

CONSULTATION REPORT

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INTEGRATED PLANNING & EFFECTIVENESS

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Tripartite approach to enhancing TRU’s research capacity

In March 2019, Thompson Rivers University began conducting consultations, through *Envision TRU*, with the intention of informing a new vision for the institution. This process—which aims to be as transparent, inclusive, and authentic as possible—is based on the idea of shared learning and is expected to continue until the end of March 2020. The following report is a summary of responses to the seventh consultation question, and presents information regarding participation, top thoughts, and emergent themes.

Thoughtexchange is an online platform that brings people together to anonymously share and communicate thoughts about a given subject and rank those that have already been submitted by others. This exchange, which ran from June 19 to September 30, asked participants:



Figure 1. Participants

How can we leverage TRU strengths (in open education, international partnerships, etc.) to enhance our research capacity in the next 10 years?

In total, 73 students, alumni, faculty, and staff participated in this event (Figure 1). Fifty-two thoughts were shared and contributed to the discussion, while 1,142 ratings provided insight into community agreement regarding these comments and ultimately formed the basis for the emergent themes (Figure 2). The largest group of participants were on-campus faculty members (45), followed by staff/admin (15).



Figure 2. Emergent Themes

Top Thoughts

The two top-ranked thoughts from this exchange were consistent throughout and addressed themes of leadership/management, curriculum/programming, and funding:

“We must also value knowledge-generation and the contribution of TRU researchers to the national and international research community. Supporting innovation and knowledge creation will enhance TRU's reputation, desirability, and will bring energy and vitality to the campus.”

“Focus on hiring tripartite faculty, building graduate programs, and supporting faculty in establishing internationally recognized research programs. Research (...) is fundamental to our purpose as a university and must be central to our mission and vision for the future.”

Leadership- & Management-Focused

A frequency analysis (Figure 3) of key terms, within the 52 thoughts that were shared, revealed that hiring and supporting faculty—through leadership and management—was a central focus of this exchange. This was also reflected in each of the emergent themes.



Figure 3. Word Cloud

Diverse Perspectives

While participants generally seemed to agree that leadership and management were necessary in leveraging TRU's strengths to enhance its research capacity, what this looked like in practice varied by stakeholder groups. For example, top thoughts for staff/admin also focused on marketing and communications, while those for on-campus faculty members highlighted grants and funding.

To read all of the top thoughts and explore each of the emergent themes from this exchange, please visit the [online report](#), provided by Thoughtexchange.

Emergent Themes

Leadership & Management

Leadership and management can have multiple meanings in different contexts. In the case of this discussion, thoughts seemed to focus both on how TRU should hire new research leaders and be a leader itself on the world stage.

“Vision: TRU could be a top 40 Canadian research university within 10 years. This is a reasonable goal that supports our mandate as a university and can leverage all of TRU's unique assets.”

“Focus on hiring tripartite faculty, even if it means increasing some class sizes. The rewards to the institutional reputation, to knowledge, and to our students will be returned many times over.”

Grants & Funding

As a faculty member, participants generally agreed that part of their responsibility should be to conduct and contribute to research. But while this may be important, it was also suggested that TRU continue to provide funding opportunities in order to help eliminate some of the perceived challenges in balancing the workload of being both a researcher and an instructor.

“Set new research faculty up for long-term success by limiting the number of new courses they have to prep and providing research start-up funds A drop in research productivity in the first year or two can seriously hinder a researcher's ability to remain competitive (...)”

“Tripartite faculty with a tri-council grant should be GUARANTEED a course release to bring their mandated teaching/research load into proper balance. Currently, faculty have to seek approval (...) for such releases. This prioritizes teaching over research when they should be equal.”

Curriculum & Programming

While the current offerings of graduate programs at TRU were appreciated, participants believed that there are still ways in which they could be improved. Some suggestions included greater involvement in the community and a targeted approach to new PhD programs.

“Increase opportunities for graduate-level training through thesis-based graduate programs Grad students are more capable to assist researchers (...) than undergrads, because they have more academic training.”

“TRU has an opportunity to combine co-location with co-creation of new knowledge (...) Moving research into the community, (...) creates spaces for real world, high impact student training opportunities.”

Marketing & Communications

Thoughts around marketing and communications mainly dealt with how participants felt TRU should market itself and its achievements. While many seemed to acknowledge those that have already been made, some participants also seemed to believe that there are still areas in which the institution could improve.

“National recognition for our excellent program and faculty mentor ship support for undergraduate research training TRU has already received national and international awards and commendations for its work (...) We need to build on this”

“Highlight and advertise faculty research programs within the institution and to the broader community Faculty-led research programs provide the foundation for all research on campus.”

Emergent Themes (cont.)**Facilities & Resources**

Like all universities and institutions, TRU is committed to the betterment of students. But, while this is inherently important, it was also remarked by participants that faculty and staff should be considered just as important too. Everyone, no matter their title, should be able to play a role in contributing to the identity of TRU.

“No dedicated faculty space There is nowhere on campus for faculty to meet and collaborate other than student spaces. Hard to build a TRU identity when we can't find colleagues”

Partnerships

Many problems, in today's world, cannot simply be solved by the knowledge and resources of a single person or institution. They require the input and ideas from many different sources, and so collaboration and partnerships are almost a necessity.

“Build partnerships with groups such as the Kamloops Adult Learners, which likely are open to facilitating research as partners and subjects. The senior demographic is well educated, active, and open to further education.”