Do it Your Way

Open Learning introduces new campaign.

By Jennifer Read

Students who are considering online and distance education typically question several things prior to registering: Where do I start? Where do I go? Can I afford it? Do I have the time? Is it even realistic for me? How much will it benefit me?

The focus of Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL)'s newest campaign is on lifestyle and how education can fit in. The flexibility of the Open Learning model allows people to achieve success regardless of their circumstance and this is something TRU-OL wants to promote. Hence the consistent line in each ad: "Do it your way."

In today's world it seems people are squeezing more into a 24 hour timespan than ever before so this campaign aims to answer the question: how do you successfully add one more thing? That one more thing being education, of course.

By nature of the mode of delivery, online and distance learners can often feel isolated and as such the campaign aims to expose the more "human side" of life as an open learner and hopefully does so with a wink and a nudge. The campaign reveals entertaining facts about OL students' approach to education in order to reach out to other potential students, allowing them to draw a parallel, which makes it easier for them to visualize themselves doing it too.

THOMPSON RIVERS
UNIVERSITY
OPEN LEARNING

The campaign focuses on three specific demographics – the campus student looking to blend online courses with their current program, the busy parent wanting to make a positive change and the working professional looking to upgrade their skill set and advance in their career.

The use of striking word vignettes that are succinct and to-the-point differentiate the campaign from other post-secondary ads in the market. The tone is light and somewhat cheeky in order to quickly draw the reader in and engage them enough to read on and investigate TRU further. By design, the ads are brief, have maximum impact and still clearly convey what TRU-OL is and what it offers.

Prior to the launch of the campaign, a survey was posted on the TRU-OL website and messages were sent out through the student portal and social media sites to help promote it. The questions were not meant to provide an in-depth analysis of TRU-OL students, but to provide fodder for the ad campaign and add entertainment value. The questions were light-hearted and sought to draw out the more personal side of an OL student. The hope was to make it easy for someone considering getting into education to draw that emotional connection and think, "I can do that too." In exchange for completing the survey, the student's name was entered into a draw to win one of two gift cards for the TRU Online Bookstore.

Alongside the launch of the new campaign was the creation of the new webpage **www.truopen.ca/yourway**, which leads the audience back to a place where they can view other interesting stats about TRU-OL students, complete the survey themselves and find information about OL offerings. This unique landing page also allows for tracking of interest and response to the campaign.

Every few months the survey results will be reviewed and new facts posted. The data will be depicted using infographics - a visual representation of factual information that is clear and easy to understand. It is a trend that is on the rise and creating quite a buzz in the world of advertising.

Given the simplicity of the design, the campaign works well in the transit medium – buses, subways and light rail transit. The campaign also reaches out to post-secondary students across BC and Alberta through ads in campus newspapers. Google display ads, banner ads and social media sites have also been incorporated into the mix.

This campaign is quite a departure from the testimonial-based ads TRU-OL has used for the past two years, however, change is sometimes necessary. TRU-OL strives to be current, relevant and in touch with its audience in the best way possible. "Do it your way" speaks to the ever-growing need for education to be extremely flexible and open, something Thompson Rivers University offers through Open Learning. ■

Research for Your Future

New course helps students build better research skills.

By Lindsey Norris

In the digital age, a person looking for information can find more material than they could ever read with the click of a mouse. The problem is not obtaining information: it's knowing what to do with it.

With so much available, the ability to explain the research process, evaluate results and speak using the appropriate terms is more important than ever, and can be a critical part of a student's education and invaluable to their career. Open Learning launched a new course in September that examines multiple aspects of the research process.

Introduction to Research Methods (RSMT 3501) is an online, paced course that is suitable for students of all disciplines. Learners will work through the subject matter as a group and participate in the class forum with other students and the Open Learning Faculty Member. Participants may take the theories introduced in the course and apply it to their own field of interest in the course's papers and projects.

Participants in RSMT 3501 will establish or advance their understanding of research through critical exploration of research language, ethics and approaches. The course, which has no prerequisites although does have recommendations, introduces the language of research, ethical principles and challenges and the elements of the research process within quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches. Participants will use these theoretical underpinnings to begin to critically review literature relevant to their field or interests and determine how research findings are useful in informing their understanding of their environment (work, social, local, global).

The next offering of RSMT 3501 begins January 21, 2013 with registration closing on January 17, 2013.

Visit **www.tru.ca/distance/courses/rsmt3501.html** for a detailed course description. ■
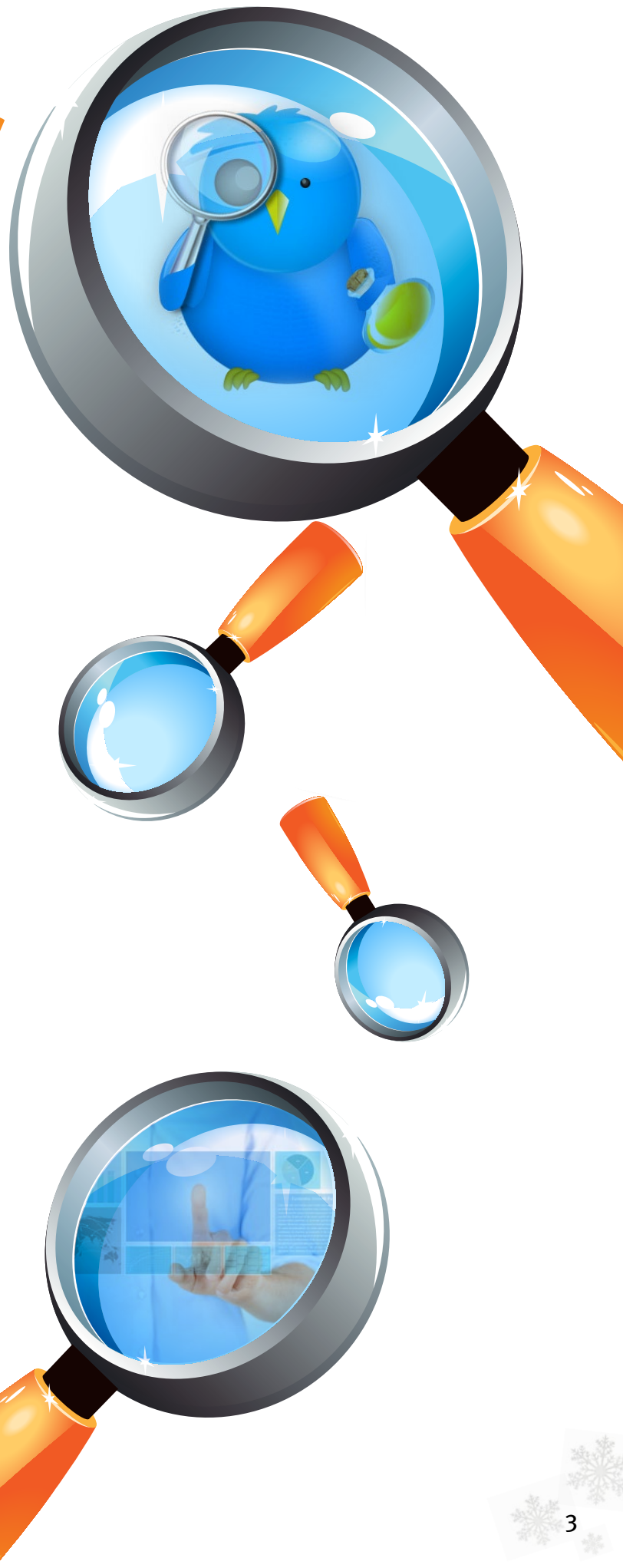
In the Name of THE FOREST

Open Learning promotes eco-friendly printing practices.

By Corey Wiwchar

A purveyor of online and distance education, Open Learning is 100% digital, correct? Not exactly. Although many services and courses are delivered online, the Open Learning (OL) Division of Thompson Rivers University (TRU) deals with print paper materials in a variety of forms in order to communicate and provide services and information to its thousands of students. Examples include the Open Learning Course and Program Calendar, the Student Handbook and program brochures. Open Learning maintains environmental responsibility by not only taking great strides to make many of its materials available online, thus saving paper resources, but also promoting and utilizing environmentally friendly practices within its print and paper guidelines.

Figure 1
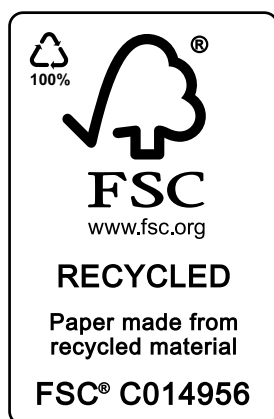
Forest Protection

Many may notice an "FSC" logo (see Figure 1) on the majority of TRU-OL print products. This logo represents the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, which further represents OL's commitment to protecting the environment.

The FSC is an international certification and labeling system dedicated to promoting responsible management of the world's forests. This means that forests are evaluated to meet FSC's strict environmental and social standards. FSC certified wood, paper and other forest products are then sold with the FSC logo by certified companies in the marketplace. The FSC vision is to promote healthy forests by providing an equitable sharing of benefits from their use, while respecting natural forest processes, biodiversity and harmony amongst their inhabitants. Its mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests (see Sidebar 1).

All FSC Forest Management (FM) standards are based on International Principles and Criteria.

At a regional level indicators and verifiers are further developed in order to reflect the unique environmental and social requirements of the region. In Canada, there are four regional Forest Management standards: National Boreal Standard; Maritimes Standard; BC Standard; and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Standard.

Recycle, Recycle, Recycle

Recycled paper is the resource of choice for Open Learning when it comes to print materials. By choosing recycled paper OL helps: preserve forests, as it reduces demands for wood; conserve resources and generate less pollution during manufacturing, as the fibres have already been processed once; and reduce solid waste, as it diverts usable paper from the waste stream. The fee for this environmental responsibility is nominal. For example, it costs only about 5% more to print 4,000 copies of the OL Calendar (at 240 pages) on 100% post consumer waste FSC recycled paper as opposed to 10% post consumer waste FSC recycled paper.

Brighten Up

In order to make paper brighter, wood fibres are often bleached with chlorine or chlorine compounds. When these bleaching agents are combined with organic matter (such as wood fibres), dioxin (a known human carcinogen) is formed as a by-product. In the paper bleaching process, dioxin finds its way into the environment contaminating water, soil and the food supply. In order to avoid the adverse affects of chlorine in the paper production process, OL opts for paper that has been produced with the use of chlorine alternatives (see Sidebar 2).

TRU Colours

In order to further reduce any negative impact on the environment through its printing process, OL utilizes more eco-friendly inks. Such inks include vegetable-based inks that are made from a renewable resource base as well as inks that are free of heavy metals. OL also avoids the use of metallic and neon coloured inks in its materials as they typically contain higher levels of toxins.

The Finishing Touch

In printing, a final coating is often applied to products in order to achieve a finished, polished look and to protect the printed material from damage that can occur through mailing and handling. OL is aware that the process of developing and applying these coatings can be damaging to the environment and can complicate the recycling process. As such, OL promotes the use of the aqueous coating techniques whenever possible as it is a water-based lacquer coating that provides the best choice in terms of environmental impact. Specifically, paper with aqueous coating can be recycled and does not emit harmful by-products and the cleanup process does not require toxic cleaning.

For more information about current environmental organizations and eco-friendly initiatives surrounding printing practices and paper use, visit:

Better Paper Project of Green America -
http://betterpaper.ning.com

Canopy -
http://canopyplanet.org

Environmental Paper Network -
http://environmentalpaper.org

Forest Stewardship Council -
www.fsccanada.org

Hemlock Printers Ltd. -
www.hemlock.com

Natural Resource Defense Council -
www.nrdc.org ■

Sidebar 1

Why Choose FSC?

- Protects high conservation value forests.

- Ensures the rights of Aboriginal peoples and local communities are respected.

- Protects waterways.

- Protects wildlife and habitat species.

- It is the only forest certification system with support from major Aboriginal, environmental and social groups.

- Ensures independent third-party Certifiers monitor forestry practices annually on the ground.

Sidebar 2

Chlorine Alternatives (in order of preference based on environmental criteria):

1. **Processed Chlorine Free (PCF)** uses recycled and de-inked paper fibres that are whitened without any chlorine. However, one or more fibre components may have originally been bleached with chlorine.

2. **Totally Chlorine Free (TCF)** paper is whitened without any chlorine bleaching, but can only apply to virgin fibre paper and not to recycled paper.

3. **Enhanced Elemental Chlorine Free (Enhanced ECF)** substitutes ozone or hydrogen peroxide for chlorine or chlorine dioxides as a brightening agent in the initial stages of the bleaching process. This process is inferior to PCF and TCF because it does use chlorine gas in the final stage of bleaching. However, compared to the processes outlined below, this process is preferable because it further improves the quality of the wastewater and enables recovery of most mill wastewater by 70 to 90% compared to traditional ECF.

4. **Enhanced ECF with extended or oxygen delignification** removes more lignin from the wood before bleaching than the traditional ECF method. Therefore, fewer bleaching chemicals are required. In addition, compared with traditional ECF, this process reduces energy consumption by 30%, improves the quality of mill wastewater and reduces the quantity of mill wastewater by nearly 50%.

5. **Traditional Elemental Chlorine Free** is a bleaching process that substitutes chlorine dioxide for elemental chlorine. Compared to elemental chlorine bleaching processes, traditional ECF bleaching reduces the formation of many chlorinated organic compounds. However, it does not completely eliminate them and the quantity of effluent from mills is not reduced.

Show Me the Money

Studies indicate the monetary value of select degrees.

Post-secondary studies require sacrifice. Whatever mode of education students engage in be it distance, on-campus or a blend of both, students must sacrifice their recreational, familial and even professional time to focus on their education, complete assignments and study, study, study. "Is this sacrifice all for naught?" is one question many students ask themselves after they ponder the bigger issue "Does a degree really offer any significant value in terms of job marketability and earning?"

According to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, degrees do in fact have strong value in terms of lifetime earnings for those who hold them. Two American Community Survey (ACS) reports released by the US Census Bureau tell the tale of how field of study and, more specifically, type of major result in varied lifetime earnings. The statistics report that a students' choice of major can mean a difference of millions throughout their career.
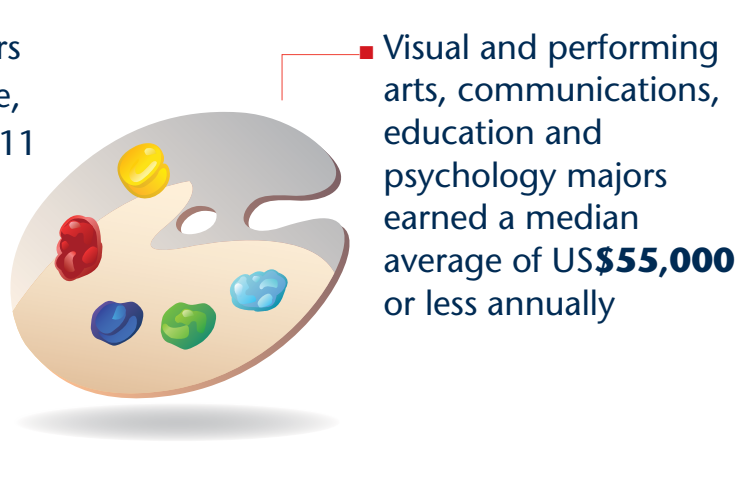
The Field of Degree and Earnings by Selected Employment Characteristics: 2011 report provides information about the relationship between field of study, median annual earnings and the likelihood of full-time employment (See Figure 1). So where is the money? According to the report, the most profitable graduates are those who majored in engineering as they had the highest earning of any bachelor's degree with approximately US$92,000 in 2011. Individuals with bachelor's degrees in fields including visual and performing arts, communications, education and psychology had a median annual earnings of US$55,000 or under.

Science, engineering and business majors were more likely to be employed full-time annually according to the report with 64% of business majors enjoying full-time, annual work. However, less than half of individuals who majored in literature, languages and the visual and performing arts enjoyed full-time, annual employment.

Another report released by the US Census Bureau entitled *Work-Life Earning by Field of Degree and Occupation for People With a Bachelor's Degree: 2011* explores the relationship between how far one goes in their education and how much money they may make during a 40-year career. And the verdict is, education pays off. According to the report, an estimate of work-life earning indicates that those with less than a high school education will make approximately US$936,000 during their work-life while individuals with a professional degree can expect to make upwards of US$4.2 million.

Field of study and occupation does impact the amount of work-life income one may expect to achieve despite their level of study. Once again engineering majors top out with those in management earning approximately US$4.1 million during their work-life. Art and education majors who were service workers make much less during their work-life with the report estimating a figure of US$1.3 million.

Statistics from another American Community Survey has resulted in a series of infographics that examine 13 different bachelor's degree majors. *Pathways After a Bachelor's Degree*, the 2010 survey, investigates the estimated work-life earnings of each level of education, beginning with bachelor's degrees, as well as work-life earnings among selected occupations at these different education levels. Visit **www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/acs/infographics/index.html** and select a major to view (choose from business, education, liberal arts and history, social science among others) to view survey results. ▪

- Engineering majors earned on average, US**$92,000** in 2011

- Visual and performing arts, communications, education and psychology majors earned a median average of US**$55,000** or less annually
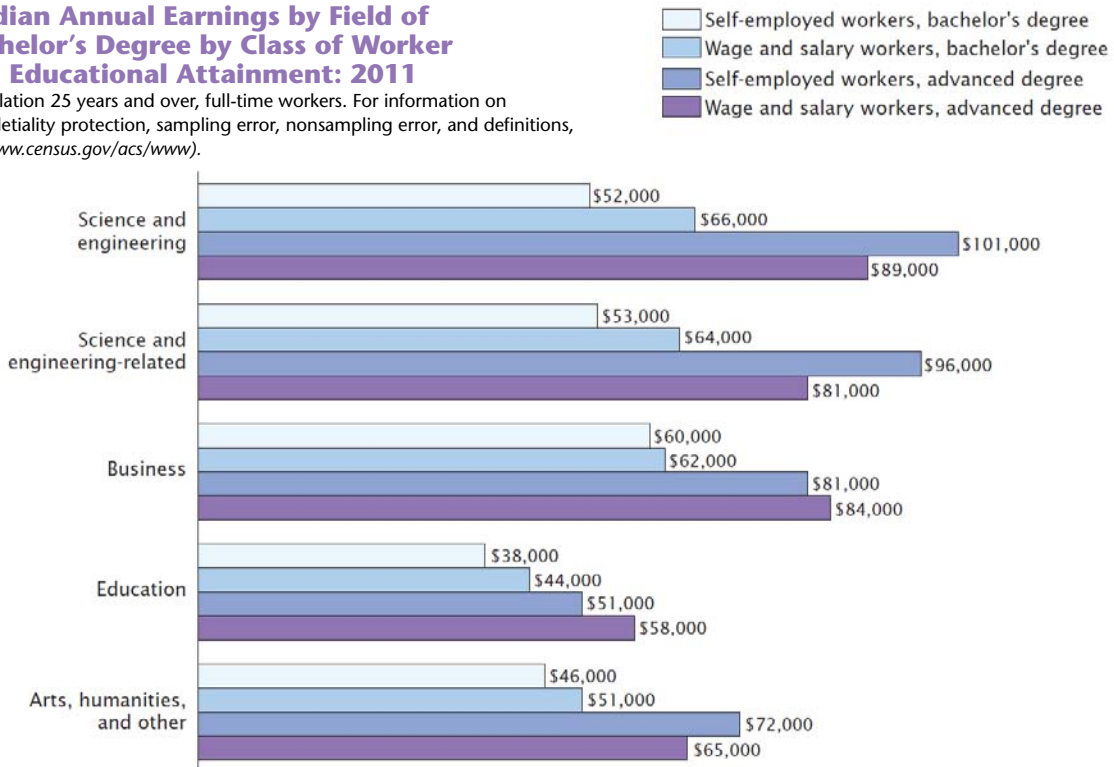
Report Highlights*:

- Fields of study that have higher work-life earnings than the average for all people with bachelor's degree include engineering, computers and math, science and engineering-related majors, business, physical sciences and social science.

- Different majors provide different earnings even within the same occupation. Of full-time, year-round workers in sales occupations, bachelor's degree holders with a major in engineering have median work-life earnings of US$3.3 million, while those of arts majors are US$1.9 million.

- Different occupations provided different earnings even with the same major field of study. Among people whose highest degree is a bachelor's, liberal arts majors working in computer- and mathematics-related occupations have median work-life earnings of US$2.9 million, while liberal arts majors working in office support occupations have earnings of US$1.6 million.

- People whose bachelor's degree was in engineering were the most likely to be working in the private sector in 2011. Education majors were most likely to be working for government (including public schools).

- Among workers who finished their schooling with a bachelor's degree — no matter what they majored in — those working for wage or salary had higher median earnings than those who were employed by themselves or in their own business. However, workers with master's, professional or doctorate degrees had higher median earnings with self-employment if their bachelor's degrees were in certain fields. People with a bachelor's in science and engineering who went on to earn a higher degree had median annual self-employment earnings of about US$100,000, while their median annual wage-and-salary earnings were US$90,000.
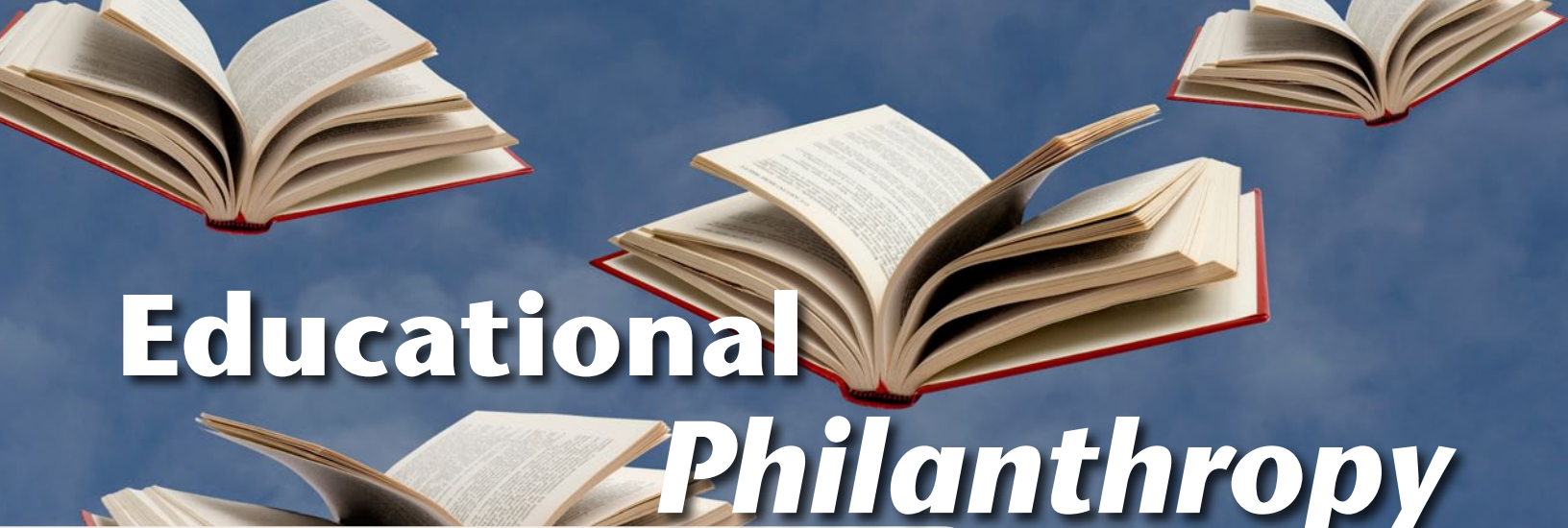
Figure 1

Median Annual Earnings by Field of Bachelor's Degree by Class of Worker and Educational Attainment: 2011
(Population 25 years and over, full-time workers. For information on confidetiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www*).

Legend:
- Self-employed workers, bachelor's degree
- Wage and salary workers, bachelor's degree
- Self-employed workers, advanced degree
- Wage and salary workers, advanced degree

Science and engineering:
- $52,000
- $66,000
- $101,000
- $89,000

Science and engineering-related:
- $53,000
- $64,000
- $96,000
- $81,000

Business:
- $60,000
- $62,000
- $81,000
- $84,000

Education:
- $38,000
- $44,000
- $51,000
- $58,000

Arts, humanities, and other:
- $46,000
- $51,000
- $72,000
- $65,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

Educational
Philanthropy

The BC Government offers free books to students.

Students working on their post-secondary studies in British Columbia may be in for a welcome surprise. The Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology has announced that "British Columbia is set to become the first Canadian province to offer students free online, open textbooks for the 40 most popular post-secondary courses." This move, which is part of BC's Families First Agenda (**www.familiesfirstbc.ca**), could help up to 200,000 BC students save hundreds of dollars each year or more on textbooks.

According to the Ministry: "An open textbook is typically published under an open licence and can be read online or downloaded at no cost. If a printed copy is desired, the book is made available for printing at a fraction of traditional textbook costs. Because the open textbooks are digital and open, they can be modified and adapted by instructors to fit different classes."

Minister of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology John Yap explained that taking advantage of this technology will allow more people to get the education they need in order to access new or better jobs. "British Columbia is proudly leading Canada in committing free, open textbooks to students and joins other international jurisdictions in taking a leadership role that puts technology to work for students," Yap said.

Dr. Alan Shaver, President and Vice-Chancellor of Thompson Rivers University, explained that some of the best universities in the world are already utilizing these types of resources. "Providing key textbooks online not only helps students enrolled in distance and on-campus programs, it also complements other OER (Open Educational Resource) projects in helping learners access the wealth of online learning resources for self-development in a way that assures excellence in learning outcomes," Shaver said.

The Government will be working with post-secondary institutions to implement an open textbook policy that may see open textbooks being used by BC institutions as early as 2013-14. The Ministry explained that the open textbooks will be created based on input from BC faculty, institutions and publishers through an open Request for Proposal process coordinated by BCcampus (**www.bccampus.ca**), a publicly funded organization. Educators will continue to have the option of using other teaching materials in developing curriculum and teaching classes. ◾

Quick Facts:

- It is estimated students spend between $900 and $1,500 per academic year on textbooks. Open textbooks reduce this to around $300 or less when printed books are needed - or $0 for e-copies.

- Open Educational Resources (OERs), like open textbooks, provide workers with easy access to training materials needed to find employment or upgrade skills.

- OERs also have significant benefits for educators and post-secondary institutions, allowing professors to more easily incorporate a teaching module designed by a colleague directly into their course, and materials shared between provinces, or worldwide, with savings for taxpayers in public dollars spent on the development of programming and curriculum.

- Since 2003, the BC government has provided $9.5 million for the BCcampus Online Program Development Fund, which supports the development of online courses, textbooks, manuals, videos and other learning materials. Once completed, these materials are licensed and uploaded to the Shareable Online Learning Resources repository (SOL*R) at BCcampus where public post-secondary educators can share online learning resources for free. OER textbooks developed under this new program will be made available in SOL*R to everyone.

Source: BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology.

APProved for Study

Top technological applications supporting education.

Education is quickly becoming a digital endeavor that extends from technology in the classroom to the ever-expanding field of distance studies. Manufacturers are responding to this technology with devices and applications to assist in the educational endeavors taken on by the masses. Students studying by distance in particular may benefit from some of the new apps storming the marketplace.

APPROVED APPS

iStudiez Pro
Students can organize their schedules and keep track of their homework assignments, GPA, to-do lists and more with this app.

StudyDroid Flashcards 2.0
Students can create flashcards on their phone or online without the use of pen and paper. These cards can be accessed from anywhere and allow students to review for exams without carrying bulky study materials.

Algebra Touch
Students can learn algebra by rearranging, sliding and tapping numbers and operations to solve problems.

MathStudio
This app includes a scientific calculator, a graphing calculator and a simple calculator. It covers all levels of mathematics from basic calculations to college calculus.

Graphing Calculator
Students can turn their mobile device into a scientific calculator that can solve equations and plot graphs.

Math Ref
This application includes more than 1,400 examples, tips and equations that may help math and science students. Students can find equations or examples quickly and can work on homework or study for math tests in any location without carrying a textbook or a list of formulas.

Netter's Anatomy Flash Cards
Students can navigate 324 fully annotated images and zoom in on details or create their own pinpoints.

The Elements
Students can learn the elements with this interactive app that provides visuals and details from atomic weight and density to melting and boiling points for each element.

Language Learning Apps
Students learning a foreign language online can purchase several different apps to help them in their studies. For example, students learning Spanish may benefit from the Spanish Verbs app or the English-Spanish Dictionary app. Applications are also available for other languages including French, German, Korean and more. Students can use these applications to learn new vocabulary, complete homework or prepare for exams.

Grammar Up HD
Students can improve their grammar and vocabulary with the multiple-choice system that features over 1,800 questions in 20 categories.

New Oxford American Dictionary
This app provides students with access to more than 350,000 words, phrases and definitions that they can use in their next assignment.

The World Factbook
Students can keep up-to-date on 250 countries and territories with information covering natural resources, industries, GDP, religion and more.

Instructional Apps
Apps that feature instructional videos may be useful for students who aren't proficient in programs that they are required to use for assignment submission and communication. Apps are available for Microsoft Word, Outlook, Excel and PowerPoint.

Social Media Apps
Students can download apps for a variety of social media websites, including Facebook and Twitter. This may be useful for the distance learner as social media provides a good tool for communication with instructors and peers. ■
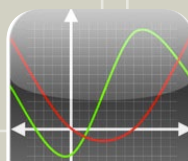
TRU*e story:*

Personal advancement lures one student to post-secondary studies.

Success is best measured by self-fulfillment. One would therefore assume that a list of accomplishments including appearing on the cover of approximately 13 magazines, authoring columns for numerous magazines, owning a profitable business that requires travel to exotic world destinations, being signed to author a book in addition to a reality TV show and being a sportswomen sponsored by Patagonia and other industry-based companies, would tip the scales on self-fulfillment and therefore success. However, one is not April Vokey, a determined and multi-faceted woman who seeks self-fulfillment within all aspects of her life.

Vokey, who is a fishing guide and the owner of Fly Gal Ventures (a fly fishing guiding company based in Chiliwack, BC), is one of those fortunate people who "can't wait to wake up in the morning to get back to work" because everything she loves to do is related to her career. Yet, she still seeks to better her personal success. She will do this through educational advancement.

"One of my biggest regrets in life is that I never finished my business degree upon leaving high school," Vokey said. "It has been an obstacle for me in more ways than I could have imagined and I vowed to one day complete it."

While she dabbled in a few post-secondary courses after high school and received a certificate in music, she never actualized her desire for educational achievement like those she admires have done.

"My mom finished her degree while raising two children and having a very busy full-time job," Vokey explained. "She's always been an inspiration of mine."

Her parents, it seems, planted the seeds for Vokey's direction in life.

It all started at about the age of three when Vokey began troll fishing with her father. Then, at age 16, her passion for fishing blossomed and with a new driver's license in hand, Vokey found herself fishing almost every day.

"My escape and my way of diving or digging into myself is to go fishing," Vokey explained of her passion for the sport. "I fly fish for adventure, excitement, survival and everything else in between."

At 18, Vokey knew fishing would be her career and just five years later she began guiding with a Chiliwack-based sturgeon guiding company. It was on the Fraser River where she would help people realize their dreams to land the big one (really big, sturgeon range in size from seven to even 18 feet in length).

With this guiding experience in hand, Vokey felt she could successfully run her own fishing guiding company and so, in 2007, Fly Gal was born. Guiding is however, just one aspect of what Vokey does. Teaching is another part. Vokey is a certified fly casting instructor, which means she travels around the world teaching people how to fish, how to cast and how to tie flies.

While hers is a fast paced job that means work is unending, be it with the soft goods side of business (t-shirts, hats, flies etc…), financials or out on the water fishing, it is a job that fills her heart and her soul.

"I'm really fortunate to be able to see my clients not only grow in the sport but see how they react to their first day on the water or the first fish they catch," Vokey said. "Everything's new through their eyes, so I really truly do get to live through them and see their excitement."

So with a thriving business that translates to between 260-300 days spent out on the water doing what she loves, why return to school?

"If I have my vision set on something I try to conquer it and education was one of the final checks I needed to mark off on my list," Vokey further explained that while her business has become quite successful, she felt that her confidence would improve if she held a degree in business. After just one course in business through Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL), Vokey saw the positive impact post-secondary education could have on her career.

"I took a business management class and it really helped me to relate to the people who work with me and work for me," Vokey said. "I definitely have taken some of the strategies that I learned in the class and applied them into real life and into my business."

In addition to supporting her business endeavours, Vokey explained that an education could be a safety net for the physically draining and taxing fly fishing industry she has invested her whole being in.

"There are days when my body feels old and I ache with pains in my feet, back and knees," she said. "It is these days that I question where my future will lead me."

"Can I be a fishing guide forever? Probably not. Can I be a business owner as long as I'm alive and breathing? Well, I sure hope so!"
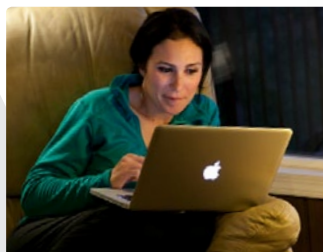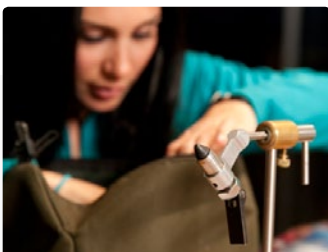
While the why return to education question is answered, the question of how is not. Considering that Vokey's days are full with guiding or teaching on the water and then move directly into her home office where she works until midnight and then gets up at six am to do it all over again, how can she possibly find time to complete her education?

"Being so busy, the only way that I could truly get my education and finish my degree was to pursue online education options," Vokey explained. "I spend so much time on the road and I do a lot of reading so I decided that I would take my time on the road – whether it be in airplanes, taxis, hotel rooms – to complete this education."

"Being able to literally be in the air and complete a course makes all the difference in the world. And it's honestly the only way possible that I can complete this education."

With the help of a bit of technology, Vokey can even combine some of her time spent fishing with her coursework. She simply takes course disks and transfers them from her computer to her iPhone.

"I can not only fish, but have my education in my ear at the same time," Vokey said. "You're not going to get that sort of education by sitting in a classroom."

And get that education through online and distance studies, Vokey has done. In June 2012, after transferring nine credits from her previous post-secondary studies at Kwantlen Polytechnic Univeristy and completing six credits with TRU-OL, Vokey graduated with a Certificate in Business Skills. However her journey with Open Learning did not end there. With visions of a degree dancing in her head, Vokey will continue her studies with Open Learning until she gets the degree in business she is determined to have. That might mean taking her course work along to her photo shoots with Patagonia or sneaking some study time in between recording for her new reality tv show - anything is possible if you put your mind to it, especially if you are a determined young woman with a desire to succeed. ■

April
VOKEY

Spooktacular Celebrations

Creepy cubicles galore as Open Learning revels in Halloween gore. *By Rob Swanson*

It was Wednesday October 31, a day that proved to be the most grisly ghastly gruesome day in the five-plus years in the history of the BC Centre for Open Learning (BCCOL). Behind closed doors, the building was infested with spooky swarms of hideous horrible heaving masses of dreadful demonic cadaverous colleagues.

Yes, it was the Halloween Celebration in the BCCOL.

Like so many unwanted devilish spawn, creepy themes were hatched and chillingly executed in 15 separate areas. Populated with the undead, the best-left-unsaid and the unwed, these weird and wired wastelands made the hair on our goose bumps sit up and shiver. Scared, even.

Frightening photos were snapped, putrid potables were gulped, grim golf was hacked, ghostly guessing was extracted and we were asked to fondle wretched foodstuffs without retching; jolly good fun.

In between consuming mountains of sugar, participants were judged. Many were found wanting. Of what, exactly, we are unsure, but the following were adjudicated winners:

Best Male Costume – Bob Byrne

Best Female Costume – Faith Bateman

Best Themed Area – The Exams Department

The LOL Club thanks everyone for making BCCOL Halloween Celebrations 2012 a frightening success. Frankly, the creativity and collegial merry-making within the walls of the BCCOL scared our collective pants off. ◼

FAITH

Best Female Costume

Best
Male
Costume

BOB

LIFE in OL

Enrolment Services welcomes **Razu Mann** to the position of Senior Data Management/Records Coordinator. Mann brings to this position a degree in Computer Science as well as experience gained through his previous positions in IT Services and as an Enrolment Services Officer and Service Coach, in addition to several years of technical experience prior to joining TRU. The department also welcomes **Karen Nichols** to the position of Service Coach. Nichols brings to this position, her experience as both an Admissions and Records Assistant as well as an Enrolment Services Officer, in addition to her past teaching experience. **Christina Zaenker** and **Marnie Storie** have also joined the department in the positions of Enrolment Services Officers. Prior to joining the department, Zaenker worked with Nursing while Storie previously worked with Exams and Enrolment Services Materials. Enrolment Services would also like to welcome **Eric Youd** back to the team. After a year away, Youd is once again working with the Data Coordination team.

Instructional Design welcomes **Marlene Brooks** to the position of Instructional Designer. Prior to joining TRU, Brooks worked within the Distance Education, Learning and Teaching Support unit at Memorial University, where she was a Senior Instructional Designer. Brooks has also worked at the universities of Guelph and Regina. She brings to this position, a Bachelor and Masters degree in Adult Education, with candidacy in the PhD program at the University of Regina as well as experience in developing initiatives in the creative use of technology in learning and First Nations programming. In recognition of her hard work, Brooks has won a number of awards including Canadian Network for Innovation and Education and National University Technology Network.

Program Delivery welcomes **Matt Dyck** to the position of Manager of the department. In this capacity, Dyck supervises the Delivery Support Team and assists in the hiring of Open Learning Faculty Members (OLFMs) and works on course delivery projects and OLFM/student queries.

Admissions and Advising welcomes **Kim King** to the position of Program Advisor. Prior to joining Open Learning, King worked at TRUs on-campus Welcome Centre. King brings to this position, a background in recruiting and a passion for serving students.

Curriculum Services welcomes **Carolyn Hawes** as Editor I and **Chris Ward** as a Course Editor.

Planning, Metrics and Analytics welcomes **Marian Sheehan** to the position of Business Analyst.

Open Learning bids a fond farewell to Open Learning Faculty Members **Jill Wade** and **Sheila Lindfield** upon their retirements as well as **Tracy Dembicki** who will be leaving her position with Open Learning.

A big thank you goes out to everyone who donated items toward the first annual **Cameron Beddome Endowment Fund DVD Sale Extravaganza**. The initiative raised a healthy $305 dollars towards the fund. Thanks also go out to the individuals who oversaw the sale including **Jon Fulton**. Plans are in the works for another DVD sale fundraising event so start thinking of what DVDs you might want to pass on and donate to a great cause.

In case you missed it, in early September students clambering back to campus were welcomed by OL with a special, larger than life message. The words "Welcome Back," which were created using colourful pieces of 8x10 paper, were spelled out on the windows of the BC Centre for Open Learning to make students feel right at home after their summer vacation. Another fun initiative brought to you by the LOL Club.

SOUPER SUPPORT: Gordon Tarzwell, Vice-Provost, Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning, serves up soup at the Culinary Arts cafeteria in support of the United Way. From October 30 to November 2, a portion of all proceeds from soup bowl purchases went to TRU's United Way campaign.

Lunch and Learns are back. As many may recall, Open Learning once offered monthly talks on a variety of topics during the lunch hour. This series has been revived with the first presentation having taken place on November 29, 2012 in OL127. These talks recognize that there is a wealth of expertise in Open Learning and on campus that can help us all both professionally and personally. The sessions provide a chance for individuals to get to know their colleagues better, learn more about what they do and pick up a few pointers. Topics do not have to be related to an individuals job function but speakers are recommended to: speak for 30 to 45 minutes with time for questions; speak on a topic in a way that is accessible for all or, if highly specific, appropriate for the audience; and have some level of expertise on the topic. Email Lindsey Norris at *lnorris@tru.ca* if you have a topic that you would like to share. ◼

TRU NEWS

By TRU Marketing and Communications

TRU Dean Recognized with Powerful Award

Thompson Rivers University congratulates Dr. Barbara Paterson, Dean, TRU School of Nursing, for receiving a prestigious 2012 Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 Award in the Public Sector Leaders category.

Marking a decade of celebrating female leaders, the Women's Executive Network (WXN) announced the recipients of the 10th annual Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 Award. Each year, these awards celebrate the professional achievements of women across the country in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

"I am very pleased to be recognized in this way but I am very aware that my achievements are due in no small way to the many people who have encouraged and supported me throughout my career," Dr. Paterson said.

Dr. Paterson joins a community of 653 women who have received the Top 100™ Award over the last decade, recognizing the highest achieving female leaders in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in Canada. Winners are selected based on their strategic vision and leadership, their organization's financial performance, and their commitment to their communities.

Dr. Paterson is the highly respected Dean of TRU's School of Nursing and a leading researcher in chronic illness. She is an exceptional innovator in engaging nursing faculty, medical staff, students and patients to transform nursing education to serve emerging needs for care and in creating collaborations in research and care with Aboriginal and other groups.

Her mentorship of the faculty at TRU has led to an increase in scholarship while her connections to other renowned researchers in the academic community have enabled new national and international opportunities for learning and research.

Visit **top100women.ca** to view the complete list of 2012 Top 100 Award Winners. ∎

Teaching and Learning Scholars Program Launched

Nine Thompson Rivers University (TRU) faculty members have been chosen as scholars for the first Teaching and Learning Scholars Program cohort at TRU. The goal of the Teaching and Learning Scholars Program is to encourage and support faculty in scholarly inquiry into student learning.

The members represent a good cross section of TRU's disciplines and expect to start a ripple effect throughout the University that will inspire their fellow faculty members to advance best practices for teaching at the university level.

"The work of the scholars will produce a deeper and more meaningful understanding of student learning in the context of their individual classes," Gary Hunt, TRU Coordinator, Teaching and Learning Support, said. "While research on teaching has been a staple for years, the new program offers a novel approach through collaboration and peer support."

The Teaching and Learning Scholars Program brings together faculty who are committed to rigorous, systematic and evidence-based study of student learning. Working in a peer-supported, cohort model of collaborative investigation over one year, each scholar will develop a course-based inquiry project, conduct research that sheds new light on a significant aspect of student learning, have the work peer-reviewed and share the findings publicly.

Adapted from the model at Mount Royal University in Calgary, the Teaching and Learning Scholars Program was originally developed by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the US. It has also influenced similar initiatives at Royal Roads University and UBC.

The program is an initiative of the Centre for Student Engagement and Learning Innovation and is led by four faculty members, Gary Hunt, Joanne Jones, Krista Lussier and Lyn Baldwin. ∎

TRU Foundation Awards

The TRU Foundation Awards Ceremony held November 22, saw students receiving close to half a million dollars in scholarships and bursaries. In total $474,600 was awarded to 497 students at the ceremony.

"For 30 years the TRU Foundation has been supporting students and the university," Les Consenheim said in his address to donors and students on behalf of the volunteer TRU Foundation board. "During this time, the Foundation through the generosity of our donors has built an endowment portfolio for student assistance of $11.4 million dollars.

"Last year the Foundation raised $3.2 million dollars for students, buildings and programs at TRU. This milestone could not have been achieved without the continued support of our donors and the hard work and efforts of the volunteers and staff team."

"Today, a learning community and a caring community come together to help people improve their lives," Alan Shaver, President and Vice-chancellor, TRU, said. "This, I believe, clearly symbolizes what TRU stands for. We should all be very proud of what the people in this room represent for TRU, for Kamloops and for Higher Education in general."

New awards presented at the 2012 Foundation Awards Ceremony include:

Mel Rothenburger Journalism Award - $500
Yoshie Ozawa and Ron Watson International Scholarship - $500 x 2
ESL Award - $1,000
Subway Bursary - $1,000
Robert Dziekanski Scholarship - $800
Kamloops Senior Citizen's Housing - $2,400
Wiseman Family Scholarship - $1,000 ∎

Government Commits millions to TRU Law Building

On October 9, 2012, John Yap, Minister of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology, announced that the government would contribute the $7.4 million needed to complete the 40,000 square foot transformation of Old Main into the new home for TRU's Faculty of Law.

"Old Main is an important part of TRU's campus and this expansion and rebuilding project is another important step forward in the ongoing development of the University and the services it offers to students," Yap said. "I know that when it's complete the building will provide a place for students to have an outstanding educational experience at TRU and will enable them to secure fulfilling careers."

The two-storey addition to Old Main will be the home for the entire TRU Faculty of Law. LEED Silver is the environmental standard goal set out for the interior fit-out that will include the first Canadian law library created in the digital age, a moot court, lecture theatres and improved disability access.

The total estimated cost for the revitalization is $20 million. The funds announced by Minister Yap will be utilized for Phase 2 of the project, which represents the completion of the interior at a cost approximately $10 million.

TRU's law faculty is now housed in the Brown Family House of Learning, the move into the new space atop Old Main will coincide with the third intake of law students in September 2013. ∎

Revitalization of TRU's Old Main building includes a new addition that will house the new Faculty of Law.

WHAT'S NEWS
IN OPEN LEARNING

Contact North, Ontario's Distance Education and Training Network, celebrates the innovative work of Ontario colleges and universities in online and mobile learning in the "Pockets of Innovation" series. The series outlines each project's opportunity, innovation, outcomes and benefits, challenges and enhancements, and potential. The projects that are featured in Pockets of Innovation are categorized in the following areas: Faculty Development; Hybrid Learning; Institutional Change; Online Courses; Online Programs; Open Educational Resources; Partnership Opportunities; and Technology Leaders. Contact North anticipates having more than 50 projects featured in the series by the end of 2012. Visit **www.contactnorth.ca/ pockets-innovation** for more information.

Algonquin College's strategic mandate agreement states that it will create the non-profit Ontario Institute for Digital Education (OIDE). **With support from the provincial government, the institute will bring together all 45 public post-secondary educational institutions in Ontario and be dedicated to helping institutions and individual educators improve the quality, scale and breadth of online education in the province.** The document states that "the OIDE will collaborate with learning organizations, government agencies and private-sector supporters to continually strengthen the foundation for digital education across the province – while working to ensure online education becomes part of everyday life, accessible to and affordable by anyone, anywhere, at any time."

A survey of 18 post-secondary education schools in Alberta and BC revealed that online learning appears to be a key direction of every respondent. The survey observed that quality assurance is the most important issue facing online learning while increasing student access is the most important aspect to each educational mandate. The findings suggest that managing growth in online learning is complicated by several factors such as varying levels of faculty engagement, the need for more robust policy development, the scope and character of supporting resources and the roles academic units play. All responding institutions expect a continued increase in online programs over the next three years, with 60% anticipating growth in excess of 10%. Institutions see a changing landscape of online learning with 61% of respondents identifying mobile learning apps as one of the most important developments in the next three years. Other emerging topics include: tablets; e-textbooks; open education policies, licences and resources; and the integration of social media into formal learning.

EDU*lib*, a platform developed by HEC Montréal that offers free online university courses, was launched on October 22. Over 2,800 students enrolled in under two weeks prior to the November 12, 2012 start date of its first course in introductory marketing. Two other courses in finance and economics were added in winter and spring 2012. Visitors to the EDU*lib* HEC Montréal site have represented about 50 different countries, although the majority are Canadians. More than 1,000 individuals have signed up for the marketing course and by November 5, more than 950 people had enrolled in a course on understanding financial statements with another 650 enrolling in a course on economic issues and politics. In taking these courses from a distance, participants can share their comments or post questions on a discussion forum, turn in regularly assigned homework and take tests. Participants that pass the course, which runs for six weeks, will receive an attestation that they have successfully completed the course requirements. Students in the EDU*lib* courses will not however receive any university credits or diploma. Visit **edulib.hec.ca**, for more information about the courses offered and to view profiles of the professors who will be teaching them.

The University of Toronto's experimentation with massive open online courses (MOOCs) has seen great response with an enrollment figure of 85,000 students. The computer science department offered three courses this fall and winter through the US-based MOOC venture Coursera. The uToronto computer MOOC courses include: "Learn to Program: the Fundamentals," with 48,000 student enrolments; "Crafting Quality Code," with at least 15,000 students; and "Neural Networks for Machine Learning," with almost 22,000 students. According to Coursera, uToronto's computer science courses are already among its most popular offerings.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) has partnered with Coursera, the US-based provider of massive open online courses (MOOCs). UBC was one of 17 new partners to recently join Coursera in producing MOOCs. These new partnerships more than double the number of Coursera's institutional partners and has increased its course offerings to almost 200. The other international universities include: Berklee College of Music; Brown University; Columbia University; Emory University; Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Hong Kong University of Science and Technology; Mount Sinai School of Medicine; Ohio State University; University of California at Irvine; University of Florida; University of London; University of Maryland; University of Melbourne; University of Pittsburgh; Vanderbilt University; and Wesleyan University. In the spring of 2013, through Coursera's online learning platform, UBC will begin offering three non-credit courses including: "Useful Genetics;" "Computer Science Problem Design;" and "Climate Literacy: Navigating Climate Conversations." UBC is the second Canadian university to join Coursera following the University of Toronto.

According to a new report published by the Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association, **Canada's post-secondary education institutions are lagging behind the rest of the world in terms of its contribution to Open Education.** The report, which suggests that very few Canadian institutions are prioritizing Open Education content creation, identifies several major challenges in terms of moving toward an Open Education culture such as: quality control; intellectual property issues; establishing the necessary IT infrastructure; developing sustainable business models; certification and assessment needs; and creating inter-university systems that are easily navigable. The report offers suggestions on how to foster an Open Education culture such as: institutional administration incentivizing the creation of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Access publications and providing IT support to allow easy sharing and distribution; faculty collaborating with each other to create OERs; students expressing concerns to professors about the cost of commercial materials and a preference for OER options when the quality is comparable; and governments making research grants issued by government agencies conditional upon the open-access publication of research results.

Canadian-based Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Pakistan-based Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) recently reached an agreement to introduce an open-schooling system in Pakistan to improve literacy rate in the country's less-developed regions. **Through the agreement, COL will assist the University in developing a curriculum for an open-schooling system that will provide education at the primary and elementary levels to drop-out students through a distance learning system.** COL will provide AIOU with the funding required to create the open-schooling system under which a network of open schools will be established throughout the country. Under the agreement, the AIOU will develop necessary skilled-based course materials for fourteen subjects to be introduced at the primary and elementary school levels.

The Inter-Organizational Task Force on Online Learning, which consists of representatives from six different national organizations for online and e-learning in higher education, recently released a report outlining the steps it plans to take to advance online learning in higher education. The report, which is available at **www.upcea.edu/files/Interorg-Task-Force-9-20-12.pdf**, outlined six required steps in order to achieve their goal:

- Create the capacity to better inform online learning policy-making and regulation by establishing a formal alliance of organizations dedicated to advancing online education.

- Inform public policymakers and higher education leaders of the fundamental importance of online learning in serving the new "traditional" student: the adult learner.

- Make the connection between online learning, the economy, workforce development and access and communicate that connection to policymakers and higher education leaders.

- Give presidents and provosts the information and tools they need to make online education a key strategic asset for financial sustainability and mission fulfillment.

- Engage policymakers and other key stakeholders in conversations about new opportunities for innovation afforded by e-learning.

- Use the overwhelming body of research demonstrating the quality of online learning to dispel the lingering skepticism of policymakers and the public at-large.

The task force was formed at the Future of Online Learning Summit in Chicago in September 2011. Its members include representatives from the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC), the Association of Continuing Higher Education (ACHE), Educause, the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), UPCEA and the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET).

WHAT'S NEWS

Educational leaders met at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in June 2012 for the inaugural World Open Educational Resource Congress. At the Congress the economic implications of the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement and its potential to dramatically expand the global knowledge economy was discussed. It was suggested that OERs could greatly stimulate the global economic demand and growth by making education more accessible and adaptable to the changing needs of the global economy as OER programs can work closely with industry to create credentials earned from OER that are linked to specific occupations or job openings. The UNESCO World OER Congress concluded with a declaration that urged governments to play a more active role in supporting the movement.

Bridge to Success (B2S), a project that provides free and open educational resources, was awarded US$750,000 to help students who are struggling with mathematics so they can go on to complete their education. The funding was provided by the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) program, which is an initiative to improve college readiness and completion in the United States through educational innovation and technology. The project is intended to help students prepare for college-level work in mathematics by offering "bridging" content in fundamentals of arithmetic, pre-algebra, and learning skills. According to the Open University UK (OU), more than 250,000 students in the United States are required to take at least one developmental mathematics course, but only 16% complete it, and only 10% of those students go on to pass a college-level mathematics course. An open solution of B2S will be made freely available to everyone and is expected to reach 30,000 users globally in the next year.

Harvard University and MIT have formed a new non-profit partnership, known as edX, which offers free online courses from both institutions. Harvard's involvement follows MIT's announcement in December 2011 that it was launching MITx, an open online learning project. edX, which began offering its first five course this past fall, is overseen by a non-profit organization governed equally by Harvard and MIT, each of which has pledged US$30 million toward the initiative. At least five other universities, including Princeton and Stanford, have partnered with a new company called Coursera.

In October 2012, a group of leading open education projects launched a new massive open online course (MOOC) that has no instructor, nor any institution or organization involvement. The "mechanical" MOOC combines offerings from MIT OpenCourseWare, OpenStudy and Codecademy. The course combines content from MIT OpenCourseWare's course "A Gentle Introduction to Python" with a study group supported through OpenStudy and instant feedback and practice projects from Codecademy. Learners will earn badges once they've mastered the course through Codecademy and will earn recognition of collaborative skills through OpenStudy's SmartScore. Participants registered for a mailing list that coordinated their progress through the content and assignments and signaled when discussions on particular topics took place. Visit **http://mechanicalmooc.org** for more information.

Massive open online course (MOOC) provider Coursera recently entered into a contract through which it will license several of its courses with its university partners to Antioch University. Through this agreement, Antioch will offer versions of the MOOCs for credit as part of a Bachelor's degree program. This represents one of the first times a third-party institution has bought permission to incorporate a MOOC into its curriculum and to provide credit for the MOOC. The purpose is to lower the cost of the degree. Antioch will pay Coursera – who will then share a percentage with its partner universities – for permission to use several of its courses. This deal represents an attempt by Coursera and its partners, to develop revenue from licensing its MOOCs. Students taking the MOOCs through Antioch will be paired with an Antioch faculty member who will provide independent study advising, discuss material and assign supplemental work.

In mid-November, the American Council on Education (ACE) said it would examine the academic potential of massive open online courses (MOOCs). The University will work with organizations including Coursera and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association to determine whether some MOOCs are similar enough to traditional post-secondary education courses that they could be eligible for credit. The agenda for this project includes the following activities: creation of a Presidential Innovation Lab that will bring together presidents and chancellors from diverse institutions; evaluation of select Coursera courses for college credit by the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT); and examination of effective approaches, pedagogies and practices that lead to student success, as well as the applicability of college credit recommendations for MOOCs to college degree completion programs. The credit evaluation process started early in 2013, using faculty teams to assess how much students who successfully complete Coursera MOOCs have learned. Students who wish to take the courses for credit have to pay a fee to take an identity-verified, proctored exam. If the faculty team decides the course is worthy of credit, students who do well could pay for a transcript to submit to an institution of their choice. Colleges are not required to accept those credits, but similar transcripts are already accepted by 2,000 post-secondary education institutions in the US for training courses offered by the military or by employers.

The University of Maine at Presque Isle (UMPI) is offering LOOCs, or little open online courses. The University is attempting to offer an anti-MOOC experience for non-paying students and one that is identical in nearly every way to that of tuition paying students who are enrolled with the University. Currently there are four open courses at Presque Isle under the brand OpenU. Each of these courses admitted two to seven non-paying students in addition to tuition paying students who are taking the course for credit. The LOOC students will not receive credit for completing the course however they will receive feedback for any paper they submit or test they write. The problem with the MOOC (massive open online course) model is that it can't replicate the experience of a traditional online course as the instructor cannot provide potentially tens of thousands of students with individual attention or critique the way the LOOC can. Students who have completed the LOOC through OpenU may however receive prior learning credit if they become a UMPI student. Visit **www.umpi.edu/academic-resources/umpi-openu** for more information.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is seeking proposals for the creation of remedial and general education massive open online courses (MOOCs). These are intended to service lower income students and to help improve college completion rates. "Ultimately, our vision is that MOOCs may provide institutions a way to blend MOOC content into formal courses with more intensive faculty, advising and peer support and also provide students an alternative and direct path to credit and credentials," the foundation said.

The education and media company Pearson recently launched Project Blue Sky, which is a search engine that helps post-secondary instructors locate free materials from popular open educational resource (OER) repositories. Instructors will therefore be able to search for e-book chapters, videos and online exercise software more comprehensively and quickly through aggregated sources including Harvard Open Courses, Connexions, OER Commons, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Open Courseware, Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative and Wikiversity to name a few. Visit **www.pearsonlearningsolutions.com/pearson-bluesky/** for details.

The state of Pennsylvania, through the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), will not give funding to post-secondary students who do more than half of their course work online or as distance education. "Blended" or "hybrid" courses, which have online and classroom components, are also classified as distance education by PHEAA. A Distance Education Study Group that will look at the issue to make recommendations for change is in development, according to PHEAA spokesman Keith New.

The University of Missouri has directed US$2.5 million to the development of its distance education arm, Mizzou Online. The money will be used towards the development of 10 to 15 new online degree programs adding to the 66 programs currently available.

Ten US universities have formed a consortium to offer fully online, credit-bearing undergraduate courses through a partnership with the education-technology company 2U. According to 2U's Chief Executive, any students enrolled in an "undergraduate experience anywhere in the world" will be eligible to take the courses. Students who enrol in 2U consortium's courses will have to pay for the experience and in return they are promised a high-tech virtual experience that reaches, if not equals, the social and intellectual rigour of a typical course at any of 2U's partnering universities. Upon completion, students will receive the equivalent number of credits – with their university's seal of approval. 2U and the institutions will share any revenue that comes from the project. The extent of the group's growth, such as admissions standards and prices, will be the purview of a governing body with the consortium itself.

A national opinion poll released by Northeastern University found that most Americans believe in the growing value of online degrees. Among respondents between the ages of 18 and 30, 68% said an online degree will be just as recognized and accepted among employers as a traditional degree will be in the next five to seven years.

Increasing the number of distance learning opportunities for students is an institutional priority for Ohio-based Youngstown State University (YSU). The University recently hired a new Director for the Office of Distance Education in order to actualize this expansion, which has been a priority for YSU since its mention in the 2020 Strategic Plan. YSU feels increasing distance learning opportunities will improve student satisfaction with academic and non-academic experiences. Currently the University is in the process of evaluating and assessing where it makes sense to implement online courses and expects this to be complete with more web-based courses being offered in fall 2013.

In September 2012, the Colorado Department of Higher Education released a comparison study of Colorado Community College System students who took science courses online versus in traditional classrooms and then tracked those students who transferred into four-year institutions in Colorado. This study identified little difference in the learning of students in online or in-person introductory science courses. Upon transferring, the students in the two groups performed equally well.

In 2011, more than 20,000 students in the state of South Dakota's public university system took at least one course through the Internet, two-way television or some other distance delivery method. This represents a 13% increase in students taking distance education over the previous year. According to the South Dakota Board of Regents, approximately three-quarters of the distance students are undergraduates and about 70% are enrolled part-time.

A number of websites that offer to take a student's entire online class for them for a price have recently sprung up. Through this service, "tutors" handle assignments and take quizzes and tests, most sites guaranteeing at least a B grade, for a fee – prices for the service vary greatly. This is a growing concern for many online education providers who now must look at designing online courses with this issue in mind.

The British government has recruited Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales to advise it on how to make all publicly funded academic research in Britain available online to anyone who wants to read or use it. David Willets, Britain's Universities and Science Minister, said full open access would "usher in a new era of academic discovery and collaboration." Wales will advise on "the common standards that will have to be agreed and adopted for open access to be a success," as well as provide input into the creation of the UK Research Councils' "Gateway to Research" portal, which aims to improve access to information on publicly-funded research.

A quarter of India's students are receiving their education through distance learning according to a report from the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Open Distance Learning (ODL) system, also known as Distance Education (DE) system, has evolved as one of the effective modes of education and training as the overall annual growth in enrollment between 1975-76 and 2008-09 was 5.6% for the conventional system, while it was 16.3% in the ODL system. The enrollment in distance education in India has been increasing approximately at the rate of more than 10% in the last two decades. According to Professor V N Rajasekharan Pillai, former Vice Chancellor of IGNOU, currently close to 24% of all enrollments are in the ODL system and this number is growing.

In July 2012, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) voiced its support to set up an open schooling network in Pakistan to improve existing literacy rate and ensure education for all, at the primary, middle and secondary level. The project is expected to serve as a model for other countries to educate people through a distance-learning system. The COL will expend necessary technical support, like designing content/curriculum of the open schools that are to be set up in cooperation with the provincial governments. The project aims at imparting basic education to around one million boys and girls during the next three years at the cost of around $20 million in monetary support garnered from international donors as initial funding for the payment of students' fee and to meet project's cost.

The Deputy Minister of Education for Namibia, Dr. David Namwandi, recently made a call for an open, distance learning university to be developed in the country. His plea was made during the 47th Distance Education Southern African (DEASA) Annual General Conference. Namwandi said the country should also use the successes of open distance learning (ODL) in countries such as Mauritius, Tanzania and Zimbabwe as guiding tools to link and transform its current college-level institutions into fully-fledged open universities. Government institutions and stakeholders of distance learning attended the three-day conference to discuss and work on a national framework for ODL that was approved in 2010 in an effort to develop distance education. Delegates from 13 African countries participated in the conference that was held under the theme "Promoting Advocacy for Open and Distance Learning in the SADC Region." Namwandi said that conventional methods alone would not enable Namibia or Africa to expand educational opportunities, therefore new approaches are needed if Africa wants to achieve the desired goals. According to Namwandi, member states agreed to formulate national policies in distance education to provide a framework for cooperation at the regional level. The Chairperson of DEASA, Dr. Primrose Kurasha, said "ODL is no longer viewed as a second best form of education in comparison to conventional education, but a first class delivery mode for a great number of our people as it offers flexibility to study anywhere and exit and return at own will."

Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University (HBMeU) recently launched the 2012 edition of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP). The SCOP meeting 2012, which was held under the theme *Open and Distance Education (ODE): Barriers, Opportunities & Strategies Forward,* ran from November 12 to 15. The meeting, which saw Presidents from 150 universities of open and distance education, tackled various challenges and barriers associated with the implementation of ODE from both an international and regional perspective. It also explored opportunities ODE provides in helping countries overcome socio-economical challenges and provided insights into successful strategies for advocacy of ODE. Specific focus was placed on the latest trends and developments in ODE, including Open Educational Resources, quality and regulatory framework, among others. In addition, a global campaign to promote e-learning was announced by President of ICDE and rector of the Indonesian Open University, Professor Tian Belawati. This one-year global campaign to promote e-learning will disseminate information about the opportunities that are provided through open and distance online learning. The campaign will be communicated through the ICDE website and its network of 100 educational institutions from 50 countries that will also promote e-learning through their own activities and websites.

A report on exam reforms through technology recommended that universities in Mumbai, India should consider providing open learning opportunities through online courses. The report, prepared by a 15-member government appointed committee on upgrading the state's higher education system, suggested replicating the models of foreign universities such as the University of Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Columbia, which offer online courses through various portals.

The University of Queensland (UQ) is looking into the possible development of a major online open learning environment. The University's Vice-Chancellor explained that this initiative is an important part of the University's "blueprint for technology-enhanced learning." In order to realize this initiative, UQ plans to develop massive open online courses (MOOCs) through which selected course content will become available to the world. Currently, UQ's plan is to offer from one to two courses from each of the University's six faculties in a MOOC format over the next two years. This project represents the first step in strengthening the UQ online learning presence.

The release of EdX's online learning platform as open source will be accelerated as a result of the release of MongoDB training to the Web. This release was facilitated by the recent partnership between 10gen, the company behind MongoDB open-source "NoSQL" database, and EdX, the free online education partnership between MIT, Harvard and the University of California Berkeley. 10gen recently released two free training courses for MongoDB—one for developers and one for database administrators. The eventual goal of the collaboration is to provide all of 10gen's training for free online and to release the entire EdX platform under an open-source license.

A new business that offers universities massive open online courses (MOOCs) that feature private industry-focused courses, automated marking and a crowd approach to learning recently opened. OpenLearning was developed by University of New South Wales graduates who define the business as "a combination of Facebook and Wikipedia for learning." The Australian company will be emulating Facebook and YouTube and taking on Coursera and Blackboard with a platform that allows students to earn points by "liking" or voting on discussion posts and getting feedback on assignments through automated marking systems. OpenLearning allows universities to offer open online courses via its platform, which also includes a wiki feature that enables students and course supervisors to collaborate for free. In cases where the university wishes to make the course private and charge for it the fees range between AUD$5 and AUD$10 per student, per course.

The airline AirAsia X recently launched the global One Laptop Per Child Program. As a result, about 200 children at the Shree Chandi Devi Primary School, which is located on a remote mountain in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, are benefiting from the innovative laptop-based learning project. AirAsia X sponsored 30 specially designed XO laptops, costing US$225 each, for young children and also trained the teachers on integrating digital learning resources in classroom teaching. The project is in partnership with Open Learning Exchange Nepal, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of education in the landlocked country. ■

CONTEST

The Marketing and Communications department of Open Learning would like to offer a special prize to the sixth individual to correctly answer the following question.

Question:

▶ **Name two ways that Open Learning is making its print and paper practices more environmentally friendly.**

Answers should be sent to *OLMarketing@tru.ca* by 4:30 pm on Friday January 18, 2013.

The winner will be informed by 4:30 pm on Monday, January 21. Details about the prize will be sent to the winner thereafter.

Story Ideas or Questions...

If you have a story idea or a question about Open Learning that you would like answered, please send an email with your ideas or questions to: *edesjardine@tru.ca*. Watch for your story or answers to your questions in the next issue of *The Open Standard.*