

THE OPEN STANDARD

The Newsletter of the Open Learning Division of Thompson Rivers University
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Publisher:

Judith Murray

Editor:

Jennifer Read

Writers:

Bronwen Scott,

Enid McCauley,

Jennifer Read

Photos:

Bob Clark, Jon Fulton

Layout & Design:

TRU Creative Services



THOMPSON RIVERS
UNIVERSITY

OPEN LEARNING



Judith Murray, V.P. of Open Learning welcomes visitors to the new BCCOL building

Open For Learning

On Wednesday, August 22nd the British Columbia Centre for Open Learning (BCCOL) building proudly opened its doors to TRU employees and students. The purpose of the day was two-fold: to allow the rest of the campus to come and explore the newest addition to Thompson Rivers University and to meet the people hard at work behind the scenes.

Bundles of red balloons framed the entrance and a campus DJ played funky jazz to lure people in. Once in, visitors were greeted by Judith Murray, V.P. of Open Learning, and an OL welcoming crew who handed out bookmarks and Frisbees with the OL logo on them. Six tour guides from the Enrolment Services department led the visitors in small groups throughout the building, stopping off at each floor for presentations. There were six presentations in total ranging from Instructional Development and Research to Course Delivery. Sandy Devick from the TRU Purchasing department commented:

"I really did enjoy the tour and found it very informative. The energy, enthusiasm and sense of pride for Open Learning could really be felt. I'm glad I attended."

All the Open Learning employees wore blue t-shirts with *Open for Learning* written across the back. "There was a real sense of camaraderie amongst the OL employees – something that was much needed after several months of intense changes and relocation" said Jennifer Read, the Marketing and Communications Manager for Open Learning, who is only two months into the job herself.

The 200 person turn-out for the day just showed that there was a need for a formal introduction to the rest of the campus and a genuine interest in what Open Learning is all about. If this day is any indication of what the Grand Opening to the public will be like in the fall, we should be looking forward to a great success!



OL Crew gathers for group shot on the front steps of BCCOL building

TRU Tutor publishes reinterpretation of American history



Dr. Rocky Mirza

His students know him better as an Open Learning economics tutor, but Dr. Rocky Mirza has ventured into the realm of political science with *The Rise and Fall of the American Empire: A Re-Interpretation of History, Economics and Philosophy: 1492-2006*, an objective and rigorous re-visiting of the history of the U.S. as the world's superpower.

"The book is my own work without co-authors and my first attempt at a non-academic textbook that hopefully has general appeal," said Mirza, who has also co-authored two economics textbooks and study guides on micro and macro economics.

The 512 page paperback begins with the documentation of the exploitation of First Nations, African-Americans and poor white Americans, explains the root cause of racism in the U.S. and the deeply ingrained desire for war mongering in the American psyche, and takes its readers through the complicit aid of

England and France in enabling the U.S. to dominate the continent and how failure of European cooperation and two disastrous World Wars in the Twentieth Century enabled the U.S. to dominate the world up to the present day.

Mirza is a self-made citizen of the world who was born and raised in Guyana and educated in England and Canada, where he now makes his home. The third oldest of 12 children, Mirza was forced to end his formal education at 14 to supplement the family income with a full-time job. He emigrated at the age of 18 to London, where he worked briefly in the British Civil Service as an executive officer after completing his secondary education through a combination of distance education and evening classes, and then earned an Undergraduate Honours Degree from London University.

After returning to Guyana to work as an economist with the Ministry of Economic Development and teach part-time at the University of Guyana he emigrated to Canada, where he completed a PhD in Economics at Simon Fraser University. He joined the Economics Faculty of Thompson Rivers University in 1980, and has been tutoring ever since.

The book, which sells for \$38 Cdn, is available at bookie's on the TRU Kamloops campus and Trafford Publishing at www.trafford.com/06-3142

New Appointments

What do a 1950's horror flick and a Buddhist retreat centre have in common? The answer is the two newest members to the Open Learning Management team; Don Poirier, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Dr. Christine Wihak, Director of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).



Don Poirier,
Director of Strategic Partnerships

Don Poirier comes to us from DeVry Institute of Technology in Calgary, where he was Director of Admissions. Don has both an MA and an MBA from the University of Calgary where he concentrated on Religious Studies, Strategic Management, and International Business. He has lived in China and South Korea, and participated in International Business courses in Penang, Malaysia through the Asian Intensive School for Advanced Management (AISAM). In Calgary, Don served on a number of international business and education committees, and was Chair of Calgary Learns – promoting innovative education programs for foundational learning. When he's not busy developing new areas of endeavour for TRU or spending time with his wife and two kids, Don is most likely watching a quirky science fiction movie or an old 1950's horror flick. Why did he come to TRU? The good quality of family life he can expect in this beautiful city, and the tremendous potential he sees for TRU with Open Learning and innovative programs like Water Treatment and the Bachelor of Trades and Technology Leadership.

Dr. Christine Wihak chose TRU Open Learning because of the opportunity to work with a team committed to making post-secondary education accessible to non-traditional students, and to live in a vibrant small city. She loves to go to exotic places, and has spent a great deal of time travelling around the world. She lived in the Arctic for almost twelve years and in a Buddhist retreat centre for five years. Christine holds a PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Alberta, a Masters of Psychology and a Graduate Diploma in Public

Administration from Carleton University, and an Honours BA in Psychology from Queen's. She is an educator, a researcher, and a registered psychologist (Alberta), specializing in Occupational and Organizational Psychology. Her teaching background includes a position as Assistant Professor in Workplace and Adult Learning at the University of Calgary, where she taught in the on-line graduate programs in the Faculty of Education; as Director of Community Programs and Co-ordinator of Management Studies Programs at Nunavut Arctic College, where she instructed in both the Human Services programs and the Management Studies programs; and as Tutor for the PLAR Portfolio Development course at Athabasca University. Her research includes Prior Learning and Assessment (a State of the Field Review: PLAR) for the Canadian Council on Learning; multicultural competence in the helping professions and Aboriginal post-secondary education; and social policy research projects for Cabinet Committees in British Columbia and Ontario, for departments in the Alberta, Ontario and Federal governments, and for non-profit organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association. Christine's hobbies (aside from travel) include film and theatre, and now that she has moved to Kamloops, DIY and xeriscaping.

We are very excited to welcome both of these newcomers to Kamloops, and look forward to the role that they will each play in growing TRU through strategic partnerships and through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.



Dr. Christine Wihak,
Director of PLAR

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Opportunities

Professional Development

The TRU Centre for Teaching and Learning supports faculty development by responding to faculty learning needs as they apply to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Watch for announcements on staff@tru.ca or faculty-l@tru.ca.

For more information about the Centre and its initiatives, call 250-828-5438 or email coordinator Penny Heaslip at pheaslip@tru.ca.

Events

Fall Convocation

Thurs, Oct 4th 3-4:30pm, TRU Gymnasium

Annual fall convocation ceremony for TRU Kamloops campus, with reception to follow in Horticulture Gardens, weather permitting, and in the Campus Activity Centre if raining. For more info contact Maryanne Bower at 250-828-5318.

Nursing tutor establishes student award

TRU-OL nursing tutor Melodie Hull, a registered psychiatric nurse and career nursing instructor who was a co-founder of the Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing degree program at Kwantlen University College, where she has taught in the BSN program for the past five years after a ten-year stint teaching psychiatric nursing at Douglas College, is leaving another legacy before moving on to another teaching position at the College of the Rockies.

Melodie, who has had a lifelong commitment to improving the credibility and visibility of the registered psychiatric nurse, has generously established an endowment for an annual Psychiatric Nursing Award.

"No matter where I work or in which capacity, nurse in the psychiatric emergency or acute psychiatric unit in a hospital or a nursing instructor, I am passionate about the profession of psychiatric nursing and wish to support any student who feels the same about the very special nurses that we are," she said.



Student Success

Time-tested tips for students studying at a distance

The number-one piece of advice for students heading to the virtual classroom for the first time or for another year comes from a successful Open Learning graduate, Amy Tucker, who says, "Whatever your field of study, set a time limit for finishing each course, and an overall end date for your program. It works!"

Another time-tested tip that works for students learning at a distance comes from many best-selling authors, who set aside a specific time each day to write a set amount of pages. You can do the same with your class work. Here are some time management tips to make your life as a student easier and less stressful:

Time Management

- 1) Keep track of your time for a week. This way, you can figure out how much time you spend sleeping, eating, studying and just hanging out (which is important, too!)
 - 2) Plan your weekly schedule in advance, clearly noting when you need to study, do research, or work on assignments. Then stick to it!
 - 3) Set monthly goals, noting on your calendar when assignments are due. Generally, a student should spend two to three hours on study or assignments per course credit every week.
 - 4) Even if you don't start writing that essay right away, do your research as soon as possible after receiving your assignment. Doing research early helps in a number of ways: interlibrary loan requests are more likely to arrive on time; if books are out of the library you can place holds and obtain them when you need them; getting the information you need early helps you to organize your thesis in your mind; if you're missing something, you have time to fill in the blanks.
 - 5) Do your most difficult work during your personal peak times. If you're high-energy in the morning, try getting up a little earlier and getting your more difficult assignments done then.
 - 6) Organize your days so that you create an easy-to-follow routine for yourself. For instance, do your readings every morning and set aside a specific period of time each evening to work on assignments. Use odd bits of time for short tasks or for review or reading.
 - 7) Speaking of readings, your readings are assigned for a purpose - a purpose which will only be clear if you actually do your readings! Try these tips to get more out of what you read.
 - ✓ Do your readings when you're wide awake. You won't retain material if you're dozing off.
 - ✓ Skim once to determine the main idea, then read more fully, relating sub-topics to the major theme.
 - ✓ Read in context: begin with an overview of the material, including the introduction, headings, charts, graphs, diagrams, conclusion and summary.
- Then take a minute to think about what you've read before beginning to read in-depth.
- ✓ Establish a list of questions, or relate the material to key concepts covered in class. Take notes while you read, or highlight important points.
 - ✓ Add notes from your readings to your course notes.

Here are some other tips to help you make a smooth transition once you get started:

- ✓ Prepare for study - have all your materials handy and arrange a quiet, well-lit, well-ventilated space for study. Make sure you're well rested, have decent nutrition and adequate exercise. Studies show that students who have all three have higher powers of concentration, and get higher marks.
- ✓ Read critically, and form your own opinions.
- ✓ Create relevance by relating course materials to what interests you.
- ✓ Plan your final exam review schedule at least three weeks ahead if possible.
- ✓ Reward yourself every hour with a break, a snack, or a short walk.
- ✓ If you're worried or stressed, try to get rid of your anxieties by writing them down, then set aside some time to problem-solve.
- ✓ Communicate immediately with your tutor if you have any study problems.
- ✓ Hand in assignments regularly, and read over your tutor's notes and suggestions when they're returned.
- ✓ Concentrate on one activity or task at a time. Don't waste time regretting failures. Learn from them and move on.

If you fall behind, whether due to illness, inattention, poor time management, or missing too many classes, you can still catch up.

- ✓ First, evaluate your performance and identify your weakest areas.
- ✓ Talk to your tutor to show him or her that you are trying, and to get help in your weak areas.
- ✓ Schedule a specific period of time each day to catch up on that particular course.
- ✓ Unplug your TV until you're back on track, and unplug your phone while you're catching up each day.
- ✓ Don't get hooked into watching TV—it's the ultimate time-waster, and the perfect tool for procrastination. So is the phone. Unplug it when you really need to get down to study.

To find out what other services are available to Thompson Rivers University Open Learning students, go to www.tru.ca/distance/services/resources.