



TRU Bold

Academic and Open Learning Plan

2024-2030



Message from the Provost

Thompson Rivers University is at a pivotal moment. The landscape of post-secondary education is shifting, shaped by technological change, social forces, evolving workforce needs, and new approaches to learning.

TRU Bold is our response — an Academic and Open Learning Plan that defines how we will navigate changes while staying true to our mission of providing accessible, high-quality education to students in our region, B.C. and Canada, and the world.

For the first time, TRU will have a unified academic plan that integrates open learning, research priorities, and a structured approach to program development through “halo programs” — academic areas of strength that will guide investment and innovation.

The plan is structured around five key goals: expanding TRU’s signature academic programs, embedding research-informed teaching, increasing flexible learning pathways, strengthening our commitment to open education, and developing graduate programs that align with research priorities.

These priorities reflect TRU’s responsibility to students, faculty, and communities — including Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc and T’exelc — by ensuring that our academic offerings contribute to real-world challenges in health, the environment, and technology.

TRU Bold will drive action through program development, research investment, and enhanced student opportunities. Whether studying on campus, online, or in applied settings, students will have access to learning designed to prepare them for a rapidly changing world.

TRU Bold provides a clear framework for growth. I encourage you to explore how this plan will shape our university and how you can contribute to its success.

Gillian Balfour

Provost and Vice-President Academic



Message from the Vice-President, Research

Research at Thompson Rivers University is deeply connected to the people and places we serve. Through TRU Bold, we will build a research culture that seeks to lead, serves people and communities, and is responsive to pressing challenges in health, the environment, and technology.

This plan affirms our commitment to integrating research into learning at all levels. Every TRU student — undergraduate or graduate — will have opportunities to contribute to meaningful inquiry that matters.

Faculty will be supported in advancing scholarship that addresses local and global needs or issues. We will tackle the complex and urgent social problems of our times. We will deepen our impact across sectors through interdisciplinary collaboration, a focus on student and faculty success, and by strengthening external partnerships, such as with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and T'exelc.

By enabling advanced research that is both relevant and impactful, TRU will create new pathways for knowledge creation and application. Our faculty and students will shape solutions for the future.

TRU Bold provides a new direction for research that matters. It will be a core pillar of how we develop programs, support faculty, and prepare students for a knowledge-driven world.

Shannon Wagner
Vice-President, Research





Introducing TRU Bold

Where do we want to be as an institution in five years? Our vision is for a university defined as a place of belonging — Kw'seltnéws (we are all related and interconnected with nature, each other, and all things) — where all people are empowered to transform themselves, their communities, and the world.

Like all public post-secondary institutions, TRU faces a rapidly changing educational landscape with significant market shifts, evolving social and economic outlooks for graduates, and new conversations about the nature of education in an AI world. In this context, bold moves are needed to ground institutional reputation and student success.

TRU Bold is TRU's Academic and Open Learning Plan, bringing us towards this vision of an interconnected and empowered community with a global conscience, bold in

leveraging the institution's mandate to provide and foster open education, bold in securing institutional reputation and resiliency through alignment of unique halo programming and research priorities, and bold in committing to a university as a space, where learning happens through high impact practices and flexible pathways.

TRU Bold presents five goals for the academic priorities of the institution over the next five years.



- Goal One** Prioritize academic planning around visible and compelling Halo Programs that align with the TRU's research priorities: health and healing, environment, and technology to improve peoples' lives. These align with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc research priorities, including natural resources, education, health and engineering.
- Goal Two** Embed distinctive high-impact teaching that reflects institutional learning outcomes.
- Goal Three** Undertake a digital transformation that embeds open educational practices into TRU's signature pedagogy.
- Goal Four** Prioritize flexible pathways to learning and student success.
- Goal Five** Develop graduate programs that align with TRU's research priorities and meet the needs of the region.

Context

TRU Bold must be responsive to internal and external conditions that will affect the post-secondary environment generally — and TRU specifically — in the coming years.

- 1.** TRU's partnership with Tkémlúps te Secwépemc and T'exelc will inform the development of a respectful relations consultation framework for curriculum development aligned with TRU's institutional learning outcomes.
- 2.** TRU is committed to continued and enriched collaboration with both the Research Universities Council of BC (RUCBC) and the Interior Research Universities Council (IURC).
- 3.** TRU is the only research university in B.C. with a School of Trades and Technology. STT will be key to meeting provincial government labour market priorities through expanded trade programming, especially for international students.
- 4.** TRU is well-positioned to build on the success and mandate of Open Learning, to expand on its commitments to flexible access and delivery, as well as open pedagogy, to meet growing demand, achieved through implementation of TRUly Flexible.
- 5.** To ensure financial sustainability, TRU must address challenges in domestic enrollment and retention, as well as the severe decline in the international student recruitment. This will be achieved through effective recruitment strategies and service standards benchmarked for attainment.

Strategic Alignment

TRU Bold is aligned with Envision TRU, the institution's mission, values, and vision, and contributes to meeting our 10-year change goals.

TRU Bold defines the academic priorities and goals, guided by our integrated strategic planning objectives. The realization of these objectives will be measured in the current financial context of changing enrolments, but remain key to our long term financial sustainability. We remain committed to:

1. Student success and research innovation through inclusive excellence in research faculty and staff recruitment. By 2033, TRU will successfully recruit and retain 200 new tripartite faculty and 100 staff. We will aim to recruit from equity deserving groups.
2. Eliminate achievement gaps across different groups of learnings, and honour truth reconciliation and rights through a holistic strategy of student wellness and belonging.
3. To be recognized provincially, nationally, and internationally for our unique programs, which provide students with flexible learning pathways, experiential opportunities, and community research.

TRU Bold addresses academic priorities and goals designed to enhance our reputation through unique programs based in the beauty of the central Interior of B.C.



Guiding Principles for TRU Bold

TRU Bold puts student success at the centre, ensuring that the institution's reputation for academic excellence reflects an engaged and inclusive student experience in learning that is available to any learner and responsive to the needs and challenges of our local and global communities.

Every student is a TRU student.

- ▶ Commitment to decolonization of programs and pedagogy and the significant and meaningful inclusion of Secwepemc ways of knowing.
- ▶ Unified recognition and support of the TRU student, who may access learning online or on-campus, in regional areas, in Williams Lake, or in Kamloops.

Every student can start here, from anywhere.

- ▶ Flexible entry options mean TRU will be recognized as a place where academic excellence is made possible for all learners.
- ▶ Flexible access to learning through a digital transformation that provides a continuum of program delivery.

Every student can be a researcher.

- ▶ Alignment of the academic and research priorities to link and integrate research with teaching and learning opportunities that meet core community challenges: health and healing, the environment and technology for improving peoples' lives.
- ▶ Continued excellence in undergraduate student research and growth in graduate programs in halo areas.

TRU Bold and the TRU graduate

The Academic Plan puts student experience and success at the centre. The goals of the academic plan are to support students in meeting TRU's graduate attributes, which are defined in the institutional learning outcomes.

A TRU graduate will:

- ▶ Recognize and respect the value of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and T'exelc knowledge and diverse cultural perspectives; to be "community-minded with a global conscience."
- ▶ Experience and demonstrate connection through effective leadership and communication.
- ▶ Set goals for learning beyond their university experience and are socially and environmentally responsible.
- ▶ Seek and produce knowledge and think critically through research activities.



Five Goals for TRU Bold

Academic Plan Priorities and Halo Programs

Goal One: Prioritize academic planning around visible and compelling “halo programs” that align with TRU’s strategic research priorities.

1.1 Elevate TRU’s reputation with unique and competitive “halo programming” that attracts students, faculty and funding.

1.2 Be recognized for enriched student experience in the specific fields of expertise aligned with institutional research priorities.

1.3 Transform current programs through collaborative interdisciplinary curriculum design and cross-appointments.





Strategic Research Plan Priorities

- ▶ Understanding and responding to changing climate and its consequences on the environment (built, natural, and social), and pursuing sustainable solutions.
- ▶ Seeking truth, reconciliation and rights through Indigenous led research and capacity building
- ▶ Contributing to greater social cohesion and sense of belonging through a commitment to social justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and social responsibility.
- ▶ Strengthening health, quality of life, and cultural sustainability in our local and regional communities.
- ▶ Advancing technological, cultural, social, and economic development and innovation that improves peoples' lives.

Three selected areas for academic planning priority have been identified for their alignment with TRU's Strategic Research Plan.

The environment



Health and healing



Technology for improving peoples' lives



Transformative Teaching Practices

Goal Two: Define and integrate high-impact teaching methods as part of TRU's signature pedagogy.

2.1 Expand opportunities for experiential learning, including community and land-based education, field schools, travel abroad, trades programs and apprenticeships, and undergraduate research.

2.2 Strengthen faculty capacity to design and deliver engaging, research-informed instruction while improving infrastructure to support student access to these opportunities.

2.3 Increase success and reputation in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

These kinds of teaching strategies contribute to student success by improving academic achievement, satisfaction, and persistence, particularly for learners across the B.C. Interior.

This commitment aligns with the strategic research plan by emphasizing hands-on student experiences in transformative research and inquiry-driven learning. Making these methods a core feature of TRU's pedagogy strengthens student engagement and research-informed education.

Open Educational Practices

Goal Three: Embed open educational practices into TRU's signature pedagogy.

3.1 Be recognized internally and externally for our excellence in open educational practices on campuses and online.

3.2 Be recognized as the provincial leader in PLAR for TRU learners and Indigenous learners, and as a hub for an expanded provincial credit bank.

TRU embraces our provincial mandate for serving the open learning needs of British Columbia. The opportunity exists now to leverage this legacy by expanding our identity and reputation in this area.



Flexible Pathways

Goal Four: Prioritize flexible pathways for learning and student success.

4.1 Be recognized as a place where academic excellence is made possible for all learners, including through flexible entry options and exceptional student services and academic support.

4.2 Prioritize the design of program architectures with flexible learning pathways for students, including laddering opportunities and transfer potential.

Commitments to flexible learning are tied to increased domestic enrollment by expanding market access, increasing education pathways for underserved and underrepresented communities, and improving retention and completion rates through diversification of delivery.



Strategic Graduate Programming

Goal Five: Develop strategic graduate programs that align with TRU's research priorities and our halo program areas

- 5.1** Develop interdisciplinary graduate programs which bring together existing areas of academic expertise from across faculties and expand TRU's reputation and research profile.
- 5.2** Explore the development of collaborative graduate and PhD programs within the Interior University Research Coalition (IURC) to complement the strategic emphasis on research partnerships.
- 5.3** Embed principles of respectful relations into student and faculty research practices within Secwépemculecw.

TRU's research commitments are grounded in community connections and community partnerships. Collaborative and innovative academic programming at the graduate level will complement and reinforce our participation in and contributions to our communities through scholarship.

Accountability and the Academic Action Plan

TRU Bold is accountable. To meet the goals of the Academic and Open Learning Plan, TRU will commit to a digital transformation in how it delivers learning to all students. The next step is an academic action plan outlining the pathway for achieving the goals of TRU Bold through measurable objectives and an implementation strategy, ensuring its accountability to the integrated strategic planning objectives and Envision TRU.

