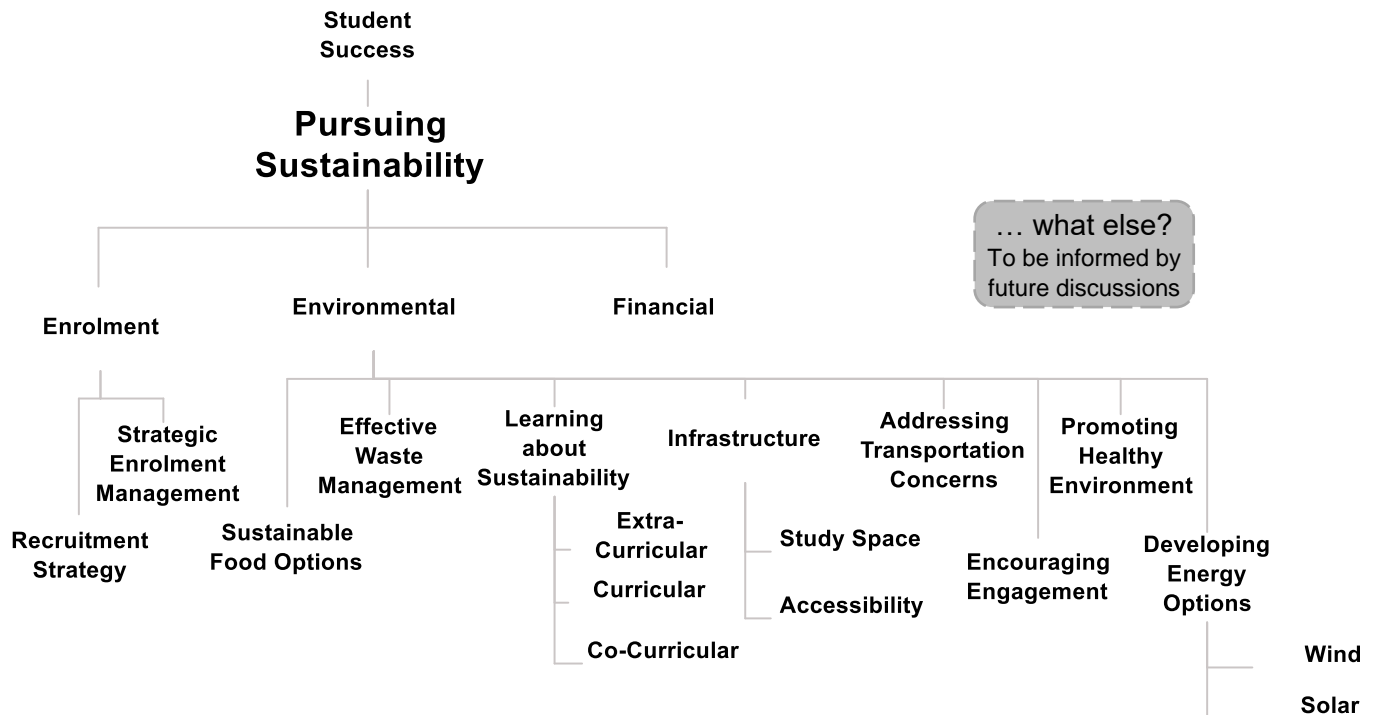
TRU’s role in community is one of advancement, inspiration, and leading change.

Participants described the tremendous responsibility that TRU carries to create positive impacts in the communities it serves. The role of TRU in community spans a spectrum of individual, societal, economic, and practical considerations, and includes the role of learner as well. TRU has the potential to impact the health and future of communities, and TRU is also responsible for **learning from communities** and developing **intentional reciprocal relationships**. This concept was strongly tied to WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY), in that TRU exists to serve regional and provincial learner needs.

Leading positive change includes encouraging collaborative research to solve societal issues, **graduating qualified professionals** who will contribute to the community, and **inspiring young learners** to consider the possibilities for their futures. TRU provides both a theoretical and a physical **community gathering place** and a **centre for debate and problem-solving**. As an employer, customer, and innovator, TRU can **contribute to economic stability**. Ultimately, SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS and VALUING EMPLOYEES have direct impacts on the lives of community members, while understanding WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY) provides guidance for understanding TRU’s role in community.



Pursuing Sustainability

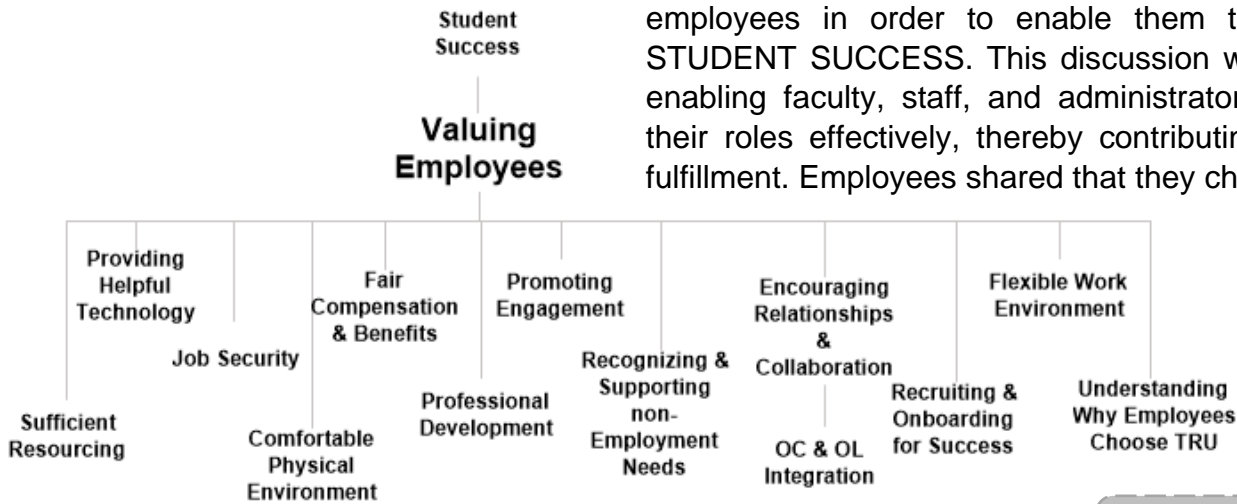


Building on the successes of environmental sustainability. While much discussion was focused on **environmental sustainability** and TRU's recent gains in this area, **financial sustainability** and **enrolment sustainability** were also mentioned. Enrolment sustainability included carefully considered **recruitment strategies** to ensure that TRU is recruiting students who will be successful (and supporting them as needed to ensure success) and considering methods for increasing student retention. Environmental sustainability was discussed as something we are proud of as part of WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY) and as something that should continue to be pursued. Particular areas of environmental sustainability included **sustainable food options, effective waste management, infrastructure, transportation, and developing energy options. Infrastructure sustainability** was related to SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS and VALUING EMPLOYEES, particularly where **study space, accessibility, and transportation** were concerned.

Valuing Employees

Employees support student success and enable mission fulfillment.

Participants discussed the importance of valuing employees in order to enable them to SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS. This discussion was related to enabling faculty, staff, and administrators to execute their roles effectively, thereby contributing to mission fulfillment. Employees shared that they chose TRU



... what else?
To be informed by future discussions

Why Employees Choose TRU



because of the opportunities for a stable career, advancement and personal growth and to participate in a dynamic environment within their home communities. These qualities were related to WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY). **Flexible work environments, comfortable physical environments, fair compensation and benefits, and recognizing and supporting non-employment needs** (like mental health) were all priorities.

Equity in compensation was related to DIVERSITY. Areas for improvement included the **onboarding process** for new employees, **encouraging relationships and collaboration** (particularly between Open Learning and on campus) and **sufficient resourcing**. **Job security**, particularly for sessional instructors, was a strong concern and was related to SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS.

Appendix A. Discussion Topics, Suggested Questions & Example Thoughts

Topic: Community Relations & Impact/ Sustainability

Suggested question: What kind of impact should TRU have on our surrounding community and region? How can we ensure that we are meeting these goals?

Example thought: "I value the way the university has been embraced by the community and the region, and how the university is seeking to have a positive impact. It's vital that the university see – and be seen to be – more than a training institute: we need to be partners in our community's development"

Topic: Open Learning-Campus Relationships & Integration

Suggested question: What should the relationship between Open Learning and campus (staff, faculty members, and services) look like, and how can we improve it?

Example thought: "Despite our collaborative goals we still need to work on not pigeon-holing the TRU community. Participants can be Open Learning and campus based and our community is stronger if we recognize and celebrate this!" (sic)

Topic: Student Focus/ Experience

Suggested Question: When it comes to customer and student service, in what areas does TRU excel and where can we do better?

Example thought: "Focusing on experience management, specifically our student experience, we are a business in the end. We need to close the gap between what students expect and what they actually experience."

Suggested Question: How can TRU ensure that a focus on student success remains a priority as we grow? What does a commitment to students look like to you?

Example thought: "I appreciate how committed TRU is to great teaching! Both research and teaching are valued. It demonstrates a commitment to student learning and success."

Topic: Programs/Courses

Suggested Question: Does TRU offer the right mix of programs? How can we deliver programs that are responsive to our communities, flexible for students, and relevant for today's world?

Example thought: "Tailor degrees and research opportunities to meet anticipated needs. Create programs that draw from many disciplines in order to understand and solve unique problems of the future".

Topic: Accessibility/flexibility/innovation

Suggested question: How can TRU ensure that we maintain open and flexible access for students as we grow?

Example thought: “Open access to learning including access to high impact learning such as undergraduate research. TRU embraces access, inclusivity and opportunities for all learners.”

Topic: Employee Experience/ Leadership/ Collaboration

Suggested question: What does TRU do well to attract and retain employees, and what can we be doing better?

Example thought: “The variety of opportunities available to staff be it the PLAR program, fitness opportunities, continuing education, flexible work conditions etc. To help retain valuable employees”

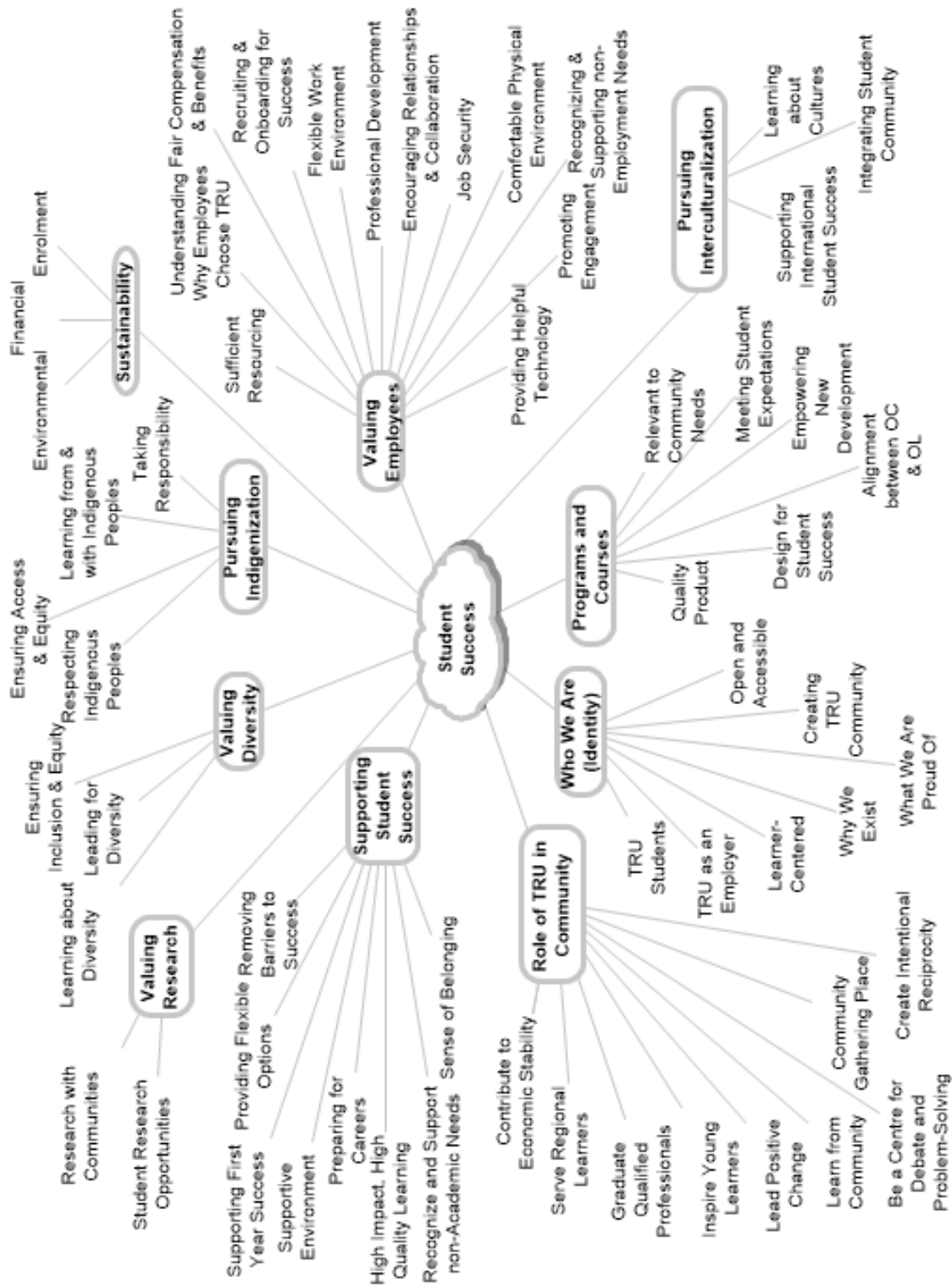
Example thought: “Value sessional instructors more; create hope and pathways to security and success through regularization and benefits. Instructors who feel disposable, vulnerable, and impoverished by instability and health (dental) emergencies cannot be at their best.

Topic: Diversity / Indigenization

Suggested Question: What does diversity look like at TRU? What are we doing well, and what can we be doing better as a university community to celebrate and grow from our diversity?

Example thought: “I love that TRU brings a diversity of cultures to Kamloops and area. Cultural diversity opens our minds and gives our children opportunities to learn from people with different experiences”

Appendix B: Emergent Theme Concept Map & Outline



Student Success

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

Supporting First Year Success

Recognize and Support Non-Academic Needs

- Supporting Mental Health
- Supporting Housing Needs
- Financial Concerns
 - Campus Work Opportunities
 - International

Removing Barriers to Success

- Supporting Students with Disabilities
- Supporting Indigenous Students
- First Generation
- OER

Preparing for Careers

High Impact, High Quality Learning

Providing Flexible Options

- Supporting Transfer Credit

Sense of Belonging

Supportive Environment

- Supporting International Students
- Providing Academic Support
- Supporting Planning (Advising)
- Supporting Open Learning Students

Providing Helpful Technology

- Providing Useful Website

VALUING DIVERSITY

Leading for Diversity

- Organizational Structure
- Employees
- Hiring Practices that Support Diversity

Ensuring Inclusion & Equity

- Gender
- LGBTQ2S+
- Religion

Learning about Diversity

- Curriculum Design & Content
- Providing Learning Opportunities

ROLE OF TRU IN COMMUNITY

Serve Regional Learners

Lead Positive Change

- Encourage Collaborative Research

Contribute to Economic Stability

Inspire Young Learners

Learn from Community

Be a Centre for Debate and Problem-Solving

Create Intentional Reciprocity

Community Gathering Place

Graduate Qualified Professionals

PURSUIING SUSTAINABILITY

Financial

- Enrolment
- Strategic Enrolment Management
- Recruitment for Sustainability
- Recruitment for Student Success

Environmental

- Infrastructure
 - Study Space
 - Accessibility
- Learning about Sustainability
 - Curricular
 - Co-Curricular
 - Extra-Curricular
- Encouraging Engagement
- Addressing Transportation Concerns
- Developing Energy Options
 - Solar
 - Wind
- Effective Waste Management
- Sustainable Food Options
- Addressing Health Concerns

VALUING RESEARCH

- Student Research Opportunities**
- Research with Communities**

PROGRAMS AND COURSES

- Design for Student Success**
- Alignment between OC & OL**
- Empowering New Development**
- Quality Product**
- Meeting Student Expectations**
- Relevant to Community Needs**

CONFIRMING WHO WE ARE (IDENTITY)

Why We Exist

- High Impact, High Quality Learning
- Student Success

What We Are Proud Of

Learner-Centered

Open and Accessible

TRU as an Employer

Creating TRU Community

TRU Students

- Understanding Why Students Choose TRU

PURSUIING INDIGENIZATION

Respecting Indigenous Peoples

Territory & Language

Ensuring Access & Equity

Representation

Learning from & with Indigenous

Peoples

Co-Curricular

Curriculum

Campus Activities

Experiential Learning

Research

Taking Responsibility

Leading TRC Response

PURSUIING INTERCULTURALIZATION

Integrating Student Community

Supporting International Student

Success

Learning about Cultures

Curriculum Content

VALUING EMPLOYEES

Promoting Engagement

Comfortable Physical Environment

Providing Helpful Technology

Understanding Why Employees

Choose TRU

Recruiting & Onboarding for Success

Recognizing & Supporting non-

Employment Needs

Sufficient Resourcing

Fair Compensation & Benefits

Flexible Work Environment

Job Security

Professional Development

Encouraging Relationships &

Collaboration

OC & OL Integration

Appendix C: Methodological Approach

The Envision TRU process is informed by a grounded theory approach to analyzing the qualitative data that is gathered through various discussion and consultation formats. Used in research on organizational culture and in education, this method is well-known for the ‘freedom’ it allows for new theory generation; absent of an existing theoretical framework, inductive analysis allows any topic to emerge from participant discussions. It also allows the overlapping of data gathering and analysis, which is well suited to the year-long Envision TRU exercise. This ongoing analysis is an iterative process that allows exploration, reflection, and careful coding of each piece of data as it is gathered.

The [initial emergent themes](#) were created as a result of a general inductive approach (open coding) to the first ThoughtExchange consultation. Under a constant comparative method, these emergent themes then became the initial coding structure for the analysis of the discussion data presented in this report, which then evolved into updated emergent themes. The data gathered during the small group discussions, pizza with the president, and lunch with the president sessions were then openly classified into the initial coding structure. The coding structure was revised to ensure that it was responsive to the newly included data. Axial coding then revealed the connections between categories of data.

While arguably not a strict application of theoretical sampling, the use of grounded theory allows for the generation of new ThoughtExchange discussion questions for suggestions for focused discussion groups based on cumulative findings throughout the Envision TRU process. Reflexivity (constant reflection on one’s relationships with the subject matter) and negative case analysis (paying particular attention to disagreeing voices) are key to maintaining rigour.

Theoretical/selective coding is in a very preliminary stage; full theoretical coding will follow as more data are added from additional discussions (in person or online) and after all ThoughtExchange consultations have been incorporated into the open – axial analysis. Due to the iterative nature of this process, emergent themes will continue to be subdivided, combined, expanded or otherwise revised until data saturation is reached and a conceptual framework can be presented.

Kolb, S. (2012). Grounded theory and the constant comparative method: Valid research strategies for educators. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 3, 83–86.

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