

**Steering Committee  
Report to Senate**

**Special Meeting, August 10, 2023**

1. **BUSINESS**

The Steering Committee of Senate met at a special meeting on August 10<sup>th</sup> to review the requests from individuals wishing to represent each of the 6 identified stakeholder groups identified in BD Policy 8-4, to present to Senate at the special meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>. Given the total responses that we received, our committee resolved that Senate should be able to facilitate all the presenters' requests to give input about the decision to wind down of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA), the Certificate and Diploma (Fine Arts) programs by 2026.

Our committee made the following decisions regarding the requests to represent each of the stakeholder groups. For the "Current faculty member" group, the two presenters submitted a joint proposal and requested to split the 20-minute presentation time slot. For the "Recent program alumni" group, we received two individual proposals and resolved that each applicant be invited to present and share the 20-minute spot, affording 10 minutes to each. For the "Current program administrator" group, we resolved that a third faculty member who is also the Visual Arts Coordinator in the Communication and Visual Arts department would be an appropriate fit, offering a different point of view from the other two faculty members. The remaining stakeholder groups received single requests from individuals to present, and thus were deemed appropriate representatives.

Of note, upon review of the submitted presentation precis from several of the stakeholder individuals, there are multiple mentions requesting Senate to support a Category III program review process of the BFA program. It was resolved that this request is not the subject of the upcoming special meeting of Senate on Sept 18<sup>th</sup>, and we recommend that the presenters are made aware that discussion on this subject may not be in order and may not be facilitated during the meeting.

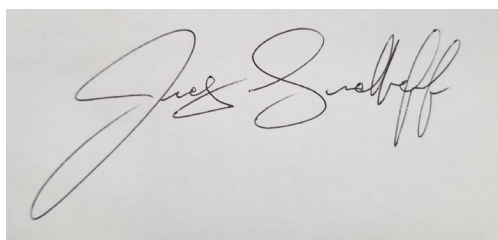
I have included each presenter precis for senate review prior to the special meeting as there is an array of viewpoints addressing different sides of the decision to wind down the aforementioned Fine Arts programs.

The Steering Committee of Senate would like to advise Senate to approve the following as presenters for the Special Meeting of Senate on Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 2023.

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS	PRESENTERS
Current faculty member in the program	Alan Brandoli and Twyla Exner <a href="mailto:abrandoli@tru.ca">abrandoli@tru.ca</a> <a href="mailto:twexner@tru.ca">twexner@tru.ca</a>
Current student of the program	Adrian Romeo <a href="mailto:abr.romeo@gmail.com">abr.romeo@gmail.com</a>
Recent program alumni	Levi Glass and Lyn Richards <a href="mailto:levi.robb.glass@gmail.com">levi.robb.glass@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:lyn@starshade.org">lyn@starshade.org</a>
Current program administrator	Terryl Atkins <a href="mailto:tatkins@tru.ca">tatkins@tru.ca</a>
Member of the Kamloops community	Margaret Chrumka <a href="mailto:mchrumka@kag.bc.ca">mchrumka@kag.bc.ca</a>
Member from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc	Dessa Gottfriedson <a href="mailto:desa.gottfriedson@ttes.ca">desa.gottfriedson@ttes.ca</a>

Respectfully submitted,

Kukwstsétsemc



James Sudhoff, DVM  
Chair, Steering Committee of Senate

3 August 2023  
Members  
Senate Steering Committee  
Thompson Rivers University  
[senate@tru.ca](mailto:senate@tru.ca)

Dear Senate Steering Committee:

Re: Proposed elimination of the BFA, Board Policy 8-4

We write in response to your invitation for members of stakeholder groups to speak at the 18 September 2023 Special Meeting of Senate on this issue.

As you may know, there is a 80-member community group, comprising at least four of the stakeholder groups you have identified: current faculty, current students, recent alumni, and community members. Visual Arts is proposing to have 2 current faculty speakers share the 20 minute presentation slot to speak to Senate on September 18, 2023. The two speakers will be:

- Twyla Exner, BFA, MFA; who on August 1, 2022, became the first tenure-track hire teaching in the BFA at TRU in 17 years and was hired just as the Department of Communication, Journalism, and New Media, and Visual Arts were combined to form the Department of Communication and Visual Arts.
- Alan Brandoli, BFA, MFA. Associate Teaching Professor, Department of Communications and Visual Arts.

In our presentation to Senate, we will focus on the first of the two options the Provost has laid out as the end point of this Board Policy process; we will ask the members of Senate to consider recommending to the Board that TRU's Bachelor of Fine Arts program enter into a Category III program revision process. We will speak to the four following points for about five minutes each, for about 20 minutes total:

**Alan will speak to:**

1. The BFA as a credential:
  - a) The Bachelor of Fine Arts is distinct from a Bachelor of Arts with a major in visual art, design, or other creative discipline. The BFA is a more prestigious degree whose curriculum focuses intensively on studio art and portfolio development whereas BA's with a major in visual arts are more general arts degrees. The difference is exemplified in rigorous study of art history, theory and skill development to train professional artists, those seeking MFA entrance, educators, academics, and cultural workers.
  - b) A Bachelor of Fine Arts is a distinct and complementary credential to CVA's proposed BA with a Major in Communication Design. As co-existing programs, they can share some courses and faculty while offering a greater diversity of course options to students. Art and design share many of the same values: the elements and principles of design, design thinking processes, colour theory, and

the understanding of art history, images, signs and symbols. However, the arrangement of, conceptual intent behind, and context of how these tools are applied are vastly different. Communication Design, as it is proposed, is a general arts degree with some focus on visual elements as they apply to commercial and utilitarian contexts. The BFA is a degree focused on the artistic application of visual and theoretical knowledge toward the creation of art, exhibitions, and critical art theory. It is important to acknowledge disciplinary differences and expertise in considering these two credentials.

2. Financial considerations:

- a) Salary Considerations: It was noted that salary costs within VISA are high. Excluding Twyla Exner, hired in August 2022, VISA Faculty have 35, 34, 34, and 20 years of service to TRU. Certainly, any program area with long-serving faculty will have high salary costs, as dictated by the collective agreement. It was noted that no jobs will be lost with this program elimination. If all 4 ongoing faculty (one is entering phased retirement in fall 2023) are all to continue to teach, it is unclear what relevance salaries have to an argument against the continuation of the BFA. How does the elimination of the credential itself save money?
- b) Class Sizes: It is true that class sizes in most visual arts (VISA) courses are small, similar to small student numbers in other hands-on areas of study such as trades, nursing, and lab-based courses. Making comparisons to these programs will be an important consideration instead of comparing VISA courses to lecture based arts courses. However, program efficiencies can be achieved and, within safety regulations, course caps can be examined through a review process.
- c) Service Considerations: Alongside other service contributions, VISA faculty run the TRU Art Gallery and manage Visual Arts' Permanent Collection, and have more recently engaged in oversight of the University's broader range of art collections. Service activities and the service requirements of managing these assets has increased for each member as a result of the reduction of faculty (considering the area has shrunk from 12 to 5 since the mid 2000s). Managing these assets includes curating, liaising with students, artists, and community members, reviewing gallery applications, cataloguing, installing exhibitions, painting and wall repair, installing vinyl, graphic design and marketing of exhibitions, and organizing and hosting receptions. VISA faculty also train and work closely with one CUPE staff member and up to 3 student WorkStudy positions to assist with gallery, shop, chemical, and health and safety considerations. Because the Dean's arguments focussed on granular FTE counts between lecture courses and hands-on courses, none of these contributions by VISA faculty were acknowledged.

3. External Review:

- a) Policy ED 8-4: At TRU, policy ED 8-4 mandates that programs be externally reviewed every seven years. The last completed review of the BFA was in 2011. Surely any decision on the fate of the program should include a thorough external review with a focus on quality, student satisfaction and success, financing, and space requirements.

- b) Faculty of Arts Strategic Planning: Less than eight months passed between the announcement of strategic planning and requested revisions to the VISA program by the Dean to when VISA faculty were informed by the Dean with the Provost present, without the Department Chair, HR or Faculty Association present, that the BFA would be phased out over 3 years and that program registrations had already been halted. During those 8 months, VISA faculty met almost weekly to discuss possible program changes. The subjects of the meetings shifted frequently in response to changing messaging from the Dean, from minor renovations and reallocations, to the complete gutting and rebuilding of VISA spaces in OM. Attempting to complete major program revisions during inconsistent messaging around space allocation is especially challenging in VISA because of the equipment and space required to teach our discipline. It is true that VISA faculty struggled to agree on program changes. Struggles are to be expected as a part of the process of major programmatic or strategic change. An appropriate time period to allow for thorough research and consideration, and working through subject matter experts' concerns, needs to be granted. An official process and mediation are also essential, and while mediation was mentioned multiple times by administration, a mediator was never engaged to help facilitate change.
- c) The University of Fraser Valley recently completed a major revision to their Bachelor of Fine Arts program. This revision took two years to complete with three faculty leading the process, and included an internal and external program review, interviews with faculty, students, alumni and community members, and allocated course release time to faculty to research and implement the required changes. UFV has been generous in sharing their program revision with us and have offered to meet with us to share their research and outcomes. This is a valuable resource for VISA faculty, should we have the opportunity to work through Category III changes.

**Twyla will speak to:**

**4. Looking to the future:**

- a) A Category III program revision will give VISA faculty the exciting opportunity to explore the possibilities of creating a unique BFA within the BC Interior that serves our regional community, meets the needs of our students, and differentiates TRU from other visual art programs.
- b) The BFA and the BA with a major in Communication Design will benefit as co-existing programs, offering diverse and enriched options to creative students. These two programs will have the synergy hoped for and spoken about when the Department of Communication, Journalism, and New Media, and Visual Arts were combined to form CVA.
- c) Revising existing courses and creating new courses, including service courses that connect with TRU's other areas of study, will improve VISA's financial viability, increase student enrollment, and engage with TRU's research values and ILOs. For further exploration of these ideas and what they could possibly entail, please see my personal letter to Senate.

- d) The significance and importance of art education: critical thinking, community engagement, independent thought, self-expression and self-exploration around the most difficult issues we face in society are championed through the examination and creation of visual art. This is where visual arts shines, it is where we contribute to the “greater good” of society, where we inspire inner and outer change, and, it is also where we can contribute financially. But, we need the opportunity and circumstances to do so, and we need the support of the Board and Senate, administration, other faculty, and advisors to relay the value of our programs to students inside and outside of the discipline.

With an external review, administrative follow-up, and university support, a new BFA will thrive and continue to be a hallmark program of which the university and the community can be proud.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you desire further information.

Kind regards,

Twyla Exner  
Assistant Teaching Professor  
Visual Arts  
Communication and Visual Arts

Alan Brandoli  
Associate Teaching Professor  
Visual Arts  
Communication and Visual Arts

3 August 2023  
Members  
Senate Steering Committee  
Thompson Rivers University  
[senate@tru.ca](mailto:senate@tru.ca)

I am writing with regard to the issue of the Bachelors of Fine Arts at Thompson Rivers University, and Board Policy 8-4. I would like to speak to Senate at the meeting on 18 September 2023 as a current student stakeholder. My name is Adrian Romeo, I am going into my fourth year of the Bachelor of Fine Arts. I support a Category III revision of the BFA program as opposed to a closure, and would like to share with Senators my perspective on this as a current student. I will speak to three areas: training for a professional life in art, the importance of studio space, and the benefits of this program. I would like a total of 20 minutes to speak, including approximately five minutes for each of the three areas, and approximately five minutes for the introduction and conclusion. If I am faster, I could entertain questions.

*Training for a professional life in art.* I grew up in Clearwater, B.C., a small town of approximately 5000 people about an hour and half north of Kamloops. In my town I did not have access to art classes; I did not have a professionally trained art teacher in my school, and I did not see examples of community members making a living in art. This situation strengthened the narrative I had heard my whole life that told me art is not a viable career choice. I believed that narrative, and I attended TRU in pursuit of a BA in 2016. After completion of my first year I felt uninspired and unsure of my future. It took me a few years, some life experience, and my own research to find the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at TRU. My lack of knowledge and experience in art made the prospect of applying for visual arts programs daunting, but TRU's commitment to open accessibility meant that I could apply without having to provide a portfolio of work. It was also the closest program to my home town, which was the reason I was attending TRU in the first place. It is the closest BFA program to home for many students from the north. My experience at TRU and my experience in the Kamloops community has enlightened me on the extent to which careers in art are not only viable but successful options. There are countless jobs in community groups, for businesses, in education, as professional artists, and in art therapy. After completion of the BFA at TRU I plan to pursue a career in art therapy, marrying my love of art and creation and my desire to help people, as well as a career as a professional artist in whatever capacity I can.

*The importance of studio space.* The access to studio space while in the BFA program must not be overlooked. The BFA is a studio/practice-based program that requires a large amount of time spent physically making art; the ability to do so would be severely limited without the studios provided. It is a reality that for myself, as well as most other students, I cannot afford to pay for a studio space on top of my tuition and educational fees. The studio space that is provided with the enrolment in the BFA program allows expansion of ideas, room to create without the limitations of creating in your living room, space to step back and see art the way it would be seen in a gallery, and the physical space to create art that is at the larger scale that we most often see professional artists work at. The size of the space is important for these reasons. My first year in the BFA program was online because of COVID-19. The following year when access to the physical spaces was available, the difference that the access to the studios made could not go

unnoticed. The previous limitations of materials, size, and lack of equipment was lifted. The concrete floors that are allowed to get paint on them, the open space for creating at a large scale, the gallery space for professionally presenting work, the printmaking equipment, the wood shop equipment, the fume hoods, and the access to these spaces that are dedicated to art making is one of the largest factors when considering art schooling. There is also a collegiality of these spaces that is immensely beneficial as a developing artist. The other students in the same courses, as well as in other art courses, who are also using the space gives access to commentary, feedback, and support during the hours of making. The ability to work with peers in the space and to have access to their unique perspectives is something that is hugely impactful.

*Benefits of the program.* The benefits of the BFA are plentiful; I'll mention some of the most important advantages I have experienced.

- The small program size allows you to build strong professional and personal relationships with faculty and fellow students, and allows them to see your progress and development over the years. This provides a unique level of guidance, support, and feedback.
- There are critiques built into every studio course that teach you how to be an effective public speaker, how to express ideas about your work and ideas, and how to constructively and productively communicate your thoughts about the work of others. This is something I did not experience in huge lecture courses.
- The small class sizes, and the ability to get so familiar with each other and each others' bodies of work becomes even more impactful when we address the intercultural benefits of infusing shared space with the experiences of international and indigenous perspectives. I have learned how to navigate, bear witness, and appreciate how different cultural groups approach art.
- Learning how to organize your time while taking concurrent multiple studio courses is massively beneficial when considering the time management skills required in making art in many professional settings that have multiple staged deadlines that require the input of others. My BFA program has introduced and honed these skills for me.
- I have been able through the program to develop my skills working within the community. No matter what area of art you work in as a professional, you will have to work with the public. I started my artistic journey as someone who was very shy, who hated other people seeing my work, and who didn't believe in my own abilities. Through my experience in the BFA program at TRU, I have become confident in my skills, I am comfortable promoting my work, I attend markets to sell my work, I have worked with local groups like Kamloops Pride on projects, and I have planned and taught a children's summer camp at the Kamloops Art Gallery. All of this came to me through the BFA program.

I do believe wholeheartedly that the program could be improved. I understand the concern that many BFA students take longer to finish their degrees. Art takes time. It is often the right choice to take fewer courses at once to allow more time and effort to be allotted to each one. What the problem with this is, I do not understand. It is more tuition and produces better marks and better artwork. I do know that part of the completion issue is that there are not enough courses in rotation. You are often unable to take the courses you need and want in the semesters you are ready to because they are not offered. We need more courses and a greater variety of them. This means more faculty. This could also allow for more voices, new perspectives, and perhaps new



areas of knowledge within visual arts to provide courses for. I know that there is concern about enrolment numbers and course cancelation because of it, and I would like to mention that I have not once seen an advertisement for the BFA program at TRU. There should be promotion of the program, promotion of the courses, and consistency in offerings that an increase in faculty could address. For all of these reasons the BFA deserves and requires a revision. It is a lifeline for students from the north, and it is a draw for international students. It aligns with all the messages that TRU wants to convey about itself, and should be treated as an asset. It is a program that strengthens TRU, provides valuable service to students and the community, and it needs better support. Please advise the Board to approve a Category III program revisions, including an external review, for the BFA at TRU.

Sincerely,

Adrian Romeo  
Fourth year, BFA

3 August 2023  
Members  
Senate Steering Committee  
Thompson Rivers University  
[senate@tru.ca](mailto:senate@tru.ca)

Dear Senate Steering Committee,

I graduated from TRU's Bachelor of Fine Arts program in 2017, a five-year experience that was life-changing for me as an artist and Indigenous person. I have similarly witnessed the impact of this program on so many of my fellow alumni, who discovered their voice, lifelong partner, role in the community, and of course their professional career emerge as a result of this incredibly engaging program. I would like the opportunity to speak to the Senate about my experience as an alumni and how a Category III revision of the Bachelor of Fine Arts could be an important leap forward for TRU as a prestigious and interdisciplinary Institution.

I understand I have 20 minutes, including questions. As a proud alumnus of Thompson Rivers University's Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) Program, I write to you to passionately celebrate and advocate for the revisioning of this invaluable program. TRU's BFA has profoundly influenced my artistic growth and prepared me for a successful professional life as an artist, business owner, and coordinator of Indigenous initiatives. In my presentation, I will share how TRU's BFA positively impacted my journey, nurturing my creative spirit, refining my interdisciplinary skills, fostering community connections, and empowering me as an artist. The following paragraphs serve as a precis of my presentation to Senate.

The comprehensive curriculum of TRU's Visual Arts Program equipped me with diverse skills in sculpture, printmaking, drawing, painting, installation, video, and photography. This training developed a broad visual vocabulary and honed my creative problem-solving abilities, allowing me to respond effectively to various artistic opportunities, from gallery exhibitions to commercial graphic projects. Additionally, as a Métis artist, the program played a pivotal role in my artistic journey of embracing and expressing my mixed Indigenous and European cultural heritage. Engaging in the Knowledge Makers Indigenous research program while delving into continental philosophy and aesthetics allowed me to embrace my Indigenous identity, explore Indigenous research methodologies, and use art to reflect on profound philosophical questions. TRU's interdisciplinary studios provided a unique space where I could freely express my thoughts about the world and create artwork in my own voice for the first time.

My journey within TRU's BFA was uniquely marked by a commitment to interdisciplinary exploration across disciplines, cultures, and media, with a heightened attention to undergraduate research. I and many of my BFA cohort received the Undergraduate Research Experience Award Program (UREAP) grant—we had the highest success rate across the University—and, for me, it led me to an international exchange in Germany, where I had numerous exhibitions and met lifelong colleagues and friends. Two years later, this training lead me to be the only student at the University of Victoria that year to both receive a SSHRC research grant (CGS-M) and foreign research supplement (CGS-MSFSS) that reunited me with colleagues in Berlin, Germany where my research project was mentored under the guidance of my favourite artist, Rosa Barba. This

transformative experience which started at TRU laid the groundwork for how I would successfully formulate, fund, research, create, and disseminate my artistic endeavors throughout my professional life.

TRU's Visual Arts Program boasts strong connections with prominent artistic institutions. My active involvement with the Kamloops Art Gallery and Arnica Artist Run Centre deepened my understanding of the professional art world and opened doors to valuable opportunities, including the exhibition of my artwork Cineorama—a result of my SSHRC project—at Luminocity 2020.

This transformative journey through TRU's Visual Arts Program has shaped my professional life as an artist. I have secured significant grants, run a successful audio-visual business, and received funding for an ongoing Coast Salish Carver in Residence program as an Indigenization Coordinator at Camosun College. These accomplishments exemplify the impact of TRU's BFA in managing diverse art projects and align with the institution's commitment to fostering artistic initiatives.

Thompson Rivers University's Bachelor of Fine Arts program is undeniably vital to its academic and artistic landscape. It equips students with interdisciplinary skills, fosters community relationships, encourages self-discovery through Indigenization and undergraduate research. A Category III revision of the BFA will propel TRU to new heights, positioning it as a prestigious and forward-thinking institution.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I believe I am well-positioned to speak to the Special Meeting of Senate as a representative of recent alumni, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Levi Glass

**From:** [Lyn Richards](#)  
**To:** [Senate](#)  
**Subject:** BFA program submission  
**Date:** Friday, August 04, 2023 6:29:10 PM  
**Attachments:** [Senate-BFA-presentation-summary-LynRichards-2023Aug04.docx](#)

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04 August 2023

To: Senate, Thompson Rivers University

I am a recent graduate of the TRU Bachelor of Fine Arts program (BFA, 2020). I have reviewed the materials presented for consideration at the Senate meeting of 12 June 2023, and have discussed concerns related to the proposed program closure with a number of fellow alumni, current students and faculty members. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to address a number of issues arising from the proposed closure of this program. A list of my chief questions and concerns is attached below. I believe we could fruitfully discuss these matters for at least 15 minutes.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Lyn Richards, MA (Psychology), BA (Anthropology), BFA

[lyn@starshade.org](mailto:lyn@starshade.org)

Residing and working as an uninvited visitor on the unceded traditional lands of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc

within traditional Secwépemc territory, the Secwepemcúl'ecw,  
where we work toward achieving meaningful reconciliation and restitution.

*Summary of questions and concerns regarding proposed closure of the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at Thompson Rivers University*

1. Has the University considered the potential effects of program closure on the careers of TRU BFA graduates who would find themselves holding an "orphan" degree with little value?
2. How do we balance fiscal considerations with other cultural values? While it is undeniable that the BFA is a very expensive program, not all educational activities can be properly compared in purely fiscal terms.
3. Acknowledging that funding for educational institutions is always limited, it does not appear that this is a time of especially dire funding restriction for post-secondary institutions. Is closure the only possible solution to departmental costs and other problems, or are there other strategies for creating change in the department to better meet the University's needs and expectations?
4. If a major role for TRU is to serve the educational needs of the community of Kamloops and the surrounding area, to what extent was the local community directly engaged at an early stage in these considerations in order to understand what effects the community might anticipate?  
I recognize that TRU has engaged directly with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc to understand and incorporate their programming preferences. This is only right, in view of colonial history and given the university is located on the Secwepemcúl'ecw, the unceded traditional lands of Secwépemc people, and the co-planned programming is important. What measures were taken to canvas the educational needs of other sectors of the community, however, such as the cultural sector?
5. How can the loss of current students and recent graduates of the BFA program not fail to contribute to the cultural impoverishment of our city, given the wide range of active roles they play in all aspects of the cultural life of Kamloops and area, including as volunteers and staff for the Kamloops Art Gallery, the Kamloops Arts Council and other organizations?
6. I would like to speak briefly to my observations as a psychologist, in relation to TRC Call to Action #10 regarding the discrepancy in educational opportunity that persists for indigenous individuals in multiple generations, and the valuable role that a BFA program can play in meeting this TRC Call to Action, as well as Call to Action #83—to provide opportunities for indigenous and nonindigenous artists to undertake collaborative works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

7. I have concerns about the message that BFA program closure for fiscal reasons would send to the portion of our community that is undecided about the value of, and need for, the Performing Arts Centre in Kamloops so generously supported by Ron and Rae Fawcett.

8. I also wonder about the effect of closing this program on morale and the retention of excellent faculty and students in other small, but essential departments in the university.

**Proposal to Present at the Senate Special Meeting September 18, 2023**  
**Terryl Atkins, Visual Arts Coordinator, Communication and Visual Arts Department**

Visual Arts faculty are deeply divided on what precipitated the current failure of the BFA program. Whoever is presenting to Senate on behalf of VA faculty has not contacted all faculty for input therefore will not present a well-rounded statement of Visual Arts' interests. This proposal to Senate provides suggestions for change and a truthful recounting of the often-obscured VA situation over the past few years.

There has been a decline in the BFA program because of an unwillingness to change with the times nor to problem-solve difficulties identified by the last four Deans of Arts – low enrolments, excessive amounts of dedicated space poorly utilized by few students, workload inequity. This unwillingness is not unusual when programs go into decline. People in them often make decisions based on strict adherence to a status quo that is no longer viable, consequently losing students to more relevant offerings. Stakeholders become trapped by commitment to the now irrelevant programs and ignore any logistical slippage. Use of space and approach become antiquated based on outdated ideas and the situation deteriorates because money and resources are needed for other programs to foster institutional growth and timely change.

The current BFA has reached the predictable end of this decline. VA stakeholders must acknowledge there is a problem given the years of warnings and undeniability of current damning statistics. The BFA, when evaluated according to market viability, is of less value than current nostalgia would have us believe nor is it the best use of art practice to benefit broader university student learning. In a world where AI is now demonstrating as much creativity as the top 1% of university students according to clear creativity tests, the problems in Visual Arts need to be solved with a radically different approach than simply invoking art training and practice as the basis of creativity training. Creativity can be learned outside the narrow stricture of a BFA, with the best of what art does assisting disciplines throughout the university. The current BFA structure is not a useful model for this. However, reconfiguring most of the same VA courses into a BA major has promise in this regard.

The process of working cooperatively towards new programming initiatives requiring substantive changes over the last two years to align with the TRU Strategic Plan and the Arts 5-year hiring plan did not produce adequate solutions. Uncomfortable at being paired with Communications in the CVA department, Visual Arts faculty expressed elitism, exclusivity and insult to new colleagues, more intent on 'fighting back' against perceived injustices than cooperating and brainstorming towards real change. The prevaricating and entropy that previously protected the status quo in visual arts became harder to maintain in the new department. There is little to indicate new solutions will be discovered in another program review considering VA implemented few of the recommendations of the last program review in 2011 or the more recent initiatives. Call for a Category 3 Program Review appears like a promise of change, or it could be just another delay tactic against the inevitable.

3 August 2023  
Members  
Senate Steering Committee  
Thompson Rivers University  
[senate@tru.ca](mailto:senate@tru.ca)

Dear Senate Steering Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you my reasons why I hope you will opt for a Category III review of the BFA program. I am part of a community group comprising around 80 people who support the BFA's review, as opposed to elimination, and I am honoured to ask to speak at the Special Meeting of Senate on 18 September 2023, representing the community stakeholder group.

I have now worked at the Kamloops Art Gallery for 11 years and as the Executive Director for the past eight. Through this time, I have continued to see the important ways in which Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) faculty and students enhance the efforts at the Gallery and the way in which the Gallery has enhanced the efforts at Thompson Rivers University (TRU).

In my letter to you dated July 6, 2023, I shared the following key ways in which the Gallery has invested in TRU and specifically the BFA program. Our commitment to this program demonstrates the high regard in which we hold it, the quality of the faculty and students in the production of their work and manifestation of their ideas, and the important contribution the program offers to our community. I propose to speak for three or four minutes on each of the following points, which I hope will give Senators some idea of the close relationship between the BFA and our Gallery, and how damaging it would be for us to lose this relationship. I hope to leave some time for questions, so request 20 minutes.

- Of the 84 exhibitions we have shared with the community over the past 10 years, nearly 50% involved BFA faculty, a faculty partner, or a student amounting to a \$6M investment from the Gallery. These exhibitions are promoted nationally and visited by thousands of visitors and shared online in perpetuity.
- When we bring artists to Kamloops and offer opportunities for our community to engage more deeply with the national arts ecology and conversation, we work to ensure that students have access to these artists. In the past, we have compensated the artist for a talk at TRU (eight over the past 10 years), we established FREE admission for students in 2016 (acknowledging that even \$5 admission is a barrier), we welcome instructors to either participate in a guided tour by staff or a self-guided tour which happens with two or more classes each exhibition, and our exhibition openings with a tour and reception are promoted to staff, faculty, and students and we are honoured when members of the TRU community attend, which they do!



- Each year, a graduating BFA student exhibits in the Cube Gallery, curated by Craig Willms, which provides the student with the experience of mounting a professional exhibit.
- We are an employer of BFA students and graduates. 30% of our staff are TRU BFA graduates. Moreover, each summer we hire one to two students to guide our Summer Art Camp program, and for the past 10 years, each of these students has carried on with us as a part-time staff member while continuing their studies at TRU. This demonstrating that we provide steps for students on their career path and particularly BFA students.
- Finally, we acquire work from BFA faculty that becomes part of the Gallery's permanent art collection and represents our cultural heritage. We were honoured in the summer of 2022 to share an exhibition entitled *Reading the Land: Ten Years of Collecting*, in which the 25 participating artists, two were BFA faculty members and one was the partner of a former faculty member.

The Kamloops Art Gallery is a public art gallery with a full-time staff of 11 and part-time at our highest in the summer at 19. We operate with a \$1.3M budget and see between 30,000 and 35,000 visitors are year. We are a recognized leader in the community and nationally. Recently I was honoured with an appointment to the board of the Canadian Art Museums Directors Organization (CAMDO). Our Board Chair is the newly appointed CEO to the National Gallery of Canada. I share this with you to demonstrate KAG's position in Canada. A position which has benefitted from the contributions of BFA faculty and students.

Our relationship with your program is reciprocal and we have and will continue to support it. I thank you for your care in considering the significant impact this exemplary program has on the community and opt for a Category III program review.

Thank you again for allowing me this opportunity to present to Senate about how the BFA program has enhanced not only the lives of students, but also the visual arts sector in the city and region.

Respectfully,

Margaret Chrumka  
Executive Director, Kamloops Art Gallery  
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250-377-2412

Dear Senators, Administration, and Applicable Committee Members

The following statement has been extracted from e-mail correspondence between Dessa Gottfriedson and myself, James Sudhoff, the chair of the Steering Committee of Senate. It is a direct quote that has been approved to be distributed to Senate prior to the discussion at the Special meeting of senate on Sept 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Dessa Gottfriedson will present on behalf of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and speak towards the current educational priorities of the TteS Chief and Council. While ideally, they would not want to see the TRU BFA program shut down, there are other academic programs that are of higher priority to their TteS community. In response to the Le Estcwicwéy (The 215+ Missing Children), Opioid Crisis, and provincial wide shortage of Indigenous mental health supports, there is a much greater need for TteS to have access to mental health and wellness programs. As such, TteS' priority is for healing for their people and an Indigenous counselling program would greatly support their community with this priority. Given that TRU does not currently offer a counselling program, this is what TteS will advocate for.

Ec k sôt'u7cw (take special care),



**Dessa Gottfriedson, M.Ed**  
Education Manager

**Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc**

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**Te tmicw re sítékwas re xqweltén-kt.** Our language comes from the land.

**Re xqweltén-kt tsqéy mell m-kúlt-ucw.** Our language is our cultural birthright.

**Re xqweltén-kt tsqéyes swéti7-kt.** Our language is our identity.

**Re xqweltén-kt yeri7 re txexeténs ne7élye ne tmicw-kt.** Our language is our power here in our land.