

To: Envision TRU

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Phase 1 of Envision TRU's Consultation Report speaks of research, noting "TRU's role in the community" and "supporting student success." These are important functions of the University and ones that I have championed. However, the University and its "Envision TRU" plan need to go further. What is needed is, firstly, to more fully articulate the value and opportunities of those already-mentioned research roles and successes and, secondly, to articulate how they are best understood as integrated into a more expansive culture of research at TRU. My thoughts here expand on a few aspects of this discussion: 1) what may be meant by "student success" in a research context; 2) how understandings of TRU's "role in the community" may be fuller, highlighting local initiatives at the same time as providing an expanded appreciation of community research, and; 3) ensuring that Envision TRU takes into account and promotes the broad geographical and conceptual scope of TRU's research culture. My examples draw upon programs of research close to my own experience, which I understand to be paralleled by faculty and student research from academic units across campus.

Envision TRU needs to speak more specifically of student success in research, presenting a well-crafted appreciation of its multiple dimensions. The manner in which undergraduate students have been integrated into significant programs of research such as the Small Cities CURA (SSHRC Cultural and University Research Alliance, 2000-2011) provide a model of high achievement that has been echoed in externally-funded programs of research since that time, providing ongoing national and international opportunities for students. A central function here is "research training." At both the graduate and undergraduate level research training is a tangible meeting point between faculty and student interests. In response to the successes of research training associated with Tri-Council funded research, student-led opportunities such as the Undergraduate Research Apprentice Awards Program (UREAP) have become an important part of the University's research culture and have been recognized as innovative and important nationally and internationally. With an eye to 2030, Envision TRU also needs to place significant value in articulating how the level of innovation and success that has been achieved and recognized to date in undergraduate research will be paralleled by innovative and significantly expanding graduate student research.

Not surprisingly, given its funding context, the above-mentioned Small Cities CURA modeled opportunities for community-based research. As a member of Kamloops' cultural community, it was clear at the time that the "CURA" was the catalyst for such institutions as the Kamloops Art Gallery, Western Canada Theatre, the City and the University coming together to explore (research) questions of mutual interest, doing so in consort with an expanding range of other community organizations. Perhaps it is this and the ongoing legacy of like-minded research interests that are alluded to in Envision's present acknowledgement of "TRU's role in the community". What is not yet articulated however, and what is essential, is an understanding that such community-based research moves beyond the local context, that researchers understand the term "community" in a broad sense and take ideas of community on the road, taking research methods explored locally to wide-ranging settings and, in turn, bringing

knowledge back to Kamloops and its surrounding regions. In my own experience, and in recent years, this has entailed creative, Tri-Council funded research projects (including with students in several instances) in and engaging such communities as: Dawson City, YK; Nanton, AB; North Bay, ON, and St. John's, NFLD. Such geographic scope is paralleled by a wide cross section of TRU's research community. Whether working locally or not, research should be encouraged that is national and international in scope.

It is important that TRU's researchers — faculty and students alike — are able to follow their own best practices and inclinations with respect to where their research questions take them, both geographically and conceptually. For some researchers this will be around community research and for others their research questions and explorations will be directed to any manner of interests, for which there are clear examples of strong success at TRU. While this is a fundamental idea I won't try to represent that broad range of research activity in this letter. Support for research should be a primary facet of TRU by 2030. There has been expanded support for TRU's research culture in recent years, which has been welcome, as previous contributors have noted. This is to encourage the University and Envision TRU, to capitalize on such advances and push them to the next level. Next steps should include significantly increased physical infrastructure for research, recognition of faculty research accomplishment in a manner appropriate to the context of TRU being a research university, and placing the administrative function of research a level above where it sits in TRU's present governance structure.

As a closing thought, research needs to be put on display, to be made visible. While that is an idea obvious in the context of my own discipline it is also a way of thinking that can be imagined for disciplines and modes of research dissemination across campus, both metaphorically and literally. On the literal side of that equation, a few examples of this could include: taking advantage of new and renovated physical infrastructure as an opportunity to create settings that may foreground such existing activities as the Undergraduate Research and Innovation Conference; in some instances labs and studios may be made visible, an experiment that many museums have taken-on in recent years in the form of "visible storage"; by way of innovative architectural planning, foyers and other building components may be designed — well designed — to allow for exhibitions, performances, lectures, etc., as an alternative to predictable settings for research dissemination. Complementing planning towards such physical infrastructure as a means of making research visible TRU of 2030 should be a destination for conference goers and perhaps by then TRU should have brought to fruition earlier faculty-led initiatives to establish a university press.



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