

THE OPEN STANDARD

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE OPEN LEARNING DIVISION OF THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

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TRU-OL student picks up prestigious award



STUART GRAHAM

Open Learning student Stuart Graham picked up the top prize for diploma graduates June 7th at TRU's Kamloops Convocation Ceremonies. Stuart, who was born and raised in Vancouver, completed his diploma in Management Studies through Open Learning while working full time. He still managed to end up with the highest grade point average of all TRU diploma graduates in the past year, and was awarded the 2007 Governor General's Collegiate Bronze Medal. Recently married to another TRU graduate, Stuart plans to keep working in Vancouver.



OPEN LEARNING BUILDING

Now open

People have moved to Kamloops from all over BC and Canada to help TRU-OL fulfill its mandate of becoming the university of choice for open and distance learning.

An employer of note in this small Interior city, Open Learning has hired 90 people since January, with more positions to be filled, and its first impact on the community has been in the housing market. Without a doubt, part of Kamloops' boom in home sales and construction, which saw 1551 home sales in the past 12 months, up from 1538 the year before, and 780 new dwelling units built, up

from 584 the previous year, is due to an influx of new employees, many who have already bought new homes and settled in to the community.

People like Deborah van den Hoogen of Burnaby, who came on the first bus tour sponsored by TRU and decided to make the move as soon as possible.

"Kamloops gave me a good feeling, like I was coming home. I bought a house on the river in February and moved in May 25th. I cried when I had to go back to Burnaby on May 27th."

Van den Hoogen, whose husband has since relocated as well, is looking forward to trying her luck on the lakes: "I haven't gone fishing in ages."

Community was a big factor for Diana Thompson, who came from Saltspring Island via Prince George to take a job as Manager of

Admissions and Advising for the new division, which delivers about 220 TRU distance courses, with another 200 delivered through consortium partners.

Thompson, who is still house-hunting, noted, "I like this size of community. It's a good size, but people are committed to balance, to a good quality of life. They're friendly and helpful. It's a great community to live in."

Kamloops' size and amenities were also a draw for Troy Hanschen, who came from Courtenay to head up Enrolment Services for the organization which serves approximately 12,000 learners at any given time.

"I'm an Interior boy, originally from Prince George. I love the vibrancy of Kamloops and my partner and I want to raise our child in a small community that has a range of activities and a family-type atmosphere," he explained.

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On top of the three dozen or so employees who have come from all over BC to take up positions at TRU-OL, a handful has come from east of the Rockies, from Banff, Calgary, Toronto, and elsewhere.

It's a long way from Montreal for André Larouche, TRU-OL's new Manager of Business Intelligence. He and his wife, a physician, moved to Kamloops with their three young sons, a 12-year-old and a pair of 11-year-old twins, last summer when she was offered a position at RIH's new psychiatric centre. Not sure if they were going to like the community enough to stay, Larouche took a year-long sabbatical from his position with the Montreal-based National Bank of Canada.

André and his sons spoke no English when they arrived in August; now, all three are fluent in the language and committed to Kamloops. The boys are already involved in minor hockey and lacrosse, and Larouche, who played at the junior level as a youth, has held two goalie clinics and joined an old-timers hockey team.

"This is a community with well-organized sports," he commented. "We came to see how we'd like the life here with our three little boys. We just love it," he said. "This town is big enough to have all the services we need, but it doesn't have all the problems of a big city. We as a family feel a sense of community here."

And Kamloops is all the richer for becoming home to Open Learning and its many resourceful and talented employees and their families.



JENNIFER READ

Just arrived from Toronto, Jennifer Read, TRU-OL Marketing & Communications Manager, enjoys the view of the TRU campus from her new office in the BCCOL building.



DIANE PURVEY

TRU professor garners prestigious study grant

TRU-OL history tutor Diane Purvey has just received notice that she and 14 co-applicants from other universities in Canada, the US and the UK have garnered a grant of \$24,972 per year for a five-year period from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for a study entitled "Open Doors / Closed Ranks: Locating Mental Health after the Asylum." A collaborative research project which will explore a broad set of questions central to improving understanding of the deinstitutionalization of mental health care in Canada, the study will involve a multi-regional, multi-disciplinary research team of scholars drawn from history, sociology, community psychology, criminology, human geography and nursing. The study will afford insights into contemporary

challenges faced by patients, social workers, nurses, psychiatrists, local residents and policy makers and will contribute to current debates about mental health service provision, providing an essential historical context for those currently working in the field. "We plan to undertake three inter-related community studies which will focus on the experiences of deinstitutionalization in rural Saskatchewan, small-town Nova Scotia, and urban Vancouver," said Purvey, who is also a faculty member in TRU's School of Education. She is involved in the Vancouver study, but her BC Interior locale may soon be involved as well, however, as Purvey recently submitted an application for funding to research a Kamloops focus.

NEWS BRIEFS

TRU-OL launches unique on-line Trades & Technology degree

TRU has come up with an innovative way to help to fill a growing need for skilled tradespersons with the business and leadership knowledge needed for management and other advanced positions with its new Bachelor of Technology in Trades and Technology Leadership degree program.

The only one of its kind in Canada, the BTTL, which is taking its first cohort of students now, is aimed at allowing certified tradespeople to earn a degree related to their trade, and will primarily be offered through on-line study.



JUDITH MURRAY, TRU-OL VP

Open Dialogue with Judith Murray

TRU-OL VP Judith Murray dishes the details to Open Standard

OS: The term “open learning” seems to be open to interpretation. What does TRU mean when it says “open learning”?

JM: Open learning is a philosophy of education based on three foundational principles: open access to education, the ability to transfer credits, and the ability to use prior learning and experience to complete credentials faster.

OS: When you say open access, what do you mean, exactly?

JM: Open access to education means few if any prerequisites for entry to courses and/or programs, enrolment in courses without having to enrol in a program, the option for students to try their hand at going to university one course at a time and knowing that they will be supported along the way.

OS: Sounds great, especially the part about being supported along the way. What do you mean by that?

JM: We will achieve our vision to become the institution of choice for open, distance and on-line learning in British Columbia and beyond by offering

exceptional service to learners, not just through the admissions process but throughout your entire studies with us. We have set high standards for customer service and are constantly striving to improve even further. Student support services are a big part of this.

OS: According to the enrolment figures, you have more than 12,000 students at any given time. How will you get students to feel like more than just a number?

JM: Our mantra is to be customer focused and student centred from inquiry through graduation. We will focus on what is in the best interests of the learner.

OS: Your fees are lower than at a face-to-face university. How can you offer the same or better level of student service?

JM: Of course, we have to balance our desire to meet the needs of learners with the fact that we are a publicly funded institution spending public dollars. But we are part of a face-to-face campus based university, so we can take advantage of support systems that are already in place, like IT support, First Nations Services and disability coordinators, to name a few.

OS: On another topic, when you say “the ability to transfer credits,” is this all-inclusive? I mean, what about the person who took a few courses here, moved somewhere else, took some more courses, but never really finished a credential?

JM: At TRU-OL, we have the ability to transfer in a significant portion of the credits needed to complete a program from one or more institutions a student may have attended in the past, because a student completing a program through TRU-OL only needs to complete two OL courses, of a 40-course program, to get a TRU credential.

OS: You mean through TRU, they can pull together all the bits and pieces and get a “true” credential at last (grins). What about the person who took some courses way back when, and has worked ever since?

JM: TRU-OL also has the ability to evaluate learning gained through past experience and apply that learning to program requirements to help students reach their learning goals faster and

complete their credential without having to repeat learning.

OS: I’m sure that’s a relief for the full-time worker trying to keep their job, get ahead in their career and still get the kids to ball practice. Which brings us to the next point: I’ve heard that TRU-OL has learning options for everyone. Can you explain?

JM: Open learning is offered in a variety of formats. At TRU-OL we are focussed on distance delivery. We offer our courses and programs for self-directed study in both print and web formats, as well as a directed study format in with a specific start and end date, and a structured progression through the material. The directed study format is what most people would think of as on-line education.

OS: When you talk about what most people would think, that brings to mind the fact that there are a lot of on-line education providers out there. How are you going to stand out?

JM: By providing an exceptional level of service, flexible delivery options and also because we’re part of a traditional brick and mortar comprehensive university fully accredited by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

OS: Is it working?

JM: Let’s put it this way. We’re not at full capacity yet, but we’re going to get there. When the government gave TRU the responsibility for the former BC Open University in 2005, enrolments had already dropped from a high of over 34,000 in 2001 to 20,500 at the time of acquisition in 2005. Last year we had just over 16,000 enrollments. Let’s just say we haven’t turned this runaway horse around, but we’re starting to pull it up.

OS: Which reminds me, you used to be quite a horsewoman. Do you want to talk about that?

JM: I am not sure that I would describe myself as “quite a horsewoman” but we can discuss that next time. I’ve got to interview a potential director in five minutes. Gotta run.

OS: Gallop, you mean.

Next issue: OS trots out some questions for Judith about horse sense and business intelligence.



GORDON TARZWELL AND COLIN JAMES

What's the difference?

There were teary eyes and a lot of hugs at Colin James's retirement social in June: Colin leaves a lot of friends who have fond memories of his antics and activities since he came to TRU in 1981.

Colin has been an Instructor, Department Chair, Acting Director, Dean of Science, Associate VP, Academic, Chief Operating Officer, Open Learning, and Associate Vice-President, Open Learning during his stay at TRU, and served on 45 internal and 12 external university liaison committees as well as with a number of community organizations. He received a TRU Distinguished Service award in 1995. Now that he's retired, he can put more time into his hobby: he's been collecting Hot Wheels since the first one came off the assembly line in 1968.

The Welsh aren't known for their physical size, but Colin will leave some big shoes to fill. Luckily, nobody has to do so. His position as Associate Vice-President, Academic and Chief Operating Officer, Open Learning Division, aimed at ensuring that the Burnaby activities continued to function, with all managers reporting to him and their various superiors in Kamloops in a complex cross-functional structure, has been retired along with Colin.

Under the new structure, Associate Vice President, Open Learning Gordon Tarzwell has specific accountabilities and a reporting structure entirely different from Colin's.

"Generally the difference between Colin's job and mine is that I am not responsible for registration, admission, IT, library, finance, marketing, and the like," says Gordon, who came to TRU in 1991 after earning a PhD in economics from Queen's University.

He's got some heavy responsibilities: course and program delivery; all activities between students and tutors; the enforcement and creation, in consultation with the deans, of Open Learning academic policies; determining the direction of expansion of programs and courses within the OL structure; student assessments; ensuring that TRU-OL lives up to its educational contractual obligations with external academic agencies and corporations; ensuring that all program students receive accurate and timely advising; ensuring that our PLAR system is credible, efficient, and cost effective; and ensuring that the credit bank is operational, efficient, and cost effective.

He's up to the challenge, though. In his 16 years at TRU, he's served as Instructor, Department Chair, and Interim Academic Director of Business and Economics with Open Learning before his appointment as AVP, where he is finding many practical applications for his areas of academic specialization, public finance and labour economics.

He also found time during a busy academic career to publish four articles in peer-reviewed journals, develop four working papers, make four presentations at scholarly conferences, serve as a reviewer for three academic journals, and consult for Indian bands, private industry, government, and the World Bank. Off-campus, Gordon has been active with and served as president of four community organizations.

But despite the major differences in their duties, Colin and Gordon may be more alike than they realize.

Not to be outdone by Colin's quirky Hot Wheels obsession, Gordon collects chandeliers.

"I like the funky, cheap ones. I get them at yard sales, second-hand shops, and such. I've never paid more than \$15 for one," he says.

And what does one do with all those chandeliers?

"Sometimes I take them out, put coloured lights in them, and hang them in trees when I have parties."

What? No chandeliers in the office?

TECH IT UP!

Find out how you can enhance instruction with technology using curriculum tools and emerging technologies at the 2nd annual Tech it Up! summer institute August 23 & 24. To register or find out more, go to www.tru.ca/techtup, email techtup@tru.ca or call 250-852-6817.

YOUR NAME HERE

Want to see your news, achievements and activities in the Open Standard? Contact Bronwen at bscott@tru.ca.

NEWS BRIEFS

Love, ethics, and a brand-new major

Does life have meaning? Students can now complete a philosophy major at TRU and explore questions like this and look at issues involving ethics and reasoning in health care, research, law, religion, and even those thorniest of age-old human conundrums, sex and love.

And if some out there are still wondering, not in an existential way, but in terms of practical outcomes, 'What's the point?' here it is: philosophy graduates have a proven track record of successful entry into law school and graduate management programs, outperforming students from other fields on the Law School Admission Test, the Graduate Management Admission Test, and the Graduate Record Examination.

To find out more about this new option, please contact Bruce Baugh at 250-371-5581 or email: bbaugh@tru.ca

TRU now enrolling students in first Master Degree in Environmental Science program

Ten students to be selected over the summer are expected to begin TRU's new Master of Science in Environmental Science degree program when it's offered for the first time this September.

The result will be the next generation of scientists and policy-makers who understand the complexities of environmental systems from a wide range of contexts, can provide effective, feasible, and creative solutions critical in maintaining a strong, sustainable resource-based economy, and will be able to respond to a regional need to address specific environmental concerns such as post-fire logging management practices, restoration of grasslands and wetlands, the integrity of southern interior BC environments, and environmental tourism.

To find out more about this program, call Lauchlan Fraser at 250-377-6135.

Get connected

Okay, it's not exactly a dating site, but the TRU Alumni Association's "new and improved" online community social networking tool could lead to some great connections.

The Online Community Network (OLC), a social networking tool for alumni, students, faculty and staff of TRU, includes blogs, photo albums, and plenty of opportunities for TRU community members to interact with one another, according to Nancy Plett, the association's executive director.

"This new social networking interface allows graduates to build detailed personal profiles and to share information with friends and groups," explained Plett. "TRU alumni, students, staff and faculty have an online protected space to create personal profiles, upload pictures, publish blogs and connect with friends and groups from TRU."

The benefits are legion, she said. "By connecting to the TRU Online Community people can plan events together, share pictures, stories, career and travel advice, search job postings, form study groups, exchange business cards and post items on the Buy and Sell bulletin board."

Log on to www.trualumni.ca to find out more or get linked.

TRU tutor to present at international conference

Nursing 293 tutor Melodie Hull has just been accepted to present a paper and two posters at the annual International Nursing & Midwifery Conference to be held in Dublin, Ireland in November 2007.

TRU tutor and Dean appointed to provincial council

Dr. Grant Larson, Dean of the School of Social Work and Human Service and TRU-OL tutor, has been appointed to the Network Planning and Advisory Committee (NetPAC) of the BC Mental Health and Addictions Research Network as the TRU representative. Larson, who has been appointed for an initial two-year term, will work alongside representatives from BC's three other major universities, six regional health authorities, the Provincial Health Services Authority, two provincial ministries (Health and Child and Family Development), the Health Services and Policy Research Support Network (HSPRN) Mental Health Team, and voluntary agencies, to direct priority setting, policy oversight, and approval of key initiatives, and to make key recommendations about research on mental health and addictions in BC.



*Attention students:
Free money!*

Did you know that you can apply for one or more of the hundreds of student bursaries and scholarships available through the TRU Financial Aid and Awards Office? Deadline to apply this year is Friday, September 21.

Check out your options at:
www.tru.ca/financialaid/awards and apply online at:

www.tru.ca/financialaid/awards/process.

There are also some awards designated specifically for open learning students, including the Full-time Single Parents Bursary Endowment Fund, the Rosemary Keene Zonta Club Bursary Endowment Fund and the Donald Weir Scholarship in Literature.



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