

## Envision Process: Written Submission

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Role: OLFM (2012- ), Kamloops faculty member (1989-2005) and Interim Dean of Arts (2003-5) and Interim Dean of the Williams Lake Campus (2005).

Post: Openly, freely.

Group ID: Male (he/him/his), Settler, Historian

I've had an opportunity to review the 'Resources' and would like to advance a number of positions and views.

Overview: TRU has a unique institutional history in British Columbia insofar as it is in fact two institutions joined together. It has a separate Act to describe its mandate and a combination of business models and revenue streams that – potentially – make it more flexible and sustainable.

1. Opportunities: Although population growth in the Thompson Valleys may be slowing, this is a trend that will change in the next ten years or so as more families in the Lower Mainland flee housing cost issues and consequent QoL compromises. Moreover, the rest of the province is growing and TRU has a unique mandate to deliver distance courses/programs through OL and to serve the province (and, indeed, the country) with the credit bank and PLAR.
  - a. Explore the creation of programs that create complementarity between F2F and OL courses/programs. Masters degrees that are a genuine combination of OL and campus/F2F present a real opportunity and, in addition, can take TRU well beyond the confines of the Thompson Valley, delivering advanced programs to areas underserved by universities.
  - b. The OL business model allows TRU to go to where the students are, rather than worrying overmuch about local demographics. Moreover, it allows for an accordion-like expansion of capacity that cannot easily be replicated on-campus.
  - c. As an OLFM, I observe that very, very few of my students are from the Kamloops area: they are mostly from the Fraser Valley and Greater Vancouver. TRU is, in this regard, the institution that makes it possible for students in the BC post-secondary sector to achieve their goals. Promoting TRU in this regard holds out the potential – immediate and long-term – for significant expansion.
  - d. Research/Scholarly Activity is the lowest of the low-hanging fruit. As TRU continues to define itself as a credible research institution, no efforts have been made to even tabulate the scholarship conducted by OLFMs. Institutional management is evidently opposed to the idea of treating OLFM research seriously. A change in direction on this brief would bring about immediate effects. All the publications of OLFMs would become part of the larger TRU

record. The possibility of collaborative research involving campus and OL faculty would be increased as well.

2. Challenges: The relationship between TRU-K and TRU-OL continues to be a source of embarrassment. None of the major offices at TRU – MarComm, Alumni, CELT, Research, etc. – do a fraction of what they might in terms of promoting/recognizing/serving OL staff, faculty, and students. The individual Faculty perform unevenly in this respect, but the Faculty of Arts in particular has a terrible record of disregard for OL courses and Faculty Members. The end effect is that OL students, faculty, and staff are *rendered invisible* by their own institution.
3. Workloads: Just as TRU addressed the old problem – and it was a problem and a sore-spot – of workloads for faculty with and without scholarly activity responsibilities by creating the bipartite and tripartite streams, it needs to address OL workload. If all TRU workload is considered together, then no one should have more than 100%. Currently, however, we have TRUFA members with tripartite contracts teaching significant quantities of OL work – which effectively defeats the purpose of a tripartite contract. This constitutes moonlighting in one's own institution. Finding the right metrics will be challenging but not impossible. Not making an effort in this regard means that we will inevitably have a number of faculty who are overworked and incapable of delivering high quality education to their F2F and OL students *and* unable to meet scholarship and/or service obligations. There will be, as well, huge salary differentials – which we're already seeing – and consequent discord among employees. OL Faculty as well, should have a workload cap and should be able to incorporate scholarly activity into that workload.

I have been associated with this institution since 1989 and was excited when BCOU and UCC melded. I saw no end of possibilities. That was 15 years ago and the only thing that amazes me now is how many opportunities have been squandered along the way and how much ill-will remains in the institution. Moving forward, priority must be given to **respect** between the various parts of TRU. This will require everyone to examine their unit's practices. For example, when TRU-K faculty declare they want oversight in the development of TRU-OL curriculum or a seat at the program review table, will there be reciprocity? When key events are announced, will they be streamed? (Can we please get better at streaming events?) Can we please not announce a celebratory list of retirees that ignores OLFM retirees entirely? Programmatically, we need to **play to our respective strengths** and **build on complementarity** in order to become a nimble and sustainable institution. **Respect is owed to TRU Students** – regardless of platform. More than anything, TRU needs to get its head out of the Thompson Valley and remember that it has a province-wide mandate. It is possible to serve the region well by serving the province too.