

*The following sections report on work underway, and progress made regarding executive priorities for the current year based on TRU's vision and 10-year strategic change goals.*

## **Enabling Strategies/Operations**

**ENROLLMENT SUMMARY FALL 2024** — According to IPE data, TRU is on track in 2024/25 to have 29,500 students, down marginally by 0.5 per cent compared to the previous year. This number represents the total number of individuals (headcount) who engage with TRU educationally within a 12-month period, and as such, is a key indicator of our reach and fulfillment of our mission. With this number, TRU is a medium-large institution in the Canadian postsecondary landscape (fifth largest in B.C.)

*TRU's student population* — In 2024/25, 14,800 of TRU's students will be studying in-person (in-person, hybrid, or synchronously online), 14,700 will be entirely online through asynchronous Open Learning, and 2,600 will combine Open Learning with other modalities during the year. Compared to previous years, the proportion of students who combine both in-person and online learning is increasing. Of the total number of students, nine per cent are identified as Indigenous in British Columbia's self-declaration system. Nearly 25 per cent of TRU's students are international students.

*Noteworthy changes* — While TRU has been affected by a sharp decline in new, incoming international students, it will take several years for this trend to have full impact. For 2024-25, this will result in an overall international student headcount decline of six per cent.

Across all modalities, domestic (Canadian) applications are tracking two per cent higher than last year and the total number of domestic students is expected to grow by a slightly larger margin due to increased conversion and retention rates. TRU's Williams Lake campus is on track to exceed last year's enrolment by approximately 40 per cent.

*Other considerations* — TRU's largest source of revenue is student fees. The revenue impact of changes in enrolment is determined by course registrations and tuition rates. International in-person/synchronous registrations will be down 16 per cent this year, domestic in-person/synchronous registrations will be flat, and Open Learning (asynchronous online) registrations are projected to be up six per cent.

Also, B.C.'s Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training calculates a "utilization rate," which will increase to about 94 per cent this year due to growth in domestic student headcount.

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES** — Canada’s changes to study permits, postgraduate work permits, and related rules have created considerable uncertainty among prospective international students abroad and have led to a sharp decline of about 45 per cent across the country. Notably, declining applications mean Canada will not meet the cap numbers announced in January 2024.

TRU is responding by changing our recruitment practices to come as close as possible to our academic goals and the targets in our Strategic Enrolment Management plan. More specifically, we are:

- Shifting recruitment focus and developing new markets: Prioritize recruitment efforts in regions less sensitive to ICRC’s policy change, particularly around postgraduate work rights, such as countries in Latin America. Returning to previously explored markets such as Mid and East Asia.
- Strengthening High School Outreach: Increase recruitment activities at international high schools
- Expanding Capacity for High-Demand Programs: Working with campus partners to develop infrastructure and resources to support high-demand fields like Health Care Assistant, Computer Science, Master of Data Science, one-year course-based Master’s programs, and trades.
- Investing in high-performing agents: Create performance-based incentives for key agents to ensure they maintain or exceed their current performance levels and stay with TRU despite it being easier to recruit for other countries in the new IRCC context.
- Enhancing Scholarship Offerings: Improve entry scholarship packages to attract high-achieving students, diversify the student body, and mitigate the effects of tuition increases.
- Developing Strong TNE Partnerships: Build quality Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships to open new recruitment channels and expand international reach.
- Expanding Visiting Student Campaigns: Increase efforts to recruit fee-paying visiting students.
- Implementing an Enhanced Communication Strategy to highlight TRU’s value proposition, ie: student services, housing, mental health, etc.

This year, we are focusing more effort on students who expressed an interest previously, especially those whose admission was deferred. We have also been targeting recruitment efforts in countries where Canada has a high rate of study permits being approved.

With these extraordinary efforts in place, TRU welcomed 679 new international students for Fall 2024. This number is lower than a year ago but meets overall SEM targets. However, this term's numbers are buoyed by deferrals from previous recruitment cycles, and it may be difficult to achieve similar levels in Winter 2025 and beyond.

Gabriel Miller, President of Universities Canada, has voiced concerns about the long-term impact of these policies. International students contribute substantially to university revenues and enrich campus life culturally and academically. The visa cap, combined with delays in processing, has created uncertainty, leading many prospective students to choose other destinations, such as the U.S., U.K., or Australia.

The effects of these immigration changes are being felt beyond enrollment numbers. Universities Canada has urged the federal government to work closely with educational institutions to refine the immigration system, ensuring Canada remains competitive in attracting global talent.

**IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ANTI-RACISM WORKING GROUP** — I am pleased to introduce TRU's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Fellows at TRU. This initiative reflects our commitment to fostering an anti-racist and inclusive environment across our campus.

The EDI Fellows will work closely with our Office of the Provost and the Executive Director of EDI and Anti-Racism and implement projects designed to address recommendations made by TRU's Anti-Racism Working Group. Here is a brief overview of the projects our EDI Fellows will lead:

- **Dr. Bodrun Nahar (Gaglardi School of Business and Economics)** — Dr. Nahar's project focuses on developing and implementing comprehensive anti-racism and allyship training for TRU faculty and staff. She will collect primary and secondary data through focus groups and feedback from racialized students, staff, and instructors to inform curriculum development. Her work aims to integrate anti-racist pedagogy into course offerings across various disciplines and provide ongoing support to faculty through curriculum reviews and training programs.
- **Dr. Wei Yan (Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching)** — Dr. Yan's project centres on launching a series of ongoing campaigns/events, lecture series and talks on anti-racism, as well as producing an onboarding and ongoing education set of modules for new staff and faculty to become educated on racism, racialization, and genuine ally-ship. His key focus areas at TRU have included creating a Community of Practice (CoP) to bring together faculty from diverse backgrounds and initiating a research project on how faculty navigate diversity in the classroom. Dr. Yan plans to develop a series of workshops on anti-racism literacy and allyship for delivery in early 2025.
- **Dr. Manu Sharma (Department of Education and Social Work)** — Dr. Sharma's project seeks to build partnerships with community organizations and develop anti-racism

initiatives through campaigns and outreach. Her work will also focus on encouraging self-disclosure of race and ethnicity within the TRU community. By leveraging connections with local and provincial organizations, Dr. Sharma will explore how other universities address similar anti-racism efforts, applying these insights to TRU's context.

- **Dr. Tanya Manning-Lewis (School of Education Graduate Programs)**—Dr. Manning-Lewis will lead an initiative to embed anti-racism curricula across foundational courses in TRU's baccalaureate degree programs. She will partner with faculty from multiple disciplines to develop anti-racist teaching modules, creating a community of practice to support instructors in integrating these practices. Her project includes piloting the curriculum and evaluating its impact on students and faculty through surveys and feedback.

These efforts are important to creating a campus where all students, faculty, and staff feel valued and supported.

**ACADEMIC INITIATIVES REPORTED AT SENATE** — At the September meeting of TRU's Senate, Provost and VP Academic Gillian Balfour gave a comprehensive overview of several initiatives underway at TRU, including:

- **TRU Bold** — One of the objectives identified by the provost as the result of Envision TRU was the creation of a robust Academic and Open Learning plan, to ensure TRU remains a provincial and national leader in delivering flexible, experiential, and research-driven education across its academic and trades programs. Consultations with TRU's community are ongoing, and a final draft of the plan is expected before the Senate and the Board later this year.
- **TRUly Flexible** — Work continues to reimagine and reinvent what Open Learning and online learning look like in years to come. The aftermath of the pandemic years shows that students expect flexible hybrid program delivery options. TRU is working to explore which courses are best suited for the possibility of hybrid delivery. DQAB approvals may be required depending on the extent and nature of changes suggested for modalities.
- **New wildfire-related certificate programs** — As TRU Wildfire becomes established, TRU is working to create a series of certificate-level courses related to wildfire education that serve the community and BCWS's need for this kind of training. Certificate courses have been proposed for the schools of Science, FACT, Arts and BGSoBE. It's hoped that these programs will be available for Fall 2025, following approvals at Senate and the Board later this year.

**NALOXONE KITS AND TRAINING AVAILABLE** — In response to the ongoing opioid crisis — including the toxic drug supply, which affects not only those with addiction but anyone using substances — TRU continues to expand its overdose prevention efforts. Unintentional overdose

remains the leading preventable cause of death in B.C., highlighting the critical need for widespread awareness and access to life-saving interventions like naloxone.

Naloxone, a life-saving medication that temporarily reverses opioid overdoses, is now more accessible across our campuses. Kits are available in key locations, ensuring quick access during emergencies. All AED wall cabinets will include nasal naloxone, and 21 additional naloxone-specific cabinets have been installed in student residences at the Kamloops campus. This means nearly 50 locations on TRU's Kamloops campus will be equipped with emergency life-saving supplies.

**TRU BREAKS GROUND ON LCDES** — TRU took a significant step forward in July in its journey to achieve zero carbon emissions with a groundbreaking ceremony for its Low-Carbon District Energy System (LCDES). This project, a collaboration between TRU, Creative Energy and BC Hydro, makes TRU one of the first universities in North America to reach zero carbon.

The ceremony, held at the future site of the Sustainability Powerhouse on the Kamloops campus, was attended by representatives from TRU, Creative Energy and BC Hydro, as well as local government officials and members of the community.

The LCDES will reduce the university's greenhouse gas emissions by 95 per cent — a bold step in combatting climate change. The LCDES will replace the university's aging natural gas boilers with a high-efficiency electrified district heating system powered by renewable electricity. This system will eliminate over 100,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over the next 30 years — the equivalent of planting a 4,000-acre forest.

## **Honouring Truth and Reconciliation**

**GROUNDBREAKING FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION CENTRE** — On September 19, TRU marked a significant milestone by breaking ground on the Indigenous Education Centre. This \$22-million investment represents a major step toward advancing Truth and Reconciliation at the university. The centre will provide critical space for Indigenous students and faculty, fostering cultural understanding and the exchange of knowledge. It will also serve as a hub for educational pathways and community engagement, incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the broader TRU learning environment.

The Indigenous Education Centre underscores TRU's commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive academic space for Indigenous learners. It will house academic and cultural programs to support Indigenous ways of knowing, fostering deeper connections between the university and local Indigenous communities. By offering dedicated resources and support, the centre is expected to enhance retention, academic success, and cultural pride among Indigenous students while also promoting greater understanding and reconciliation across the entire TRU community.

The centre will also serve as a bridge between TRU and Indigenous communities, strengthening partnerships and enabling collaborative initiatives supporting academic and community development. It aligns with provincial priorities around Indigenous education and provides a model for other institutions seeking to deepen their relationships with Indigenous communities.

Expected to open in late 2025, the Indigenous Education Centre will be a symbol of TRU's commitment to fostering an educational environment that honors the history, cultures, and contributions of Indigenous peoples. It also represents a forward-looking approach to supporting Indigenous learners and expanding the reach of Indigenous knowledge and leadership within TRU and beyond.

**STRENGTHENING RELATIONS IN WILLIAMS LAKE** — I'm pleased to share that TRU and the Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) signed a partnership agreement on September 9. While our relationship between the First Nation and TRU has always been meaningful and productive without an agreement, this partnership formalizes our collaboration in the spirit of respect and friendship.

The agreement includes a commitment to collaborate in the development and implementation of mutually beneficial and innovative programs for the St'élcelcenc people; to develop trades, training, and academic programs while incorporating St'élcelcenc ways of knowing, values, and philosophy; and to meet in the future to discuss ongoing and new initiatives.

**RECOGNIZING TRC DAY** — As we pass the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, I am reminded of the importance of reflecting on the past while working together towards a better future. This day is dedicated to honouring the survivors of residential schools and acknowledging the painful legacy that continues to affect Indigenous communities across Canada.

At TRU, we are committed to being part of this journey toward healing. This year, we created a video message featuring TRU Chancellor DeDe DeRose and Secwépemc Cultural Advisor Ted Gottfriedson. Their conversation touched on the generational trauma still felt by Indigenous families and communities while also highlighting the strength and resilience of those working towards healing.

I encouraged all members of the TRU community to listen to and reflect on their powerful words. Reconciliation begins with truth, and at TRU, we are committed to supporting Indigenous voices and perspectives at every level. [The video can be found here.](#)

**INDIGENOUS RESEARCHER ELECTED AS ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA FELLOW** — Dr. Rod McCormick, a member of the Mohawk (Kanien'kéha) First Nation and a professor and BC Innovation Chair in Indigenous Health at TRU, has been recognized for his scholarly achievements by the [Royal Society of Canada](#) (RSC).

Rod is [among 104 new Fellows](#) elected by their peers for their outstanding scholarly, scientific and artistic achievements. Recognition by the RSC is the highest honour an individual can achieve in the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Science. Rod's research has attracted more than \$50 million in funding for Indigenous health and mental health, suicide prevention, capacity building and community wellness.

As a global expert, McCormick regularly shares his knowledge with Indigenous communities, provincial and national governments and international organizations.

## **Leading in Community Research and Scholarship**

**TRU AND BC ON PANEL ABOUT APPROACH TO FIGHTING WILDFIRES** — TRU had the opportunity this past summer to join a panel session at the Pacific Northwest Economic Region's annual conference in Whistler addressing the challenges posed by climate change and wildfires.

Dr. Mike Flannigan and I joined B.C. Forests Minister Bruce Ralston and others for a panel discussion *called Fire Knows No Borders: Enhancing Disaster Response Capabilities through Technology and Collaboration*. Minister Ralston told the crowd the government's main goal in the face of wildfires is keeping people safe. At the gathering of more than 600 officials from state, provincial, and territorial governments, I shared information about TRU Wildfire, and Dr. Flannigan provided insights on wildfire trends.

Minister Ralston noted that the summer of 2023 was an especially tough fire season. Following the end of the season, the government struck a task force and conducted a review, which led to a series of recommendations. One significant recommendation was the need to enhance wildfire training, research and science, leading to B.C. Premier David Eby's announcement in April to create a first-of-its-kind training and research institute at Thompson Rivers University.

TRU Wildfire will link research, education, training and innovation to create a new model for interagency partnership and collaboration in wildfire mitigation, response and recovery. It will also work to incorporate Indigenous knowledge about cultural fires with cutting-edge science to produce more comprehensive wildfire mitigation and response strategies.

In early June, VP Research Shannon Wagner and VP Advancement Brian Daly represented TRU at the meeting of Canadian Council of Forest Ministers in Cranbrook on the invitation of the Honourable Bruce Ralston, Minister of Forests, Government of British Columbia.

Shannon and Brian met with forest officials from provincial and territorial governments across Canada, sharing information on TRU Wildfire, our research, education, training and innovation partnership with the BC Wildfire Service.

## **Eliminating Achievement Gaps**

**TRU FALL OPEN HOUSE 2024** — TRU will open its doors at the Kamloops campus to the community on Saturday, October 19, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The event begins with check-in at 9 a.m. and kicks off at 9:30 a.m. Open House headquarters are outside the Campus Activity Centre at the main stage.

This year's Open House is designed to engage a diverse audience. Prospective students can explore TRU's academic programs and connect with faculty and staff. Families and community members are also encouraged to interact with university representatives and enjoy various activities, including the Haunted Physics Lab, Solar Stargazing and a Fun Zone featuring cotton candy, games and photo opportunities with Wolfie, the Wolf Pack mascot.

Additional attractions include a barbeque and prize draws, with giveaways such as a full-semester tuition credit, an Apple Watch, Air Pods, and TRU merchandise. I encourage everyone at TRU to mark the date and come out to celebrate our campus.

TRU's Fall Open House is becoming one of our key activities to promote our institution to domestic students. It forms a key activity in TRU's Domestic Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

**INCREASED FINANCIAL AID FOR STUDENTS** — The Canadian government [has extended significant financial aid measures for the 2024-2025 academic year](#), responding to the rising cost of living. These include an increase in Canada Student Grants from \$3,000 to \$4,200, and interest-free Canada Student Loans increasing from \$210 to \$300 per week.

The government has also modernized rent supports, reflecting true housing costs, which will help around 79,000 students receive more financial aid.

## **Community Engagement and Partnerships**

**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS** — On October 19, 2024, British Columbians will vote to elect our provincial government. Over the past six months, I and members of the executive team have had the opportunity to meet with all party leaders.

We have briefed them on TRU priorities, including the TRU Wildfire partnership with the BC Wildfire Service, our priority infrastructure projects, and our sustainability goals. I look forward to continuing to work with the Premier (whoever it may be) following the election.

In another GR-related effort, TRU and other members of Universities Canada continue to engage with the federal government's initiative to establish a new overarching agency that would coordinate the efforts of Canada's three primary research granting councils: the Social Sciences



and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

The proposal for a capstone agency stems from a recognized need to enhance the coordination and efficiency of research funding in Canada. The current structure, with separate agencies for different research domains, sometimes leads to overlaps, gaps, and administrative complexities. By creating a unified agency, the government hopes to streamline processes, foster interdisciplinary research, and better align funding with national priorities.

TRU and other universities are participating in consultations to provide insights and feedback on the proposed agency's structure and mandate. They advocate for a model that considers the needs of institutions of varying sizes and research capacities, ensuring equitable access to funding opportunities.

Universities Canada is working with its members to develop policy recommendations emphasizing support for fundamental research across all disciplines.

**LETTER IN RESPONSE** — In late August, I received a letter from B'nai Brith Canada raising concerns about antisemitism on Canadian university campuses. I responded by reaffirming TRU's commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all community members.

Antisemitism, like all forms of discrimination, has no place at TRU. I made it clear to B'nai Brith that we take these issues seriously and will remain vigilant in addressing them. Maintaining an inclusive campus is a responsibility we all share, and I welcome ongoing input and dialogue to help us stay accountable.

**PARKING CHALLENGES AT TRU** — As is often the case in September, TRU has experienced parking, with students expressing frustration over a perceived shortage of parking spaces and alleging overselling of parking permits.

Although TRU does not guarantee a spot with the purchase of an economy or general permit, many students were reportedly unaware of this, causing dissatisfaction when spots were unavailable during peak times. Recent student concerns have reached social media and local media outlets, prompting TRU to reiterate that parking availability is on a first-come, first-served basis.

**CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT** — Here is a short list of recent events and meetings that have allowed me to connect with stakeholders. In recent months, government relations in connection with the development of TRU Wildfire and issues related to international students and immigration rule changes have taken a large part of the time of the executive, including our VP International, VP Research, and VP University Relations:

- RUCBC President's Planning Session – June 17

- China: Attended convocation ceremonies and partner visits June 19 – July 2
- PNWER Summit in Whistler. Guest Speaker – July 22 & 23
- Celebration event for Burns Lake area Indigenous cohort of water treatment operations certificate – July 26
- Vietnamese delegation, MOU signing and lunch – August 26
- New International student orientation – August 29
- LCDES ground-breaking event – August 29
- Back to Class BBQ – September 6
- President’s Circle Event – September 7
- People’s Republic of China in Vancouver – 75th anniversary celebration – September 12
- RUCBC President’s meeting – September 13
- Universities Canada: Meeting with the President – September 16
- Ottawa – Government relations meetings –September 17
- IEC ground-breaking event – September 19
- Continental Institute for International Students (CIIS) from India. Luncheon – Sept 24
- TRU TRC Day event – Sept 27