

# INVESTING

## in a University Education

*A submission to the  
Select Standing Committee on  
Finance and Government Services*

*JUNE 2019*

*On behalf of the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Board of Governors, welcome to Kamloops and to our beautiful campus, situated on the traditional and unceded lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc within Secwepemcúlcw, the traditional territory of the Secwépemc people. We thank you for the opportunity to participate in this public consultation on the next provincial budget.*

Your visit to Kamloops is timely as we recently concluded convocation ceremonies. In Kamloops, we watched 1,400 students cross the platform at convocation to receive their credentials. In total, more than 2,000 graduated. This time of year represents the culmination of dreams and hard work—the end of one chapter and the start of another. Our students leave TRU richer through education and experiences, and enter into the world with a promise of contributing to communities and the world around them.

***Education changes lives.***

*Jim Thomson*  
Board Chair

*Brett Fairbairn*  
President and Vice-Chancellor

## Acknowledgement

TRU appreciates provincial investments made through the years. With the support of provincial and federal funds, our Kamloops campus has a new Industrial Training and Technology Centre, opened in September 2018. We are also seeing the future home for our health programs take shape. The Nursing and Population Health Building opens in 2020 and would not be possible without the province's contribution.

Additionally, TRU was fortunate to receive a provincial loan in 2018 to support the purchase of affordable student housing adjacent to our Kamloops campus. We are also pleased with new provincial initiatives that support student access to education, such as the recent Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training announcement to invest in additional open educational resources including open textbooks. Students continue to benefit from the tuition waiver program for former youth in care and the elimination of adult basic education fees.

## The New Equation: More Jobs Demand an Education

Rapid advances in technology. Digital disruption. Business and economies are changing like never before and the vast majority of future workers will require a post-secondary education to get a good job. According to the BC Labour Market Outlook (LMO) 2018 edition, there will be over 900,000 job openings in BC over the next 10 years, with approximately 77 percent of them requiring a post-secondary education. If BC colleges and universities are not training enough people, due to limitations in programs or funding or other barriers, then the province will not have enough people for jobs, or jobs for people.

*“...the province will not have enough people for jobs, or jobs for people.”*

## Jobs of the Future: Careers in Health and Technology

### Training for a healthier future

TRU has a rich history educating future registered nurses, health-care assistants, licensed practical nurses and respiratory therapists. Graduates are ready to work at



Trades and Technology Building



their full scope of practice and readily find employment. But with growth in the health-care sector, there are more jobs than there are workers. The province predicts health care is and will continue to be a major employer in the Thompson Okanagan region with an additional 14,000 jobs anticipated in the next 10 years for nursing and residential care facilities, hospitals, and ambulatory health-care services. Yet, the number of students graduating within TRU's health-care programs is relatively small by comparison.

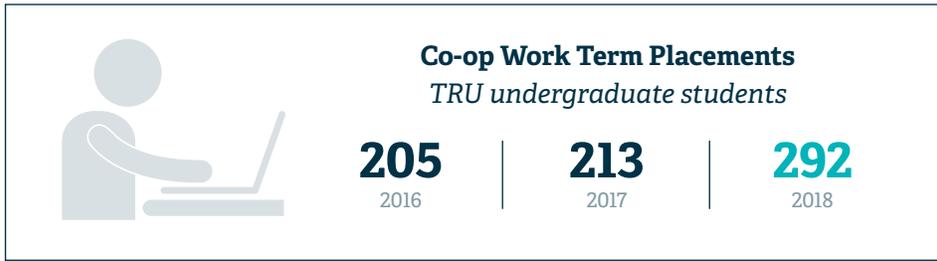
Enrolment in the high-demand Bachelor of Science in Nursing is limited to 80 first-year students annually based on provincially funded seats. TRU could educate more students based on current community and student demand, but at this time, the university turns away approximately 75 to 80 percent of new applicants each year. This represents more than 400 qualified students who could help fill a critical gap in health care in the region. In addition to educating more nurses, TRU is ready to establish a nurse practitioner program with the requisite provincial funding.

### Training for the tech sector

As with health care, jobs in technical services will comprise a substantial portion of new openings in the next 10 years. In particular, and relevant to TRU, are jobs for software engineers with 4,760 new job openings expected from 2018 to 2028 in the province (BC Labour Market Outlook).



TRU achieved a platinum rating through the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's global rating system



TRU takes in its first cohort of third-year students for the Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering program this September, an important milestone as up until now, individuals pursuing an engineering degree transitioned after year one or two to another university to complete their full degree.

Software engineering is part of a broader engineering package envisioned at TRU, and we ask for government support for further degrees, in electrical and computer engineering.

### Learning by Doing: Investing in Work-Integrated Learning

Today's university students are interested in hands-on, practical and real-life work experiences to prepare them for their future careers. TRU-specific results from the 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement showed that 54 percent of first-year student survey respondents indicated they "planned to participate" in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching or clinical placement over the course of their undergraduate experience. Of fourth-year respondents, 46 percent said they had participated in such work-related learning opportunities.

Governments are recognizing the value of work-integrated learning with the federal government targeting an addition of 84,000 new student work placements across Canada by 2023/2024. Additionally, in 2018, the BC government

provided \$1.9 million in one-time funding to the province's 25 post-secondary institutions for co-op and other work-integrated learning opportunities. Ongoing investment in work-integrated learning is welcome and needed to meet student and employer needs.

### Universities: Support for a Sustainable Future

Through partnerships with local governments, research, and training, universities like TRU are helping to build a sustainable future. TRU is a world leader in encouraging sustainability in all aspects of higher education. In fall 2018, TRU achieved a platinum rating through the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's global rating system, joining only a handful of other universities to receive this designation. With composting and recycling now a way of life on campus, and several energy-saving projects under its belt, the university continues to challenge itself to go further.

While TRU is a sustainable campus, researchers at the university are studying ways in which to sustain our earth for future generations. Researchers at TRU, UBC Okanagan and the University of Northern BC are involved in research projects aimed at natural disaster prevention, while another world-renowned TRU researcher is leading the way in land reclamation research. Society-changing research such as this happens with the support of federal and provincial government grants.

**Student Services Front Desk**  
*Inquiries*



**11,000+**  
2016/17  
**18,000+**  
2017/18

**Indigenous Student Development**  
*One-to-one interactions*



**3,541**  
2016/17  
**4,192**  
2017/18

**Writing Centre**  
*Unique students*



**2,063**  
2016/17  
**2,286**  
2017/18

## Beyond the Classroom: The Rise in Student Support Services

Post-secondary institutions offer services to help students succeed both in and outside the classroom. At TRU, there are a range of student supports in place including accessibility services, tutoring through the writing centre, mentorship, career education and co-op, counselling and sexual violence response and prevention. Through the years, the level and demand for services have increased, including requirements established by the province, yet funding for such services has not kept pace.

Additionally, given TRU is geographically located within an area that is home to numerous Indigenous communities, we are supporting the unique needs of Indigenous learners. We anticipate resources needed for these students, as well as the university community at large, will only increase and require government support as we are only in the early stages of Truth and Reconciliation.

TRU also finds itself supporting students in a more intensive way than other universities due to its mandate as an open access university. Hence, the cost to deliver education and supports per student is intrinsically higher. Our student population is diverse—in age, in

socio-economic background, in various abilities, and from urban, rural and Indigenous communities. Open access universities typically spend more per FTE to recruit students, more on retention, transitions (high school to university and university to employment), orientation, advising, remedial learning centres, counselling, etc. We also offer flexible education through TRU Open Learning, which serves the needs of the entire province and beyond. Yet, our provincial funding allocation does not fully take into account this unique, open access mandate.

## Conclusion

TRU is proud of its unique mandate within the province of BC.

We see much potential for the future—in training to meet tomorrow's labour market needs, in expansion of work-integrated learning opportunities, and through universities' influential role in creating a sustainable world.

We have also outlined challenges in funding to keep pace with the demands placed on post-secondary institutions.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide our viewpoint. We believe an investment in our students is a lasting investment in our province.

