

## **President's Report to the Board**

For the period from March 27 to June 11, 2020  
Submitted to the TRU Board of Governors  
By Brett Fairbairn, President and Vice-Chancellor

This report summarizes progress to date on priorities of the executive team for 2020/2021. It also includes university highlights since the last reporting period.

### **Priorities**

#### Institutional Resilience and Capacity-Building:

##### *Leadership and culture*

**Executive Update**—TRU is pleased to have our new Vice-President University Relations (VPUR) Brian Daly now in place. Arriving May 1 and during a pandemic, Brian has spent his first several weeks orienting himself with TRU and its people in a virtual and socially-distant way. Brian is enthusiastic and looking forward to advancing TRU's priorities and its relationships in the year ahead. Brian's arrival also has formalized the new "president's executive" structure which consists of the president, three vice-presidents and the university solicitor (head of TRU's governance secretariat).

**Dean appointments**— Dr. Greg Anderson joins TRU July 1 as Dean of the Faculty of Science. An award-winning educator and scientist in the fields of occupational, environmental and stress physiology, Greg comes to TRU from the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC), where he held the position of Dean in the Office of Applied Research and Graduate Studies since 2011. His diverse portfolio as dean included oversight of the Centre for Research, Innovation and Scholarship, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Innovation, and Centre for Liberal and Graduate Studies.

In April, we were pleased to announce the appointment of Bryan Daly as Associate Dean, Williams Lake Campus, a position he has held on an interim basis since 2018. Bryan has been an incredible asset to TRU, involved with the university for three decades holding positions in a variety of areas including health, sciences, engineering, and trades and technology programs.

Leading one of our largest schools, Mike Henry was reappointed in May to a second term as Dean of the School of Business and Economics (SoBE). During his first term as dean, Mike has overseen the creation of the faculty's five-year strategic plan (2018-2022), managed enrolment growth of 40%, and prepared and implemented an action plan for professional accreditation of SoBE programs. Mike is known for his tireless efforts on behalf of students and the community.

The search continues to progress for an AVP Advancement, an integral role within the University Relations portfolio.

Finally, I'd like acknowledge the support of different leaders within TRU for filling interim appointments as we finalize our search for a new Dean of Law. Chris Adam, who has held the role of Dean of Students, Faculty of Student Development since joining TRU in June 2010, will assume the position of Interim Dean for the Faculty of Law for three months starting July 1. Sara Wolfe will continue in her role as Acting Dean of Students, a role she began in January to support Chris during her six-month administrative leave. And a thank you to Dennis Acreman who has been interim Dean of Law since January.

**Resiliency in pandemic**—an overarching priority for the executive this year is to develop resiliency as an institution. This priority, in a pre-pandemic context, meant among other things financial resiliency and sustainability, an engaged workforce and strong culture. All of these are being put to the test as we navigate our way through a global pandemic. Financial sustainability, a conversation we began having more than a year ago in regards to stable and predictable enrolment, has taken on a new meaning as we address the impact of COVID-19 on our operating budget. And the development of a more engaged and strong workforce has also taken on new meaning, as we endeavor to stay connected while working remotely. Increased use of technology, connecting via new platforms, and more frequent communication and touchpoints with employees is one result, a positive result, of this pandemic. There is also more collaboration and teamwork, as we've shifted from on-campus education and service delivery to virtual delivery.

**Adapting our plans**—Since March, much of the university's focus has been planning around COVID-19. Finishing the last few weeks of the winter term in alternative delivery formats; planning for spring and summer sessions; planning for a virtual convocation; and now planning for a fall semester primarily off-campus. Add to that, the non-academic support and planning—of supporting students in financial crisis, in health and mental health distress, in navigating non-university supports such as provincial and federal assistance programs, and also addressing the unique questions and concerns from our international students. As we look to the fall, our attention has been on reaching out to students—through enrolment services, through TRU World, through marketing and through communications to let them know that in spite of COVID-19, TRU is here. A major message is that, while how we *do* education may differ, the value of an education remains.

## Strategic Change Goals:

### *Students – Balance and Achievement Gaps*

**Enrolment planning and student recruitment**—The pandemic has accentuated issues of balance and equity in student recruitment, making more urgent the work that was envisaged when TRU's new Vision Statement was adopted. In the short term, Marketing and Communications and TRU World have undertaken new recruitment initiatives that include advertising, working with key stakeholders such as recruitment

agents and guidance counsellors, and hosting online meetings and making telephone calls with current and prospective students. Goals include to ensure students consider the option of learning in alternative formats, and to meet the domestic and international targets for enrolment including appropriate balance where possible within these categories. In the medium term, issues of equitable access to the preconditions for alternate learning have become more urgent (such as stable and affordable broadband internet, and study space for those who may lack it at home).

### *Truth, Reconciliation and Rights*

**Honouring Secwépemc and Indigenous Culture**—As committed in TRU’s 2020 Vision Statement, a first priority is to honour our host houses of our campuses, Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc for our Kamloops campus and T’exelc for Williams Lake as well as their Secwépemc culture and belief systems. One important early project, the translation of the Vision Statement into Secwepemctsin by Secwépemc Elders, has been delayed by the pandemic. Initial work is underway to expand information on Secwépemc knowledge and ways on TRU’s website as a resource for students, faculty, and employees.

### *Research Leadership*

**Community-oriented research in a pandemic**—TRU’s role as an open-access research university means our faculty respond to issues relevant to our communities, and this is no less true when there is a pandemic. The Research office maintains an up-to-date [website](#) of pandemic-related research at TRU, including projects funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC); the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC); and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). TRU [Research News](#) provides an overview of current projects. Of note is that research activity at TRU is continuing through the pandemic. A new Interior University Research Coalition *Rapid Deployment Health Research Program* has been funded by BC’s Ministry of Health, and will address COVID-related issues locally and regionally. At this time, we have five COVID-related projects underway. Additionally, 147 students are currently engaged in a variety of funded research projects.

### *Lifelong learning*

**Shift in learning and teaching**—this strategic change goal in our new Vision Statement imagines a future where TRU will adapt and combine modes of learning, teaching and practical experience to create a seamless, flexible array of educational opportunities designed to meet the changing needs of learners at various stages in their lives and vocations. The reality is, our efforts have accelerated as the pandemic has caused us to change how we “normally” provide education. Depending on area of study, students entering fall term will have learning in synchronous or asynchronous formats of virtual learning, and in limited situations face-to-face.

**Opening up education**—Headlines early this month in several news outlets featured the lead role TRU is taking in making university education more accessible around the

world. TRU is the first North American institution to offer an international credential transfer based on open educational resources that are available free online. It is also among the first in the world to recognize micro-credit transfer toward a university-level qualification. This is one way for individuals with internet access to pursue a post-secondary education step by step regardless of their income, time constraints or geographic location. For more, [see the story](#) on TRU's newsroom.

## 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](#).

- Students—four graduate students are the recipients of entrance scholarships valued at \$15,000 each, representing a significant investment by the Province of BC through the [BC Graduate Scholarship Fund](#). The merit-based awards are granted to students in research-focused and professional programs. This year's recipients are Jesse Biddlecombe, Nick Fontaine and Fauve Garson, enrolled in the Master of Science in Environmental Science program, and Michelle Delany in the Master of Nursing program.
- Helping faculty make the transition—staff with the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and Open Learning's Learning Technology and Innovations team have been instrumental in helping faculty make the switch from traditional classroom-based courses to virtual delivery. With resources such as "Pivot to Digital" and a crash course called "So You Hate Moodle," faculty have been eager to sign up and learn. For more on these great employees and their efforts, [read here](#).
- Students supporting the frontlines—Whether they were enrolled in the Health Care Assistant Certificate program, in nursing, or in respiratory health, a number of TRU students graduated a few weeks early this spring and were able to support the health-care frontlines in the response to COVID-19. Included was Justine Shaw, [one of 65 students](#) from TRU's respiratory therapy program, who noted while it was a "bizarre way" to start her career, it was also a proud moment.