

*The following sections report on work underway, and progress made regarding executive priorities for the current year based on TRU's vision and 10-year strategic change goals.*

## **Enabling Strategies/Operations**

**ENROLMENT SUMMARY SUMMER / FALL 2025** — TRU's summer and fall enrolment trends reflect ongoing shifts in domestic and international student interest, with expected declines in international applications and registrations due to federal policy changes. The university continues to monitor enrolment trends closely, particularly international student numbers, while working to support domestic growth through expanded recruitment and improved access.

For Summer 2025, on-campus course registrations are down 33% compared to the same time last year, with overall student headcount down 40%. Domestic student registrations have declined by 22%, while international registrations have dropped by 38%. The only exception is the Faculty of Education and Social Work, where total registrations remain steady due to a 32% increase in domestic enrolment, offsetting a 13% decline in international students.

For Fall 2025, total applications are down 7%, with admissions tracking 14% lower than last year. Domestic applications have increased by 28%, largely due to policy changes such as the removal of application fees, but actual enrolment growth is expected to be smaller.

In contrast, international applications have dropped 44%, and admissions are down 45%, reflecting the impact of federal immigration policy changes. The decline is particularly sharp in business programs, though select areas, such as the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Supply Chain Management and the Master of Arts in Human Rights and Social Justice, have seen modest increases.

TRU's student population currently stands at approximately 29,000. About 10% of students study in-person on the Kamloops campus, while 47% are from the rest of B.C., with the majority studying online. Another 10% are from the rest of Canada, also primarily online. International students represent 29% of TRU's enrolment, with most attending in-person.

**TRU DAY OF GIVING SETS NEW RECORD** — TRU's 2025 Day of Giving raised \$105,997 in just 24 hours, more than doubling its initial goal of \$50,000. A total of 193 donors, including alumni, long-time supporters, organizations, and first-time contributors, participated in the annual fundraising campaign on February 27. Donations were directed to a variety of funds, with the majority

supporting scholarships and bursaries for students in Kamloops and Williams Lake through the TRU Foundation.

Associate Vice-President Advancement Kim Cassar Torreggiani emphasized the significance of the event, noting the strong community response and the critical role these funds play in supporting students. She highlighted that many donations came in smaller amounts, such as \$25, \$50, or \$100, demonstrating the collective impact of individual contributions.

The 2025 campaign was the first to take place over a 24-hour period, instead of the previous 48-hour format. Despite the shorter window, it attracted more individual donors than any previous year and set a new fundraising record, surpassing the previous high of \$81,591 in 2024.

Several community members and organizations provided matching and challenge funds to increase the impact of donations, including Roland and Anne Neave and family, the Kamloops Blazers Scholarship and Education Society, Marg and Terry Bangen, Trace Associates, Fiona Chan, Brogan Fire and Safety, the BC Nurses' Union, Valley First Credit Union, and TRU Alumni.

For students, these donor-funded awards provide essential financial relief, allowing them to focus on their education. TRU's Day of Giving continues to demonstrate the power of community support in ensuring students have the resources they need to succeed. More information about the impact of philanthropy at TRU is available at [tru.ca/giving](http://tru.ca/giving).

**SAYING GOODBYE TO OUR PROVOST** — Provost and Vice-President Academic Gillian Balfour has accepted a new role as Provost at Lakehead University in Ontario. Her last day at TRU will be May 25.

Since July 2022, Gillian has led academic, strategic, and budget planning, contributing to a surplus budget for 2024/25 and a balanced budget outlook for next year. Under her leadership, TRU established Canada's first Honours College, advanced wildfire research, and developed new flexible learning initiatives. She played a key role in navigating international enrolment declines while championing academic excellence and student success.

Dr. Shannon Wagner, currently VP Research, will serve as Interim Provost starting May 26 for up to 12 months. A search for TRU's next Provost will follow. Please join me in thanking Gillian for her leadership and welcoming Shannon to her new role.

## **Honouring Truth and Reconciliation**

**KNOWLEDGE MAKERS SPECIAL EDITION TAKES INTERNATIONAL STAGE** — TRU Knowledge Makers Program, an award-winning Indigenous research network, is receiving international recognition with the launch of a global edition of the *Knowledge Makers* journal. This special

edition, featuring research from 21 Indigenous women across 16 countries, is being published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and was officially unveiled in Rome on March 7. TRU representatives and authors from the Knowledge Makers Indigenous women's research cohort attended the event.

Developed through a partnership between TRU's All My Relations Research Centre and the FAO, the program provides Indigenous women with a platform to contribute to global discussions on climate change, food security, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Historically, Indigenous women's perspectives have been underrepresented in these areas, and the Knowledge Makers initiative ensures their voices are heard.

TRU's vice-president Research, Dr. Shannon Wagner, emphasized the program's impact, stating that *Knowledge Makers* aims to remove privilege and elitism from research, making space for Indigenous voices and methodologies. While the publication is a significant outcome, the broader influence of the program lies in its ability to empower participants and share critical Indigenous knowledge.

The call for participants was issued globally in late 2022. The women participating are from Indigenous Peoples in Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Sweden, Russia, Nepal, Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Turkey, Mexico, Venezuela, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Kiribati. Over the course of a year, they engaged in online learning and group discussions, receiving mentorship as they developed peer-reviewed research articles on Indigenous food and knowledge systems and climate change.

In 2024, TRU hosted the *Coyote Brings the Food Conference* to mark the completion of the program and the upcoming journal release. Participants presented their research and connected with fellow Indigenous scholars and *Knowledge Makers* alumni, strengthening the network of Indigenous researchers worldwide.

Since 2020, the All My Relations Research Centre and the UN's FAO have collaborated to bring this project to fruition. The launch of this special edition journal at the FAO headquarters in Rome is a milestone for TRU, the FAO, and the Indigenous women scholars involved. The success of this initiative has sparked interest in further research partnerships with the FAO, expanding opportunities for Indigenous-led research on a global scale.

**TRU'S INDIGENOUS AWARENESS WEEK** — Both the Provost and I were invited (among other guests) to offer remarks at the Elders Luncheon held on March 4 as part of Indigenous Awareness Week events. Here are our written versions of our remarks:

Brett Fairbairn: It is an honour to welcome you to TRU's Elders Luncheon, held on the traditional and unceded lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. Today allows us to

recognize the Knowledge Keepers among us — those who hold the stories, teachings, and wisdom that guide our communities forward.

In Secwépemc tradition, knowledge is not stored away; it is something lived, shared, and passed on through generations. That is why this event is essential — it is a moment to honour the role Elders play in shaping education, relationships, and the future of TRU.

Kw'seltknéws tells us that we are all interconnected and that our success and well-being are tied to one another. That is why your presence here today is meaningful. It is a reminder that universities are not just places of study. They must also be places of listening and respect.

This week is Indigenous Awareness Week at TRU, when we recognize and celebrate Indigenous knowledge, languages, and traditions. From drumming and storytelling to student presentations and language lessons, this week reinforces our understanding that learning needs to be rooted in tradition, relationships, and responsibility.

It is our responsibility to ensure that Secwepemc ways of knowing are carried forward with respect and purpose. And today we begin by honouring you, because you are the Knowledge Keepers.

We are grateful for the time and wisdom you share with us. Your voices will continue to shape a centre for higher learning where Secwepemc ways of knowing are valued and celebrated, where learning is not just about the mind but also about the heart.

Gillian Balfour: It is a privilege to be here today with everyone as we share time in the spirit of respect, gratitude, and learning. This event reminds us that Elders are the heart of Indigenous communities. I want to acknowledge the deep contributions you make to TRU.

At universities, we often focus on new ideas and emerging knowledge, but we often forget that wisdom is about more than discovery — it is also about remembering. Secwépemc knowledge is enduring, tested, and deeply connected to the land.

Secwépemc ancestral knowledge teaches us how to live, listen, and pass knowledge forward. Events like this one today are not just moments to celebrate or recognize individuals – they are also opportunities to recognize the strength of Secwépemc languages, traditions, and ways of knowing that have always been here.

As others have noted, this week is Indigenous Awareness Week at TRU. This week, we will have opportunities to learn about and celebrate Secwépemc language and culture. But the most important lessons do not come from scheduled sessions or events. They come from

relationships, sitting together — as we are now — and listening to those who have carried knowledge through generations.

To the Elders here today — you are the teachers, the Knowledge Keepers, and the foundation of our communities. TRU is grateful for the time you share with us and the wisdom you pass on to future generations.

## **Leading in Community Research / Scholarship**

**TRU BOLD INTRODUCED AT SENATE** — The TRU Bold Academic and Open Learning Plan (2024-2030) has been introduced at Senate, marking a significant step in defining the university’s academic priorities for the next six years. This comprehensive plan integrates open learning, research priorities, and structured program development, aiming to position TRU as a leader in accessible, flexible, and research-driven education.

TRU Bold is built around five key goals:

- Prioritizing “halo programs” that align with TRU’s research priorities in health and healing, the environment, and technology to improve lives;
- Embedding high-impact teaching practices;
- Advancing open educational practices;
- Prioritizing flexible learning pathways; and
- Developing strategic graduate programs.

The plan reflects TRU’s commitment to student success, interdisciplinary research, and collaboration with Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc and T’exelc.

**2025 TRU GAGLARDI AI SUMMIT** — The 2025 AI Summit, hosted by the Bob Gaglardi School of Business and Economics at TRU, examined the role of generative AI in education, business, and society. Building on the 2024 AI Symposium, this year’s event expanded the conversation beyond teaching and research by including industry leaders who shared insights on AI’s impact in the workplace. Faculty demonstrated how AI is being integrated into classrooms, and students discussed their experiences and expectations regarding AI in their education.

AI is no longer an abstract concept but a reality shaping both learning and business operations. More than 100 Canadian universities and colleges already use AI tools in their curricula, and over half of Canadian students expect their institutions to offer AI-related support. The summit provided faculty with practical approaches to incorporating AI into their teaching while helping students understand how AI will influence their future careers.

Industry experts highlighted AI's practical applications and the challenges businesses face in adopting new technologies. The summit reinforced that AI is not just a tool for the future but an immediate reality shaping education and business.

TRU is taking an active role in ensuring students and faculty are prepared for an AI-driven world. The university's focus is not merely on discussing AI but on equipping its community with the knowledge and skills to use it responsibly and effectively.

**TRU EMBRACES OPEN RESOURCES AND TECH FOR STUDENT SUCCESS** — Our TRUly Flexible initiative is intended to adapt higher education to the changing needs of learners. This approach includes using open educational resources (OER) and online technology to make education more accessible, affordable, and personalized. By reducing costs and expanding learning options, TRU is removing traditional barriers and supporting student success.

Open educational resources encompass digital textbooks, videos, podcasts, and course content that can be freely used, adapted, and shared. TRU launched the TRU Open Press in 2023, working closely with Open Learning and academic practitioners to develop and distribute these resources. Brian Lamb, director of Learning Technology and Innovation, emphasized that OER not only lowers costs and improves accessibility but also provides long-term stability, as resources remain available without pricing changes or version updates dictated by publishers.

TRU maintains multiple platforms to deliver these resources, including Moodle and WordPress, ensuring students can access materials without special software or login requirements. The university is also developing interactive content through open-source tools like H5P, allowing for dynamic and engaging learning experiences.

[In an article on TRU's NewsRoom](#), Lamb underscored that open educational resources align with the TRUly Flexible initiative by meeting students where they are, offering adaptable learning methods, and ensuring that TRU's teaching and learning practices remain relevant to student needs.

**OPEN-SOURCE COLLABORATION GAINS PROVINCIAL BACKING THROUGH NEW GRANT** — A grassroots initiative co-led by TRU to foster the use of open-source technologies for higher education is gaining momentum with a \$100,000 grant from British Columbia's Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. The [Shared Education Resources and Technology \(SERT\)](#) grant enables TRU and its partners to take the [Open EdTech Collective \(OpenETC\)](#) to the next level.

Founded by a group including TRU, the University of Northern British Columbia and BCcampus, OpenETC arose as a voluntary effort to collaborate with other universities and colleges to share and support the use of open-source technologies such as WordPress for teaching and learning. The site's community of educators, technologists and designers share their expertise to develop open infrastructure for B.C.'s post-secondary sector.

Recognizing the role OpenETC and its collaborators can play in supporting the ministry's [Digital Learning Strategy](#), the one-time SERT grant will fund the development of infrastructure, sharable designs and templates that will sustain the project moving forward, including a governance policy and business model. TRU, which is provincially mandated to serve B.C.'s open learning needs, will lead the initiative with continued collaboration across the province.

Work is already underway on OpenETC, with the rollout of demonstration tools and potential business models expected this spring and summer. The SERT grant wraps up in March 2026.

**ELDER LAW CENTRE MOVES TO FACULTY OF LAW** — The Canadian Centre for Elder Law (CCEL) is relocating to the TRU Faculty of Law, as announced by the BC Law Institute (BCLI) and TRU. Under a revised memorandum of understanding, TRU's Law Library will now house all CCEL publications, including the *Practical Guide to Elder Abuse and Neglect Law in Canada*.

Since its establishment in 2003, CCEL has operated as a division of the BC Law Institute, producing over 30 publications and providing legal information and educational resources to organizations focused on aging-related legal issues. Ed Wilson, chair of the BCLI board, expressed confidence in TRU Law's ability to continue CCEL's work, emphasizing the ongoing need for legal innovation to address the diverse issues affecting aging populations.

TRU's dean of law, Daleen Millard, highlighted the significance of hosting CCEL, noting that it strengthens the faculty's research capacity and deepens its commitment to elder law. Both Wilson and Millard acknowledged the contributions of past CCEL staff in advancing resources and expertise in the field.

The BC Law Institute, an independent not-for-profit law reform agency established in 1997, will continue its research on elder law reform in collaboration with TRU Law. This transition marks an important step in advancing legal education and research in elder law at TRU.

**IDAYS 2025 AT TRU CELEBRATED CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION** — TRU hosted its annual IDays celebration from March 12 to 14, bringing together students, faculty, staff, and the Kamloops community to highlight cultural diversity and global perspectives. Presented by Kia Kamloops, this year's theme, *Collective Voices: Innovating Towards a Sustainable Future*, was reflected in performances, hands-on workshops, and immersive experiences that emphasized collaboration in addressing global challenges.

IDays provided an opportunity to celebrate culture through food, music, and dance while fostering meaningful conversations about sustainability and the future. Vice-President International Baihua Chadwick noted that the event was more than a showcase of diverse traditions, describing it as a reminder of TRU's role in creating an inclusive and globally engaged campus where diverse perspectives contribute to a shared future.

The week featured a variety of events, with the IDays Fashion Show debuting as a stand-alone spectacle on March 12. Held in the Grand Hall of the Campus Activity Centre, the show featured students presenting traditional and modern designs that celebrated heritage and self-expression.

The capstone event, the IDays Showcase, took place on March 14 in the TRU Gym. The evening featured live performances, cultural exhibits, food, and artistic expressions, offering a dynamic experience that brought the community together in celebration of global traditions. The showcase emphasized creativity, learning, and cultural exchange, drawing strong participation from both the TRU and Kamloops communities.

All IDays events were free and open to the public. With students from over 100 countries contributing to TRU's multicultural environment, IDays continues to grow each year, reinforcing TRU's commitment to fostering connection, collaboration, and the celebration of cultural diversity.

## **Eliminating Achievement Gaps**

**NEW BURSARY INCREASES ACCESS TO STEM** — A \$25,000 donation from Progressive Planet will support women pursuing studies in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) at TRU. The company has established the Progressive Planet STEM Bursary, which will provide financial assistance to female students over the next five years.

Progressive Planet CEO Stephen Harpur, a father of three daughters, sees this bursary as a way to reduce financial barriers for women interested in STEM careers. He noted that while women make up more than half of university admissions in Canada, they remain underrepresented in fields such as engineering, mathematics, and technology. He hopes the bursary will contribute to greater gender balance and encourage more women to see STEM as a viable and respected career path.

TRU's Faculty of Science serves more than 4,000 students annually, with women representing more than half of enrolment. Dean Greg Anderson emphasized that partnerships like the one with Progressive Planet help reduce gender disparities in STEM by expanding access and opportunities for students. He noted that community support is essential in providing students with resources that may not otherwise be available.

Progressive Planet, a clean technology company based in Kamloops, develops products using mineral assets and recycled materials to promote environmental sustainability.

## **Community Engagement / Partnerships**

**TRU DEEPENS COLLABORATIONS WITH MEXICO THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES** — TRU is strengthening its ties with Mexico and Latin America through its membership in the Canada and Latin America Research & Exchange Opportunities Consortium (CALAREO). This



initiative supports student mobility, research collaborations, and scholarships between Canadian and Latin American institutions.

In March, TRU representatives Dr. Juan Felipe Mejía Mejía, manager of Transnational Education, and Colin Doerr, principal, Global Matters, visited Querétaro, Mexico, as part of a CALAREO delegation. They engaged with institutional partners to advance initiatives in student exchanges, research partnerships, and institutional development. Meetings in Mexico City with government officials and institutional partners further reinforced TRU's commitment to international collaboration.

César Eduardo Gutiérrez Jurado, executive director of Institutional Strengthening at the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Mexico, emphasized the importance of student mobility and academic collaboration in strengthening bilateral relationships and fostering global leadership.

TRU, in partnership with the Canadian-Mexican Chamber of Commerce and the Embassy of Canada, hosted *Investing in International Education in Uncertain Times*, a networking event in Mexico City on March 13. This event brought together professionals and stakeholders to explore cross-border partnerships in education, business, and investment. Mark Richardson, deputy head of Mission at the Embassy of Canada in Mexico, highlighted how international education benefits students while enriching their home communities by introducing new perspectives and practices.

Beyond this visit, TRU's involvement in CALAREO has led to tangible outcomes. Dr. John Church, professor in Natural Resource Science, used CALAREO funding to advance his research on precision ranching technology in Brazil, promoting sustainable livestock practices. As a result, TRU has established a new research partnership with Universidade Comunitária de Santa Catarina and is now hosting a research student from Brazil.

TRU's engagement in CALAREO continues to create opportunities for collaboration, advancing research, innovation, and cross-cultural learning that support international education and sustainable development.

**IMPACT OF HAVING A FULL UNIVERSITY IN KAMLOOPS HAS BEEN FAR-REACHING** — The following is my op-ed that ran on Castanet on March 12:

A significant milestone for Thompson Rivers University is coming. In just a few weeks, on March 31, we will celebrate TRU becoming a full university. Twenty years ago, after an intensive community-driven campaign, the B.C. government approved legislation, the Thompson Rivers University Act 2005, that brought together the University College of the Cariboo with B.C.'s Open University to create a new centre for higher learning in Kamloops.

Anniversaries invite reflection. Whether it's a personal milestone, a community achievement or the evolution of an institution, marking the passage of time gives us a chance to consider where we started, what we've accomplished, and where we're headed. This year, Thompson Rivers University turns 20 — a milestone for Kamloops and the many thousands of students, faculty and staff who have been part of its journey.

The evolution from the UCC to TRU was a bold step that reshaped the provincial educational landscape. But has TRU fulfilled the promise? What has it meant for Kamloops to have a university in its backyard? And, as we look ahead, what role should TRU play in tackling the biggest challenges of our time?

Before TRU became a full university in 2005, Kamloops lacked a research-driven centre for higher education. Bright minds — both faculty and student — often had to leave to pursue research and higher education. Businesses had to look elsewhere for highly skilled graduates and pressing local issues—whether economic, environmental, or social — often lacked the benefit of in-depth academic research.

That changed with TRU. Today, thousands of students from Kamloops and beyond choose to study here. Faculty members are leading research that directly impacts our region. And the city benefits from the economic and cultural energy of a thriving university.

Having a university in Kamloops has meant more than just educational opportunities. It has meant growth — of people, ideas, and industries. TRU has created new degree programs, expanded its reach through Open Learning, and established partnerships that connect students with employers.

It has become an anchor for the city's economy, attracting investment and talent that might otherwise have gone elsewhere.

A recent economic impact study examined how TRU benefits local, regional and provincial economies. The economic evidence is striking. TRU now contributes more than \$885 million annually to the Kamloops economy and supports one in every 10 jobs in the region.

The influx of students, the expansion of research activity, and the development of industry partnerships have all made TRU a major economic driver. If TRU had stayed a university college, many of these opportunities — and the people and businesses that benefited from them — might have gone elsewhere.

Becoming a university also allowed TRU to attract research funding that was previously out of reach. Today, TRU brings in \$8.5 million annually in sponsored research. Recently, TRU reached a new and important milestone, being named in the top 50 research universities 2023 list, for the first time. From wildfire science to sustainable agriculture, TRU's research

is tackling some of the most pressing challenges of our time. Without a full research mandate, those projects, and their benefits to local industries and communities, would likely not exist.

Beyond economics, the social impact has been profound. TRU's growth has increased access to higher education, allowing more students, especially from rural and Indigenous communities, to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees without leaving the region.

TRU has also enriched Kamloops' cultural and civic life. Our work makes Kamloops more diverse, connected and engaged. TRU supports the arts, fosters debate and brings diverse perspectives to the community. The research and scholarship our faculty does related to global issues, which includes faculty and student exchanges, increases international understanding. It all ensures that Kamloops is not just a great place to live but also a great place to learn and innovate.

As we look ahead, TRU's role in Kamloops, B.C., and Canada will become even more critical. We are tackling some of the most pressing challenges of our time, issues that matter to people from all parts of our country.

Take wildfire research as an example. TRU is becoming a national leader in studying wildfires and their impacts. With the devastating effects of climate change more apparent in recent summers, the need for evidence-based solutions has never been greater. TRU researchers will help us better understand fire behaviour, mitigation strategies and ways to build more resilient communities. Their work will save lives and protect livelihoods.

Then there are social challenges. TRU's Strategic Research Plan emphasizes research in areas such as housing and homelessness, community-based addictions research, and Indigenous health. The plan highlights the university's commitment to studying social challenges through collaborative research initiatives.

Kamloops is a stronger city because of its university and, as TRU moves into our next 20 years, its value will only grow. The challenges of the future — climate change, social inequality, economic uncertainty, including tariffs and trade wars — are complex. But they are precisely the kinds of challenges universities exist to help solve.

In 2005, TRU's potential existed as an idea, a concept. Today, its value is well understood. By any measure, TRU has been, and continues to be, a tremendous success. And the promise it offers for the future is even greater.