



# Thompson Rivers University Students' Union

805 TRU Way, Kamloops BC, V2C 0C8

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December 15, 2021

Members of the Board of Governors  
805 TRU Way  
Kamloops, BC V2C 0C8

## **Re: Recommendations to Mitigate Harm at Thompson Rivers University**

On behalf of the members of the Thompson Rivers University Students' Union we are writing to express our concern regarding the current state of affairs at Thompson Rivers University and our fears regarding the campus/community to which students will return in January 2022.

As you are no doubt aware, several current and former faculty and/or staff members have publicly come forward to report acts of racism, harassment, misogyny, bullying, and other abusive behaviors on the part of Vice President Administration and Finance Matt Milovick and Associate Vice President People and Culture Larry Phillips. Further, we understand that subsequent to these public disclosures additional individuals have come forward to express experiencing similarly concerning behaviors on behalf of these individuals and that more individuals are still exploring the safety of coming forward.

To begin we were pleased to hear that the Board of Governors has engaged an independent contractor to investigate these reports in a credible manor. This is an excellent first step.

As you can rightly imagine we are deeply troubled with both the reported behavior of senior leadership at Thompson Rivers University and the continued actions of the accused in our community. As of the date of this letter the accused continue to participate in the workplace and we have been made aware that they continue to engage in inappropriate behaviors including but not limited to threatening reprisal against subordinates or other community members who may choose to speak to investigators, pressuring subordinates and other community members to make public statements of support for them, and working to publicly undermine or discredit individuals they believe may be complainants or supporters/connected to complainants.

Not only has Thompson Rivers University's senior leadership not addressed these behaviors but they have created a climate in which folks are so afraid they may or may not even be reporting them. They have publicly disparaged the complainants, tried to intimidate broader campus leadership from speaking to their own colleagues regarding the issue, and attempted to downplay the seriousness of the harm being done to their own employees by the accused. It is clear that senior leadership is not managing this issue appropriately or effectively. Increasingly students are becoming frustrated with the institutions failure to mitigate harm against the complainants and the accused, and most importantly from a student perspective, their failure to provide a safe place to study and work while the investigation is underway.

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On more than one occasion recently staff or faculty with whom we share projects or work have reported being afraid to come to campus, or that they were presently hiding from their employer/colleagues as they felt unsafe, or that they were afraid to meet or speak with us, or come to meetings with other participants (even on unrelated projects) for fear being singled out by their employer as taking a side or "non-neutral". For nearly a month it has been increasingly difficult to get work to done to support our members in what has been an incredibly challenging semester back from COVID19. There is no doubt that this culture/work environment is creating long term harm on our community and preventing students from getting the education and supports they need at an already difficult time.

We are deeply worried that management is losing or worse has lost the confidence of the campus community to mitigate the harm this investigation is causing and are even more fearful that we will only see an escalation of this type of negative behavior in January 2022. Further harming our members and other members of the campus community. It is with this in mind that we are calling on you to take immediate action in order to restore a safe and collegial campus at Thompson Rivers University until such time as this investigation can be completed.

## **We are calling on you to:**

1. Immediately place on paid leave both Vice President Administration and Finance Matt Milovick and Associate Vice President People and Culture Larry Phillips until such time as the investigation is completed.
2. Ensure that both Vice President Administration and Finance Matt Milovick and Associate Vice President Finance People and Culture Larry Phillips and their families receive appropriate mental and physical health supports throughout the investigation.
3. Ensure that any and all members of the campus or broader community who wish to participate in the investigation can do so in a discreet and safe manor.
4. Proactively distribute to the campus and broader community the mechanism by which complainants can contact the investigators independently of TRU.
5. Ensure that any all members of the campus or broader community who wish to participate in the investigation and their families receive appropriate mental and physical health supports.

We thank you for your work to address this difficult matter and we and look forward your response.



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Sincerely,  
Members of the Board of Directors  
Thompson Rivers University Students' Union

CC  
Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training – Honourable Anne Kang  
Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association President – Tara Lyster  
Thompson Rivers University Open Learning Faculty Association President – Mark Salopek  
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4879 President – Lois Rugg