

**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.

I want to thank everyone for their efforts and cooperation. I am confident that we will emerge from this period of uncertainty in a strong position. I look forward to your continued cooperation and collaboration as we navigate these challenges.

**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.

**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](#).

**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.

**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](http://tru.ca/sip).

**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 honouring 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 and the Ambassador of India
  - Prime Minister's Office
  - IIRC
  - Opposition Leaders
  - Policy advisors
- March 15 — IDays Showcase