

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. There are also sections on Enabling Strategies/Operations, and International Development/Community.

Enabling Strategies/Operations

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS UPDATE — As you know, the federal government has capped the number of study permit applications that can be issued across Canada for international students. Provincial governments were given the task of allocating permits to institutions in each province.

Within an overall national cap of 606,250 study permit applications for 2024, B.C. was allocated 83,000 study permit applications, effective January 22, 2024. In early March, the B.C. government informed institutions across the province about the number of study permits each institution will likely receive, although this number may not yet be final.

In reaching its decision, the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills assessed federal data regarding past study permit authorizations and international-student ratios at each institution. Based on these data, the ministry allocated a specified number of provincial attestation letters to eligible public and private post-secondary institutions (PSIs) in B.C.

The distribution was 53 per cent for public PSIs and 47 per cent for private institutions. In making the allocations, the province noted its goal was to ensure that public PSIs with sustainable international enrolment could maintain their international student programs, while private institutions with unsustainable growth would be affected through reduced allocations ([see March 1, 2024, News Release](#)).

We appreciate that public institutions, including TRU, benefitted from this process. The B.C. government's speedy response and efforts to bring a degree of clarity will allow us to begin moving forward with more certainty in the coming months.

However, we will remain vigilant about our international student numbers in the coming year. Various factors contribute to this caution; however, the primary factor is prospective students' declining perceptions of Canada as an educational destination.

The continuing lack of clarity around the federal government's changes to the international student program, combined with the extensive media coverage of "bad actors," has left students feeling confused or discouraged about applying to study in Canada. The negative impact on Canada's

“brand” in overseas markets has the potential to impact our enrolment and budgetary targets for the coming year.

Faced with these concerns, TRU World has adjusted its recruitment strategy. The team at TRU World, with 40 years of experience in international education, is a strategic asset for TRU, as are particular programs that draw applicants to our university. TRU’s strong reputation and student service-focused approach ensure we will do well compared to others in the challenging environment we now face.

Lastly, I want to thank our IT and international admissions teams, which helped the B.C. government develop the attestation letters and the processes for issuing and receiving them. TRU is now receiving and issuing the letters, as our other institutions in B.C. This kind of collaboration with the government sets TRU up as a key partner and will undoubtedly help us in the future.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY — March 8 was International Women’s Day, a day that not only celebrates women’s and girls’ achievements but also recognizes the importance of rights and acknowledges challenges. The theme for this year’s day was Inspire Inclusion.

I want to thank Provost Gillian Balfour and political science assistant professor Saira Bano, as well as numerous students, for taking part in a special video talking about the importance of this day. Their discussion, which was shared internally on TRU Connect and externally via social media, shared important insights and context around the importance of this occasion. You can find the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6-ym2nAu3g>

BUILDING STRENGTH, SUPPORTS FOR EDI AND AR — It’s been just over six months since Pauline Streete joined TRU as Executive Director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDI and AR). The EDI and AR Office has already made progress in building internal strength and moving towards a more equitable and inclusive working and learning space. The following provides an overview of work underway or on the near horizon:

- EDI Conference May 29-30 — Planning is underway for the EDI and AR Office’s first EDI conference to take place May 29 to 30 at the Campus Activity Centre. Faculty, staff and students are welcome to attend.
- New website — Please explore [the revised web pages dedicated to EDI and AR](#). A larger presence on the website is one of the many ways that TRU demonstrates a commitment to EDI-AR.

- Internal committees — Two new committees are now in place to advise the executive director of EDI and AR and guide the advancement of recommendations made by the AR Task Force. Also, an EDI and AR Faculty Committee of volunteer faculty members from each school and faculty has been established, with members serving as intermediaries between the EDI and AR Office. Their role allows for tremendous opportunities for collaboration.
- Five-year service plan — Along with all departments, faculties and schools, the EDI and AR Office is developing its five-year service plan, which will provide an overview of priorities and planned work.
- Staffing updates — The office is pleased to welcome Tristan Muhr, Research Assistant to the team and looks forward to hiring a manager of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The office said farewell to Tehmina Kwaja, whose contract concluded at the end of December.

ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS MASTER PLAN BEGINS — As shared [earlier this month](#), TRU’s 2013 Campus Master Plan will be updated and include opportunities for students, faculty and staff to provide input. Now is the time for faculty and staff to provide input by filling out this short, five-minute survey. [Complete the Campus Master Plan survey](#) by Friday, March 15

Feedback will be incorporated into a proposed update to the Campus Master Plan, which will be presented to the Board of Governors. If you have thoughts, ideas, and concerns about the future of the Kamloops campus, please be sure to have your voice heard.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT — Here is a list of recent events and meetings that have allowed me to connect with stakeholders:

- Feb 13 — Meeting with provincial government officials in Victoria
- Feb 23 — New Chancellor (Dede Derose) announcement and welcome
- Feb 27 — Presentation to City of Kamloops Council regarding Summit Drive overpass
- March 4 — Universities Canada Research Committee meeting
- March 4 — Event honoring outgoing TRU Chancellor Nathan Mathew
- March 5 — Elders luncheon
- March 7 — ESTRs 10-Year Anniversary celebration
- March 11 — UNFAO/Knowledge Makers opening
- March 13/14 — Meetings in Ottawa with:
 - China’s Ambassador
 - Prime Minister’s Office
 - Global Affairs Canada-International Trade Office
 - Immigration and Refugee Services Canada
 - Opposition Leaders
 - Policy advisors
- March 15 — IDays Showcase

DAY OF GIVING EXCEEDS GOAL BY OVER \$33,000 — TRU’s seventh annual Day of Giving on February 29 raised \$81,591.50 for TRU students at the Kamloops and Williams Lake campuses last week, smashing the goal to raise \$48,000 in 48 hours.

A total of 223 donors — including alumni, long-time individual supporters, organizations and new contributors — chose from several areas to make their donation during the campaign, held Feb. 29 and March 1.

This year’s donors also include 90 current TRU students who visited the Day of Giving booth on campus, at which they allocated \$970 provided by an anonymous donor to the funds of their choice.

Eliminating Achievement Gaps

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN OPEN EDUCATION — I want to congratulate Natasha Ramroop Singh, an assistant teaching professor in TRU’s Department of Biological Sciences, on being recognized by BCcampus in February with an Award for Excellence in Open Education.

Natasha was recognized for her significant contributions to open education as an author and avid adopter of open textbooks in the subject areas of chemistry, genetics and biochemistry. Her efforts have resulted in annual savings of more than \$50,000 for students.

Natasha promotes the adoption of open educational resources (OER), serving as a member of the [TRU Open Education Working Group](#), collaborating with the newly minted TRU Open Press and advocating for OER within her faculty.

Since 2019, she has been an assistant teaching professor in the Biological Sciences Department. She teaches approximately 300 students each academic year, covering introductory biology, biochemistry and genetics in courses ranging from first to fourth year.

Natasha’s work on open textbooks aligns with her role as a content expert and course developer for [TRU Open Learning](#). She revised three TRU courses by creating and adapting open textbooks — BIOL 2341: Introduction to Genetics, BIOL 1113: Principles of Biology I and CHEM 1503: Chemical Bonding and Organic Chemistry. In February 2023,

She published [Introduction to Genetics](#), an open textbook featuring videos, practice questions and interactive H5P activities. This textbook was created with the support of a [TRU OER Development Grant](#). In the same year, Natasha created two open textbook adaptations: [Chemical Bonding and Organic Chemistry](#) and [Introduction to Biology](#). All three of her open textbook projects have been part of the [Zero Textbook Cost initiative at TRU](#).

2024 MERIT AWARD WINNERS — Every year TRU faculty and staff make extraordinary contributions that change the lives of our students, colleagues and wider community for the better. Through a process involving peer nominations and review, committees from the Research Office, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), and People and Culture recommend a few for special recognition. I am pleased to announce this year’s Merit Award recipients:

President's Distinguished Teacher Award

- Michelle Borgland, School of Nursing

Faculty Excellence Awards

- Dr. Laura Doan, Faculty of Education and Social Work
- Dr. Florriann Fehr, School of Nursing
- Shyann Vosper, Faculty of Student Development

Award for Excellence in Interculturalization

- Heather Hamilton, School of Trades and Technology
- Roxane Letterlough, Faculty of Education and Social Work

President’s Distinguished Scholar Award

- Dr. Matthew Reudink, Faculty of Science

Distinguished Service Awards

- Curtis Atkinson, Athletics and Recreation
- Alana Frymire, Faculty of Education and Social Work
- Val Jacobs, Faculty of Student Development
- Kathy Lauriente, Williams Lake and the Regions

Congratulations to these colleagues for their outstanding teaching, research, and service! We will celebrate our Merit Awards recipients and 179 dedicated colleagues receiving Long-Term Service pins at the President's Annual Merit and Long-Term Service Awards ceremony on Wednesday, April 24, from 9 to 11 a.m. in the Grand Hall, CAC.

TRU RESEARCHERS AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS FEDERAL GRANTS — Three professors at TRU are among faculty from across Canada to receive some of the \$1.7 billion in research funds awarded by the federal government this year.

SSHRC Insight Development Grants support research in its initial stages, building knowledge and understanding about people, societies and the world by supporting research excellence in the social sciences and humanities. These grants were awarded to:

- Dr. Scott Rankin, business and economics — New theories of people management in social enterprise. The research team, led by Scott Rankin and Salvador Barragan, along with Bruce Martin, Tolulope Oluwafemi and Melanie Reed, is studying human resource management and leadership within social enterprises and social-purpose organizations. These are businesses that try to accomplish social and environmental impacts or goals, as opposed to for-profit businesses. This research will be passed on to future social enterprise managers and contribute to their ability to achieve social missions more effectively.
- Dr. Kimberly Thomas-François, tourism — Information communication technology at hotels: A route to sustainable development. Thomas-François aims to generate knowledge on the level of technological integration at hotels in Canada. She will assess the willingness of Canadian hotels to integrate technology into their day-to-day operations in a manner that improves their overall sustainability. A higher level of integration may also contribute to more efficient and sustainable operations and help address some concerns, such as labour shortages in the sector.

NSERC Alliance Grants encourage collaboration between researchers and partners from different sectors to generate new knowledge and apply research results for Canada's benefit. This grant was awarded to:

- Dr. Omer Waqar, engineering — Scalable and trustworthy machine learning over the wireless edge networks. In partnership with his global collaborators from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, Waqar plans to design innovative machine learning models that are scalable and trustworthy. These models will be designed with a distributed architecture, making them ideal for deployment over the wireless edge networks. Additionally, they plan to develop customized radio resource management strategies tailored to support the unique requirements of the distributed machine learning models. Waqar received his NSERC Alliance International Catalyst Grant while at TRU and currently holds an assistant professor role at the University of the Fraser Valley.

The [Research Support Fund](#) provides a portion of the costs associated with managing the research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Natural Science and Engineering Council (NSERC), such as salaries for staff who provide administration support, training costs for workplace health and safety, and library maintenance.

Honouring Truth, Reconciliation, and Rights

IDAYS & COYOTE BRINGS FOOD CONFERENCE — TRU once again hosted our annual IDays from March 11 to 15, celebrating the cultural diversity brought by international students from 103 countries. Several events were held on campus throughout the week, culminating in the Days Showcase on March 15. As always, this was a lively, colourful event that featured students' performances. The passion students bring to this event shows their cultural pride and their deep desire and willingness to share their heritage with others.

As part of this year's IDays, TRU hosted the two-day Coyote Brings Food Conference to celebrate a special research partnership between TRU's Knowledge Makers and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (UNFAO).

The conference spotlighted the launch of the Special Edition Knowledge Makers Journal Volume 8, titled "Indigenous Women, Indigenous Peoples' Food and Knowledge Systems, and Climate Action," showcasing the work of 16 Indigenous women authors. The event's second day focused on Indigenous research, featuring discussions with the FAO, Knowledge Makers alumni, Elders, and Indigenous scholars from TRU and other institutions.

This gathering marked the culmination of a partnership that began in 2022 between TRU's All My Relations Indigenous Research Centre and the FAO. The collaboration aimed to enhance research opportunities for Indigenous women through a special edition of the TRU Knowledge Makers Program.

A global call was issued, attracting 101 applicants from 30 countries. From this pool, 16 Indigenous Women from diverse backgrounds were selected to contribute to this edition. The program was led by TRU All My Relations directors Dr. Rod McCormick and Jeneen HERN-Jensen, alongside TRU faculty, staff, and Indigenous Elders, and in partnership with TRU World.

Over the course of a year, Dr. Sereana Naepi, along with fellow Indigenous facilitators and Elders, guided the research cohort through an online course, group discussions, mentorship, and a writing process. This effort produced peer-reviewed research articles on topics vital to their communities, aiming to promote the recognition of Indigenous women's knowledge and amplify their voices in decision-making processes.

This conference at TRU marked the completion of this special program. It aligned with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), emphasizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and particularly focusing on Indigenous women's rights.

By valuing the voices of Indigenous scholars and integrating their wisdom with global initiatives, the partnership addressed immediate challenges such as food security and climate change and contributed to a larger narrative of respect, sustainability, and inclusivity.

It was an honour to welcome the attendees at this conference, including four members of the UNFAO and several of the journal authors. Thank you to all who participated in this event.

Leading in Community Research and Scholarship

JOHN CHURCH IPL— On March 26, Professor John Church gave a public lecture as part of the Inaugural Professorial Lecture series on Precision Ranching Technology.

Precision ranching technology is revolutionizing remote data collection from livestock and the land base they depend on. Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS or drone) based remote sensing to data has been used to assess intensive cropping, but RPAS systems equipped with interchangeable cameras: high-resolution visual, thermal, LiDAR, and multi/hyperspectral imagers are now being deployed on pasture to monitor subtle changes in the visible, near infrared and infrared spectrums (radiation) that both plants and animals reflect.

A single RPAS system can now be used simultaneously for high-quality vegetation mapping and the location, identification, and behavioural analysis of animals, providing new tools for studying livestock in various landscapes and rugged terrain. Precision breeding techniques enable the development of new lines of climate-adapted cattle that are better able to withstand future extreme weather events. Additionally, equipping these cattle with new tracking technology, including “smart” GPS ear tags, rumen boluses, and wireless fencing collars (based on low-earth orbit satellites and cellular networks) enables animals to be readily identified and tracked on the landscape while providing invaluable physiological data, such as body temperature, to monitor estrous, heat stress, or the onset of disease.

Finally, the new wireless fencing systems have the potential to improve animal management through autonomous mustering or adaptive multi-paddock grazing for use in regenerative agriculture efforts and will improve the sustainability of future livestock production systems.

An inaugural professorial lecture is given by tenured faculty members who have recently been promoted to full professor positions. IPLs are a recognized way for universities to celebrate this milestone event publicly.

International Development / Building Our Community

INPUT ON STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALIZATION PLAN — TRU is in the process of creating our first pan-institutional strategic internationalization plan. This work will help guide, develop, and inform decision-making across the institution in matters related to international education and research.

Your work and perspective as part of the TRU community hold valuable insights into shaping the future of global connections at TRU. Every interaction, from fostering understanding across cultures to collaborating on global projects, contributes to our collective journey toward embracing global citizenship. Whether you are faculty or support staff, we believe you have valuable input to contribute to the planning process.

Sessions are underway to seek input as part of our development of TRU's first Strategic Internationalization Plan. Your contribution is integral to shaping the future of global connections at TRU. Learn more and register for an engagement session at tru.ca/sip.