

## Envision TRU Submission

I am fully in support of TRU developing institutional values, a mission statement and a set of clearly defined strategic priorities to govern the operations of the university from 2020 through 2030.

However, the key operational and administrative function for TRU must be a commitment to allocate budgetary resources to achieve these laudable goals and outcomes. I want to focus on “Student Success” since it has been fully supported as the cornerstone of our institutional and legislative mandate.

While student success requires adequately funded front-line, support and infrastructure components, I will be concentrating on the front-line and support requirements needed based on my 26 years at UCC and TRU.

First, Faculty and School academic plans and overall TRU strategic priorities must be the major determinant of the TRU budget. While we’ve heard a lot of talk about academic programs being at the core of budgeting and we’ve seen the Provost and VP Academic chairing the Budget Committee of Senate for the past two plus years, most faculty members agree that institutional budgets have not adequately supported the delivery of programming.

Using the 2014-2019 TRU Strategic Priorities regarding student success—specifically, “TRU will prioritize academic engagement and programs which fully develop our learners’ knowledge and skills...”—here are some ways that aligning budget decisions to these goals can work.

1. Student engagement with their course and programs demands small class sizes, faculty availability for one-on-one consultation, faculty ability to engage undergraduate and graduate students in research, professional development support for all instructional and instructional support faculty, and flexible delivery options unencumbered by the need for faculty facing oppressive bureaucratic requirements.
  - a. National student surveys have identified small class sizes as one of the main reasons they choose TRU. Faculty instructional workloads have increased steadily with higher and higher course caps, and increased need to consult with and support student learning outside of class time.
  - b. In addition, current faculty workloads for both tripartite and bipartite faculty make it more difficult for faculty to engage students in research.
  - c. The work of the Centre for Learning and Teaching has been of great benefit for faculty, and should continue to be fully supported to assist with developing course- and program-specific learning outcomes for student academic development. CELT has the potential—if adequately resourced—to be a valuable in-house source for faculty professional development.
  - d. Approval of flexible delivery options for students is slow, often making it impossible to respond nimbly to student needs.
2. Developing our learners’ knowledge and skills demands the **continuing expansion of academic support opportunities** including the Writing Centre,

the Math Centre, the Language Learning Centre, supplementary learning, peer mentorship and other forms of academic support.

3. Mid- and long-term academic planning at all levels has almost completely been sacrificed for the need for short-term implementation, often the result of the inability to plan for—let alone implement—any program needs beyond the current academic year.
  - a. One way to address this problem—and it’s a radical one—would be to adopt **multi-year budgets for Faculties and Schools** with the ability to recruit faculty in advance, plan new or revised courses and programs.
    - i. Granted that provincial government funding is always uncertain and Ministerial budget letters come out once a year. However, the government grant now covers only about 42% of TRU’s operating costs. And, fortunately, TRU is in an overall financial position to allocate core budgets for each Faculty and School for a number of years into the future.
    - ii. Multi—year budgets would allow Faculties and Schools the ability to review their programs, initiate adequate course and program curricula development, and recruit students for new or revised programs.
    - iii. Currently, posting for needed new faculty hires is mired in bureaucratic delay with the approval being granted well past the ideal time to recruit in the academic calendar. Academic postings should be out no later than mid-fall if TRU is to attract ideal applicants.
4. International students are a welcome addition to TRU, but much better advance planning and provision of support services is required.
  - a. Appropriate on-site language testing and placement is a must if we are to see our international students succeed.
  - b. Registration of international students must be finalized in advance to avoid the last minute, hurried placement of students, which often results in rapidly opening course sections without programs having the personnel to fill them and—too often—inadequately prepared students for academic courses.
  - c. The Language Learning Centre must be expanded with a full-time academic coordinator and have faculty with ESL teaching expertise assigned to work with international students.
5. TRU students residing outside of Williams Lake and Kamloops must have the same opportunity to succeed as those at our two campuses.
  - a. For many students in more remote communities, Open Learning or ITV without additional support is not a pathway to success. Face-to-face learning has proven in the past to be a far better way of ensuring student success in communities such as Lillooet, 100 Mile House and Clearwater. The cost of providing these services must be recognized in the budget if TRU is to commit to achieving our strategic goals.

Most of the issues I’ve raised would be well addressed by having many academic decisions made directly by Faculty/School Councils and Deans at the Faculty and School level.

I strongly believe that academics—primarily student success—must drive the institutional budget, not the reverse. During the upcoming decade, I would hope that the development and implementation of the TRU budget will use the strength of academic programs and the resulting student success measures as yardsticks for assessing budget effectiveness. This commitment would mean that administration, Senate and Board would be required to measure not just the “bottom line” itself, but would have to see how the bottom line reflects meeting our strategic priorities. What we need as an institution is budgetary accountability in order to show not only our own university community, but the broader regional and provincial community that we are fulfilling our vision and our legislative mandate under the TRU Act.

Thank you,

**Tom Friedman,**  
Department of English and Modern Languages  
Faculty of Arts