

"TRU is a comprehensive, learner-centred, environmentally responsible institution that serves its regional, national, and international learners and their communities through high quality and flexible education, training, research and scholarship."

First, I thought the question was **on First Year (FY) Experience**, but perhaps that was for last week, and I'm too late. I'd like to engage with that though, because it matters greatly to me.

Our population of incoming students will likely always have a higher proportion of "First Gen" students, or those whose parents don't have university or college experience. (We can aim, and hope, to reduce that proportion, gradually, but it may take another generation.) It's known that many students arrive at Post-Secondary institutes with Fixed Mindsets (Dweck)—and moreso if they are in the first gen. of their families to attend. This makes it ever-more important to attend to the transition to first year. And it makes teaching of introductory courses also makes it all the more important that, within our departments and faculties and wider institution, we support those faculty teaching FY courses in whatever ways we can. If they are aware of the challenges typical of FY, and are given access to resources to support learning, and mentored well, that will ease the transition for and better support the FY student.

Other considerations for these courses introducing students to a discipline would be to intentionally incorporate a dual perspective: that of the student who will go on to master the discipline and perhaps major in it; and *also* that of the student who is exploring other avenues, broadening her/his/their worldviews, and keeping options open as goals evolve. This latter student could succeed in the course and carry away the core understanding, with the key accomplishment being an understanding of the value of this particular discipline in the broader scheme of things (e.g., the value of geography, or accounting, or philosophy, or chemistry; why they matter and what they contribute and where they fit).

As for the broader vision statement (quoted above), the two things I would comment on are environmental responsibility, and **comprehensiveness, or breadth, which also incorporates flexibility** (or could do). . On that second notion: we have extraordinary breadth as an institution, but I don't think we go far toward enabling students to take advantage of that. We could have bold options for combined degrees that span not just disciplines, but faculties. I believe there are some compelling examples happening—but we could go so much further to offer flexible, creative options for students.

In addition to easing the way (reducing obstacles), to more creative and open options for programs, we are also in a unique position to incorporate truly open electives, such that students could, for example, take a welding course as an open elective in, say, an Arts degree; or an accounting course as part of a Science degree; (and so many more). We could do this more effectively and intentionally, and market it so that students come to TRU watching for these opportunities. This would require careful preparation to do well (eg., for pathways where GPA matter and would inhibit such exploration, Pass/Fail options might work; and success will only be a real possibility when faculty are aware of these students from outside the stream, and teach in ways that invite them to engage and succeed)...

For the **environmental responsibility** part, well, we *are* trying, and *have* come a long way. But there's *so much further* to go:

We don't seem to honour our surroundings (e.g., every day it seems we're trying harder to obstruct the wonderful views which are conducive to awareness of the beauty of our setting; every day I'm sad to see litter, often beside disposal containers, on my way across campus).

We have heat flowing when it shouldn't be (e.g., into the basement of the gym, where fitness classes are sweltering!); and air conditioning set remotely such that most offices seem to have small heaters going, when a window that opened and an option to turn off AC would be so much more comfortable, and certainly environmental.

I'll resist devolving further into rant mode, but end by saying we can, collectively, resist complacency here, and keep aiming to do better. And new students (and staff too) ought to be fully aware of this goal, so that we're all in this together.

I appreciate whoever is reading these, and attempting to process them. I would be pleased to participate in conversations about these kind of important ideas and questions (though I am not one to speak out at the bigger public forums—my own shortcoming, I recognize).

Respectfully,
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