

A large crowd of students is gathered in a hall, holding numerous red signs that read "REDUCE TUITION FEES". The students are densely packed, and the signs are held high, creating a sea of red. The hall has a high ceiling with large windows and industrial-style lighting. The overall atmosphere is one of a large-scale protest or demonstration.

2016 Provincial Budget Submission

Thompson Rivers University Students' Union

***Standing Committee
on Finance and
Government
Services***

executive summary

About the TRU Students' Union

The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union (TRUSU) is the membership organization of the more than 10,000 students at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in Kamloops. We are Local 15 of the Canadian Federation of Students, Canada's largest students' organization. Our members collectively provide and receive advocacy, services, and entertainment that contributes to universal access to, and a fulfilling experience in, the public post-secondary education system.

Executive Summary

This submission presents the priorities of the Thompson Rivers University Students' Union for the 2015 provincial budget. Our members strongly believe that post-secondary education is an unparalleled means to achieve an equitable and prosperous future for our province.

Education is a means of social mobility for individuals, of equity for disadvantaged or underrepresented populations, and of sustainable performance in a changing economy. This submission puts forward recommendations to achieve the full social, economic, and fiscal potential of our post-secondary education system.

The returns of post-secondary education system must be measured against a series of targeted outcomes including: participation rates that meet labour market requirements and that are equitable across incomes levels; increased completion rates and reduced time to completion to optimize the use of resources; quicker and unhindered transition from studies to facilitate full social and economic participation; and fulfillment of post-secondary institution's mandates. Our recommendations are each designed to improve performance against these targets.

Our first recommendation is to determine a legislated reduction in tuition and ancillary fees that will increase participation rates and equity (equitable participation). Our recommendation following this is to maintain the 2% cap on annual increases.

Our second recommendation redeploys student financial aid to maximize participation and completion. This includes the establishment of a provincial system of upfront, need-based student grants, the transfer of the value of loan remission grants to upfront grants over four years, and the elimination of interest charged on the provincial portion of student loans. These recommendations should be targeted to reduce the average student loan per recipient per year to \$3,000 within four academic years.

Our third recommendation is to review the per student funding formula for TRU to better reflect its mandate, to index per student funding across the system to inflation, and to fully fund any reduction in tuition and ancillary fees

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priority and targets

Post-Secondary Education Priority and Targets

Budget Priority

The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union is confident that post-secondary education should be a priority for the 2016 provincial budget. The social, economic, and fiscal possibilities and imperatives of post-secondary education are clear.

Post-secondary education remains the central means of social mobility, increasing levels of income, standards of health, and independence from social services. For example, baccalaureate graduates employed full-time earn, on average, \$18,000 more per annum than high school graduates employed full-time. Baccalaureate graduates are also more likely to be employed, with an unemployment rate 2.8% lower.¹

Post-secondary education is also increasingly the means to our common economic prosperity, as industry becomes more and more reliant on knowledge, creativity, and advanced technical skills. Projections report that 78% of job openings by 2020 will require post-secondary education.²

Finally, as post-secondary education supports higher standards of living and productivity, it increases the fiscal resources of governments that reap the benefits of an increased tax base and reduced demand for social services. In fact, university graduates, who make up 22% of the population, contribute 41% of income taxes paid and receive only 14% of government transfers.³

In short, post-secondary education is one of the most effective and necessary public investments of our age. It is an investment in the true assets of a new economy – the productive and innovative capacity of our citizens.

priority and targets

Targeted Outcomes

To achieve the full social, economic, and fiscal benefits of post-secondary education, provincial policies and resources must be directed to achieve and be measured against the following tangible and targeted outcomes:

Participation

- Participation rates should meet or exceed projected labour market demands
- Participation rates should be approximately equal across incomes

Completion

- Average time to completion should be brought as close to that for full-time, continuous study in a given program as possible
- Persistence and completion rates should be above 90% and finances as a primary reason for discontinuing studies should be eliminated

Transition From Studies

- The rate of transition to employment should be 100%
- Graduates' employment, career, and entrepreneurial decisions should not be influenced by debt obligations
- Graduates' volunteering and other community service should be entirely unhindered by debt obligations
- Graduates' major consumer purchases and family investments should be minimally delayed by debt obligations

Mandate

- Post-secondary education institutions should be able to tangibly demonstrate progress towards and fulfillment of their purposes and mandates

tuition fees

Tuition and Ancillary Fees

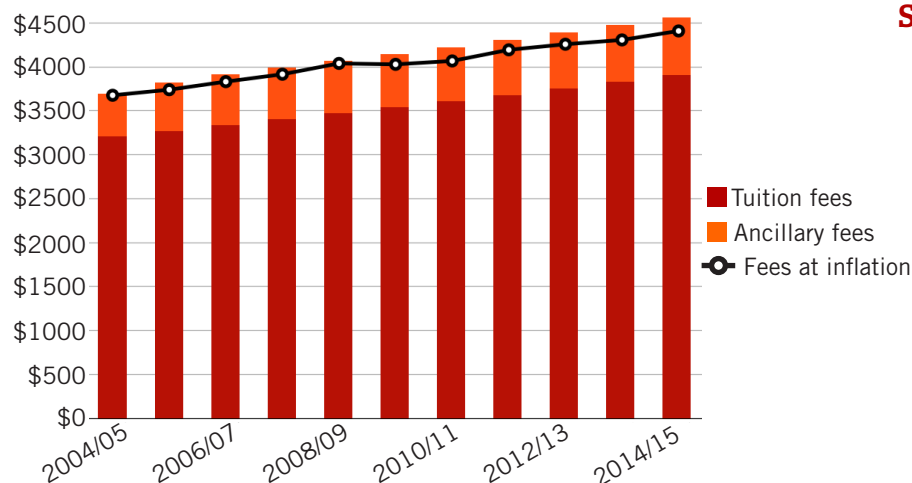
Tuition and ancillary fees can constitute financial barriers and burdens that undermine sufficient and equitable participation rates if not set appropriately.

The current provincial policy of capping annual fee increases to 2% has successfully held fees rates constant over the last decade, and remains a good long-term approach. However, while the change in fees is being well managed, evidence demonstrates that the overall level of fees is too high to meet targeted outcomes of participation rates and equity.

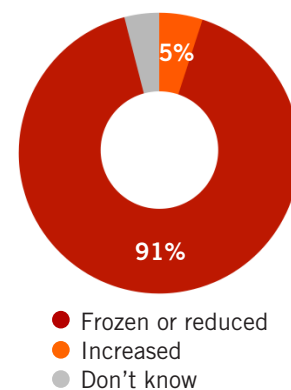
Reductions in fees are a necessary measure to ensure the economic and social benefits of post-secondary education.

Tuition and Ancillary Fees in Context

Tuition and Ancillary Fees at TRU, 2004/05 - 2014/15



Kamloops Public Opinion: Should Fees be Increased, Frozen, or Reduced



Tuition and ancillary fee increases have been held largely constant for the past decade. Between 2004/05 and 2014/15, fees at TRU increased by 23.4% – or 3% above the rate of inflation.⁴ While the policy of capping annual fee increases has successfully managed change, fee levels are producing less than optimal outcomes.

The vast majority of Kamloops region residents (91%) support spending more through taxation to freeze or reduce tuition fees at TRU.⁵

tuition fees

Fees and Participation

Sufficient Participation Rate and the Labour Market

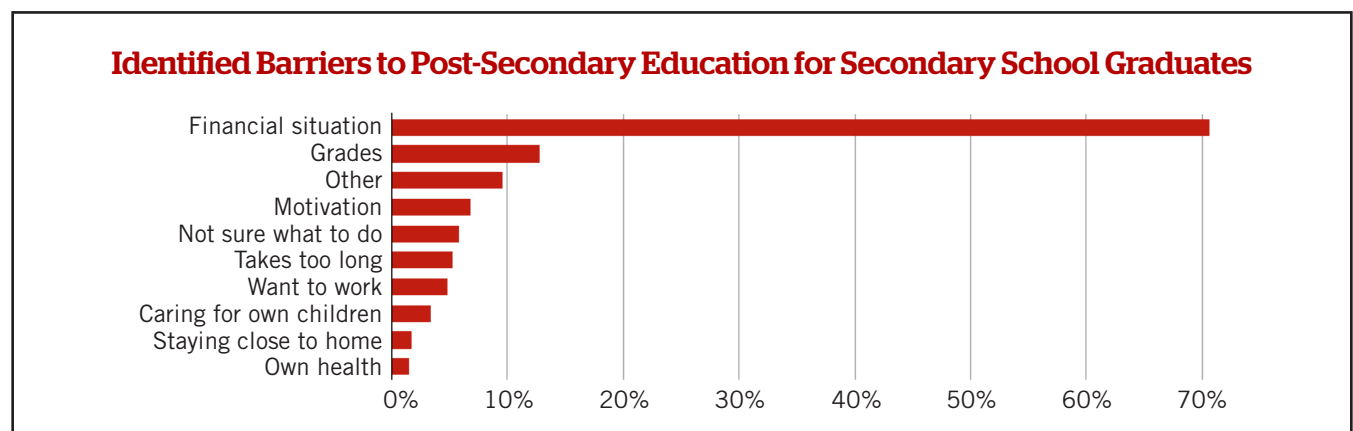
In BC, incentives to obtain a post-secondary education have grown considerably. Projections show that 78% of all job openings to 2020 will require a post-secondary education.⁶ Despite this significant incentive, participation in post-secondary education in BC has actually declined from a peak of 67% of 18 to 24 year olds in 1993 to a low of 46% in 2006.⁷ The levels of tuition and ancillary fees are a significant cause.

Surveys have clearly identified financing as the primary barrier to participating in post-secondary education. The Youth in Transition Survey found that 71% of successful high school graduates facing barriers to post-secondary education in Canada cite financial issues.⁸

This reporting by prospective students is confirmed in the statistical correlation between rising fees and declining participation here in BC. Over the period of 1995 to 2006, average tuition fee rates in BC have had a statistically significant, negative correlation with post-secondary education participation rates (-0.81).⁹ This correlation is stronger than that between post-secondary participation and unemployment rates, suggesting that the cost of education and not economic conditions has been the primary force behind declining participation. Further underscoring this point is the absence of a surge in participation during the economic downturn.

Finally, instances of tuition fee reductions in Canada serve as natural policy experiments that demonstrate the clear link between affordability and participation while holding other variables, from demographics to economic performance to labour market requirements, constant.

In 2007, the BC government eliminated tuition fees for Adult Basic Education, offering a dramatic example



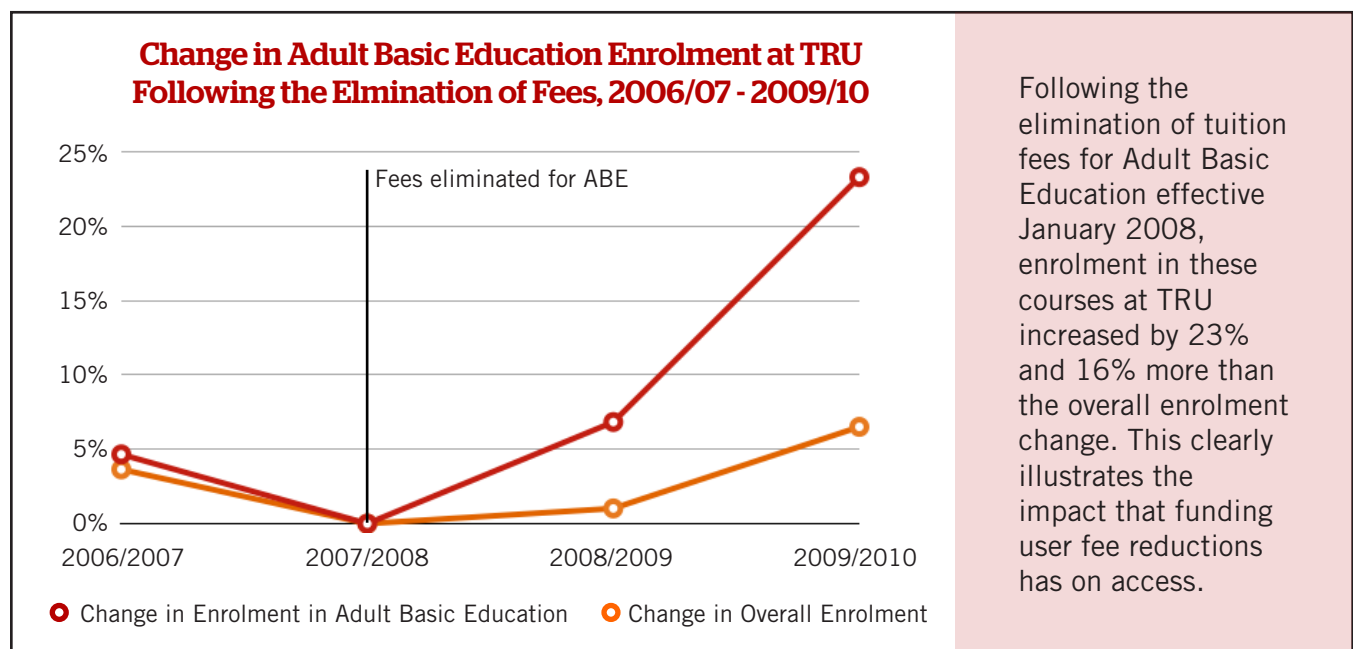
tuition fees

of fee reductions absent changes in other variables. Following this exceptional change, enrolment in these courses at TRU reversed a decline, and in the following two years increased at a rate 16.3% above the overall enrolment change.¹⁰

In Manitoba, tuition fees were reduced by 10% in 2000/01 and frozen in subsequent years. In the three years prior, enrolment had declined and become stagnant. In the following three years, full-time equivalent enrolment increased 18% and the student headcount increased 21%.¹¹

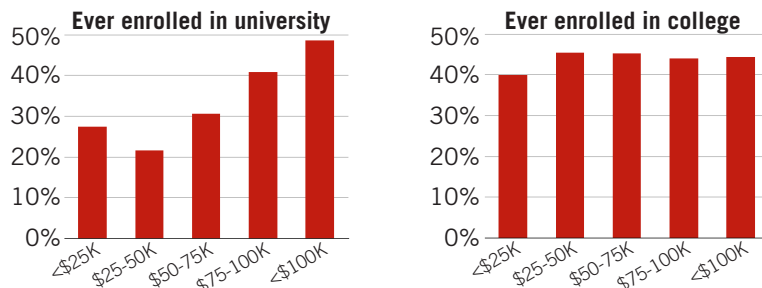
In Newfoundland and Labrador, tuition fees were reduced by 25% between 2001/02 and 2003/04. By 2002/03, full-time equivalent enrolment at the province's Memorial University was up 2.8%, the largest increase in a decade and despite a continuing reduction in the post-secondary age population.¹² As a result, the participation rate amongst this population grew by an even greater degree.

Surveys, statistical correlation, and natural policy experiments together form a clear consensus that fees can significantly affect participation. Reducing financial barriers to post-secondary education is crucial to meeting the labour market demands of today's economy, making it a key budget priority.



tuition fees

Youth Participation Rates by Parental Income, 2006



Equitable participation is largely determined by fee rates. Participation in university, where average fees in BC are \$4,474, is inequitable; whereas participation in college, where average fees in BC are \$2,807, is equitable.

Equitable Participation and Social Mobility

High fees negatively affect not only the overall post-secondary participation rate, but also the equity of that participation.

Because tuition fees are charged at a flat rate to all students, they constitute a greater proportional barrier to those of lower income. By 2004, tuition fees in Canada had risen to 45.8% of the after-tax income of the lowest quintile earners, and that proportion has grown faster in British Columbia, where it has increased by 240% since 1980, than any province except Nova Scotia.¹³

The consequences of high fees on the equity of participation are clear. In 2006, while 48.6% of youth from Canadian families earning over \$100,000 per year had enrolled in university, only 21.7% of youth from families earning between \$25,000 and \$50,000 had.¹⁴ In the college system, where average fees in BC are 37% more affordable, enrolment is equitable across incomes.¹⁵

The potential of education as a means of social mobility is undermined by financial determinants of participation. Given evidence of the growing percentage of tuition fees as a portion of the earnings of the lowest income British Columbians, and the effect of this financial barrier on the equity of participation, reducing tuition fees should be a key budget priority for the promotion of social mobility, poverty reduction, and reduced dependence on other social services.

Recommendation

- Implement an outcomes-based tuition and ancillary fee reduction, then maintain the 2% cap on annual increases

financial aid

Student Financial Aid

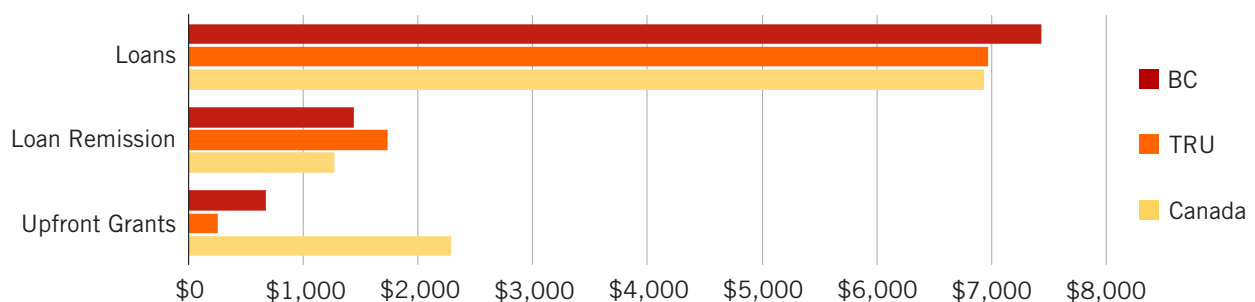
While reducing tuition fees is the most effective policy lever, student financial aid can provide additional targeted mechanisms to support sufficient and equitable participation, completion, and full transition from studies. However, the complement of financial aid strategies can have widely divergent performance against these targeted outcomes.

BC has an overwhelmingly loan-based system of student financial assistance, which is founded on incurring debt to participate in post-secondary education. This system improves participation for students with insufficient cash flow, but not for those who both cannot afford up-front costs and are debt averse. It can create financial disincentives for completion. Finally, it requires years of debt repayment that delays, limits, and distorts the full transition from study to economic and social participation. Those with the most need also become the most indebted and thus service larger debts with greater interest payments, compounding inequality.

In short, financial aid that relies too heavily on student loans performs poorly against post-secondary education outcomes.

Financial Aid in Context

Average Financial Aid Per Recipient, 2007/08



BC student financial aid is overwhelmingly (72%) provided as student loans, which facilitates participation only by deferring up-front costs at a premium. Further, the vast majority (68%), and twice the national average, of non-repayable aid is in the form of loan remissions, provided well after the student experiences financial need. In fact, because BC lacks a provincial system of student grants, it provides the least up-front, non-repayable financial aid in the country - more than 70% below the national average.¹⁶

financial aid

Up-front, need-based student grants, are a necessary component of a successful financial aid system because they are targeted to need, provided when financial need occurs, and transparent, allowing students to be sure of their financial position before incurring the costs of accessing post-secondary. These characteristics make grants effective in increasing participation, completion, and equity.

A key budget priority should be to balance the student financial aid system by establishing a provincial system of up-front, need-based student grants with the aim to reduce the average student loan per recipient per year to \$3,000 in four years.

Financial Aid and Participation

Debt Aversion and Participation

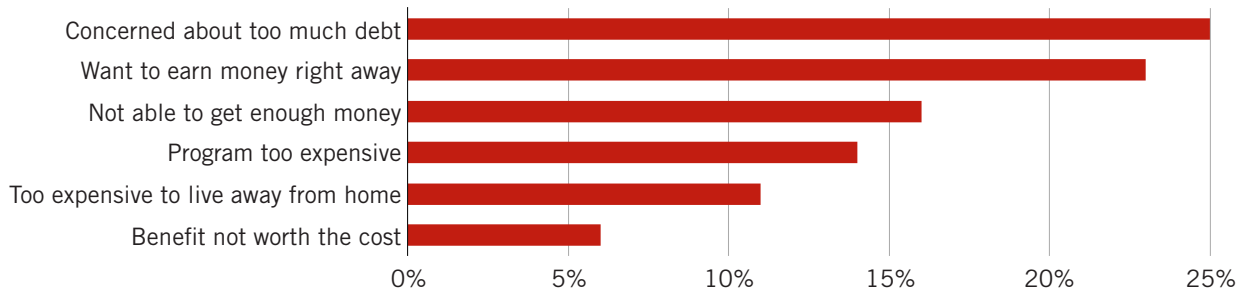
Loan-based financial aid provides students with the means of meeting the up-front cost of post-secondary education by incurring debt. Access to debt solves the issue of insufficient cash flow, but does not reduce the financial burden. Students who are not comfortable shouldering that burden due to other debts, expectations of modest income, or simply a desire for financial security, do not achieve greater participation through loans.

In fact, aversion to debt is the most prevalent of all financial barriers to post-secondary education, creating concern amongst 25% of those citing financial barriers.¹⁷

Non-repayable aid in the form of loan remission does not address this issue either, because instead of reducing financial burden at the time it is incurred, it offers debt adverse students an uncertain possibility of relief.

Grants improve access by directly addressing the issues of financial need and debt aversion. Students receiving a grant are provided with the means to meet costs when they are incurred, and directly reduce the financial burden instead of deferring it as a debt to be repaid.

Financial Reasons for Not Entering Post-Secondary Among Those Citing Financial Barriers



financial aid

Financial Aid and Success and Completion

Debt and Dropping Out

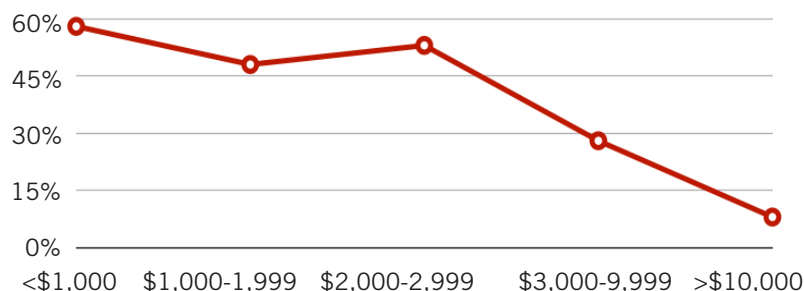
Student loan debt at excessive levels has a negative effect on the ability of students to complete their studies. As debt increases, it may become favourable to choose employment over continued studies. Poor performance related to financial worry, which has been linked to greater levels of tension, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping amongst students, may also cause them to fail.

Without grants, students who accumulate over \$3,000 in loans per year are actually less likely to graduate than students who receive no aid at all. In fact, as student debt rises from \$1,000 to \$10,000 per year, completion rates plummet from 59% to 8%.¹⁸ Given low completion rates amongst borrowers with high debt, that the average loan required per recipient in BC is \$9,662 per year suggests that student financial aid is being applied poorly.¹⁹ Addressing this challenge is urgent, as student loan borrowing in British Columbia is growing faster, at 44.6% growth between 1997 and 2005, than any other province in the country.²⁰

Every financial aid dollar that facilitates participation but not completion is a wasted dollar. It is tempting to think repayment makes student loans a cost-effective approach to participation, but without a positive impact on post-secondary education completion the return on investment is fiscally neutral and economically and socially negative.

Grants are a critical complement to loans in achieving post-secondary outcomes. They have a positive affect on completion because students receiving grants do not carry a financial burden through their studies and are less likely to drop out due to financial worry or to seek income. Students with the highest financial need who receive grants are almost five times as likely to graduate as those receiving only loans, providing a much greater return on the investment.

Degree Completion by Annualized Student Loan Amount



As student loan borrowing grows to more than \$3,000 per year, the probability of a student completing a degree program drops dramatically. As a result, providing loans above that amount is counter-productive and wasteful.

financial aid

Financial Aid and Transition From Studies

Debt and Transition

A debt-driven model of financial aid not only performs poorly against participation and completion targets, but also hinders or distorts the transition to the labour market, and other means of economic and social participation while penalizing those who require the greatest assistance.

During debt repayment, graduates' social and economic participation is limited by reduced disposable income. Student loan repayment is typically scheduled for 120 months, or 10 years, and some students take up to the maximum 174 months, or 14.5 years. An average BC student loan debt of \$34,886 repaid over 10 years requires monthly payments of \$383 well into a graduate's adult life.²¹ During that time, purchasing a home, investing in savings, or starting a family are less likely.

Student debt also distorts career choices, as graduates seek the most immediate and greatest remuneration at the expense of non-financial considerations such as field of choice, region of employment, career development through internships or volunteering, or professional service. Law graduates' career choices are illustrative and of particular concern to TRU where the new Faculty of Law is intended to serve the region. In a study by the Ontario Bar Association, graduates reported "overwhelmingly that they are seeking high paying corporate jobs" while turning down or postponing public and community service work.²² Graduates in the study stated:

"If I leave [university] \$60K in debt, I'll go wherever they'll pay me the most."

"I feel the need to stay at a larger firm in order to get by and pay down my debt."

"It would not be possible for me to perform legal aid work, nor any government position given my financial needs and current debt load."

Repayment Schedule for Average BC Student Loan Borrowers

Total loan
amount: \$34,886

Interest rate
type: Floating

Interest rate: Prime (2.7%)
+ 2.5%

Repayment
period: 120 months

Grace period
interest: \$907

Total loan: \$35,793

Monthly
payments: \$383

Total interest
paid: \$10,185

**Total amount
repaid: \$45,978**

financial aid

For professionals like lawyers and doctors, student debt makes publicly valuable service like regional practice, family practice, public service, and pro-bono work unfeasible. Amongst other graduates, it may hinder entrepreneurial ventures or community leadership opportunities.

Debt repayment with interest also compounds existing inequalities in the transition from study. The greater the loan a student requires to meet up-front costs of education, the larger the debt that student must service. This results in longer repayment periods, and larger and more interest payments. In effect, the more disadvantaged a student is in participating in post-secondary education, the higher the cost becomes for that same education.

Recommendation

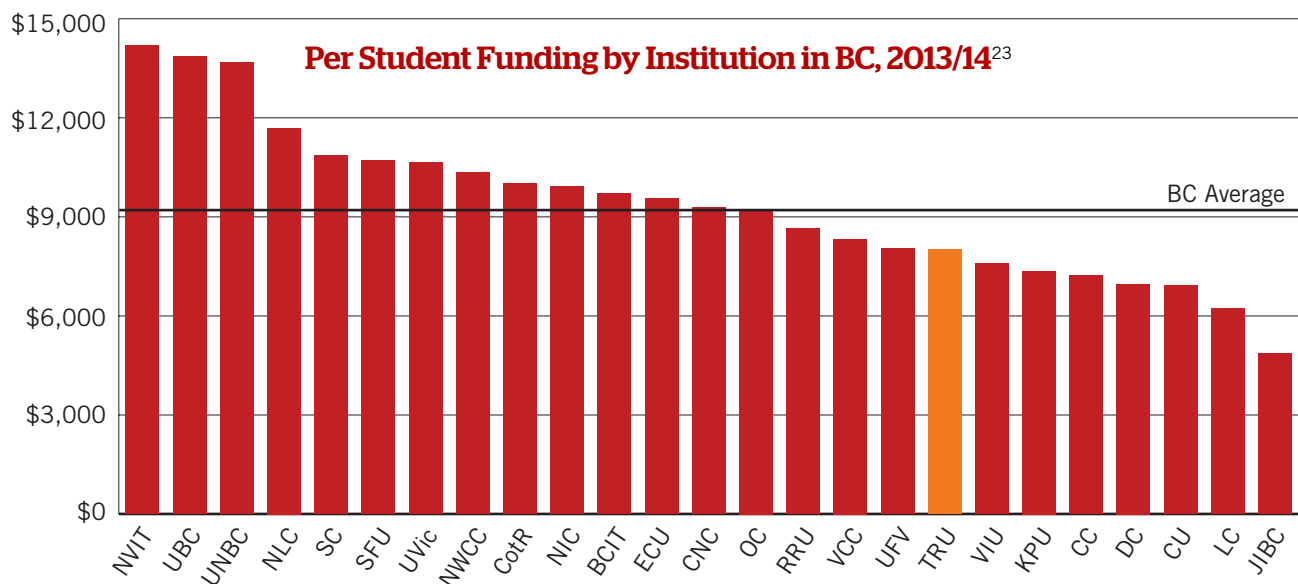
- Establish a provincial system of up-front, need-based student grants
- Transfer the value of student loan remission grants to up-front, need-based grants over four years
- Eliminate interest charged on the provincial portion of student loans

funding

Per Student Funding

Per student public funding is the only effective means of financing post-secondary education in support of institutional mandates. At TRU, the formula for per student funding does not reflect its mandate, and across the province inflationary pressures have eroded the value of operating grants provided to institutions. Finally, increasing per student public funding is also necessary to facilitate reductions in tuition fees to increase participation rates.

Funding in Context



TRU receives less per student funding than most post-secondary education institutions in British Columbia. In fact, TRU suffered a \$4,411 cut in per student in the year following its reincorporation as a full university in March 2005.

This is despite the fact that the *Thompson Rivers University Act* gave TRU a unique and expansive mandate including research, the broadest range of educational programming, and both a regional and provincial mandate. The current funding formula for TRU does not reflect the purposes for which it was reincorporated.

funding

Funding our Mandate

In March 2005, the University College of the Cariboo (UCC) was reincorporated as TRU under the Thompson Rivers University Act, making it one of only two institutions in the province with its own specific legislation. This legislation provided a unique mandate:

- (1) The purposes of the university are
 - (a) to offer baccalaureate and masters degree programs,
 - (b) to offer post-secondary and adult basic education and training,
 - (c) to undertake and maintain research and scholarly activities for the purposes of paragraphs (a) and (b), and
 - (d) to provide an open learning educational credit bank for students.
- (2) The university must promote teaching excellence and the use of open learning methods.
- (3) In carrying out its purposes, the university must serve
 - (a) the educational and training needs in the region..., and
 - (b) the open learning needs of British Columbia²⁴

This mandate is particularly unique and expansive in its combination of research and the broadest range of educational programs from adult basic education to masters degrees, and in its combination of both a regional and a provincial mandate.

While the faculty, administrators, staff, and students of TRU and the people of the Thompson region have been eager to fulfill and reap the benefits of this mandate, provincial funding of the institution has not reflected the required resources.

In 2004/05, its final year as UCC, the institution received \$11,188 per full time equivalent student and was the fourth highest funded post-secondary institution in BC.²⁵ In the following year, under its new legislation and mandate, TRU suffered a \$4,411 cut in per student funding and fell to eighteenth of twenty-five institutions in BC for funding where it has remained.²⁶ The current funding formula for TRU does reflect the purposes for which it was reincorporated. This can be seen through comparisons of per student funding and mandates across institutions in 2013/14.

In its mandate for certificate, diploma, and baccalaureate programs, TRU's peer institutions include all post-secondary institutions in BC. Despite this common mandate, TRU received \$1,330, or 14.2%, less per student funding than the average.²⁷

funding

	Adult Basic Education	Continuing Education	Career/Tech /Trades	Certificate/ Diploma	Bachelors	Masters	Doctoral	Research	Regional	Provincial	Per-Student Funding
TRU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	\$8,021
UBC	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	\$13,865
SFU	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	\$10,701
UVic	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	\$10,642
UNBC	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	\$13,679
RRU	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	\$8,654
VIU	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$7,579
Capilano	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$6,914
Kwantlen	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$7,360
UFV	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$8,043
Emily Carr	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	\$9,568
Selkirk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$10,861
Okanagan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$9,177
Camosun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$7,225
Douglas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$6,967
VCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$8,329
Langara	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$6,215
CNC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$9,278
NWCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$10,330
NIC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$9,919
NLC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$11,692
CotR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$10,009
NVIT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	\$14,200
JIBC	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	\$4,850
BCIT	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	\$9,714
Category Avg	\$8,948	\$9,973	\$8,773	\$9,352	\$9,352	\$9,562	\$11,508	\$10,509	\$8,620	\$10,389	
TRU Funding	\$8,021	\$8,021	\$8,021	\$8,021	\$8,021	\$8,021	N/A	\$8,021	\$8,021	\$8,021	
% Less	10.4%	19.6%	8.6%	14.2%	14.2%	16.1%	N/A	20.3%	7.0%	22.8%	

funding

TRU has the most expansive mandate for educational programs, but also receives less than institutions providing programs at each end of the spectrum. In its mandate for master degree programs, TRU received \$1,541, or 16.1%, less per student funding than the average provided to its peer institutions. In its mandate for adult basic education, TRU received \$927, or 10.4%, less than the average provided to its peer institutions.²⁸

TRU also has an explicit research mandate, but received \$2,038, or 20.3%, less per student funding than the average provided to its peer institutions in this regard.²⁹

In its mandate to serve both regional educational needs and specific provincial needs, TRU has no peers. Despite this exceptional mandate, TRU received \$2,369, or 22.9%, less per student funding than the average provided to institutions with provincial mandates. In fact, it received \$178, or 2.2%, less per student funding than the average provided to institutions with only regional mandates.³⁰

These funding discrepancies are not intended to suggest that TRU should receive exactly the per student funding as other selected institutions, but rather demonstrates the critical challenge that TRU faces in delivering the most expansive mandate in the province without appropriate resources. To this end it is critical that the funding formula for TRU be reevaluated to ensure it receives necessary support to fulfill all aspects of its mandate and maximize its economic and social contributions.

Sustainable Funding

Students have continued to contribute their share as fees have increased by inflation, but public funding has not. While institutions have been working to find efficiencies, continued declines in inflation adjusted per student funding will undermine the fulfillment of institutional mandates.

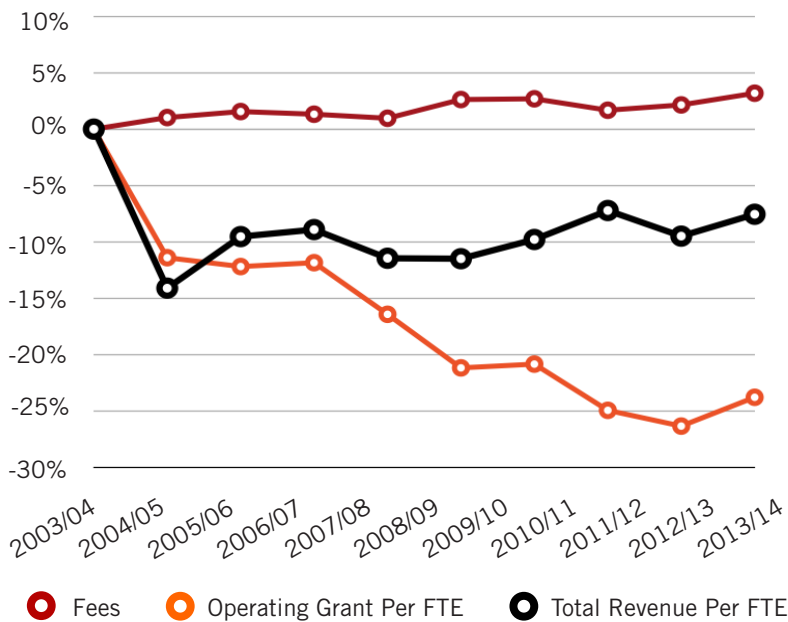
It has been unworkable to sustain adequate institutional resources with inflationary increases in fees, but not funding. Declining funding is accompanied by overall declines in revenue due the issue of scale. At TRU, for example, a 23.8% decline in per student funding between 2004/05 and 2013/14 corresponded with a 7.5% decline in per student revenue despite continued fee increases that actually exceeded inflation.³¹

Facilitating the fulfillment of institutional mandates requires that public funding maintain the real purchasing power of institutions. To ensure that post-secondary institutions continue to receive resources the provincial government should index per student funding to inflation.

Fully funding any reduction in tuition and ancillary fees is also required to ensure improvements in equitable participation rates across incomes, as well as to ensure post-secondary completion rates and times are not hindered by reduced resources.

funding

**Percent Change in Fees, Funding, and Revenue at TRU,
2003/04 - 2013/14 (constant 2013\$)**



Reducing funding while increasing fees fails to adequately finance post-secondary education institutions.

Despite fee increases above the rate of inflation between 2003/04 and 2013/14, a 23.8% decline in per student funding at TRU has resulted in a 7.5% decline in total per student revenue.

Recommendation

- Reevaluate the per student funding formula for TRU to reflect its mandate
- Index per student funding to inflation
- Fully fund any reduction in tuition and ancillary fees

conclusion

Conclusion

Our current system of post-secondary education has room for improvement on key targeted outcomes. Participation rates are below the projected labour market requirements, and inequitable participation undermines the social and fiscal returns of social mobility. Levels of student debt are making completion difficult while prolonging and limiting transition to economic and social participation. The ability of post-secondary institutions to deliver on mandates is declining as inflation erodes per student funding, particularly at TRU, whose funding formula does not clearly reflect its unique mandates.

Nonetheless, we have eager students, dedicated faculty, and a system of institutions that provide educational opportunities across a range of programs and regions that all British Columbians can be proud of. The provincial government must now provide these students, faculty, and institutions with the targeted leadership, and financial and policy support that will achieve their full potential.

First, the province must focus its resources by adopting tangible outcomes for participation, equity, completion, the transition from studies, and institutional mandates.

Second, the province must improve participation and equity by reducing tuition fees and then maintain the new rate with the 2% cap on annual increases.

Third, the province must improve participation, completion, and the transition from studies by redeploying its financial aid resources through the creation of a student grants program to reduce student loan borrowing. It must further improve the transition from studies by eliminating interest charged on student loans.

Fourth, the province must facilitate each of the previous recommendations and the mandates of its post-secondary institutions by reviewing the funding formula for TRU, indexing per student funding across the province to inflation, and fully funding any reduction in fees.

The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union encourages you to provide take these steps as outlined in our three sets of recommendations in the development of the 2015 provincial budget.

recommendations

Recommendations		Cost (\$million)
tuition and ancillary fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement an outcomes-based tuition and ancillary fee reduction, then maintain the 2% cap on annual increases 	\$0.0
student financial aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a provincial system of up-front, need-based student grants with the aim of reducing the average student loan per recipient per year to \$3000 in four years 	\$41.4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer the value of student loan remission grants to up-front, need-based student grants over four years 	\$0.0
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate interest charged on the provincial portion of student loans 	\$30.0
per student funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reevaluate the per student funding formula for TRU to reflect its mandate 	TBD
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Index per student funding to inflation 	\$36.9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully fund any reduction in tuition and ancillary fees 	TBD
Total Annual Investment:		\$108.3 + TBD

endnotes

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- 24 Thompson Rivers University Act, RSBC (2005)
- 25 Sources: Budget and Government Letters of Expectation to BC universities
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Joint Statement

Investing in TRU

A Shared Perspective from Students, Faculty and Staff

The TRU Board of Governors and Senior Administration, the TRU Student Union, and the TRU Faculty Association request a re-investment in TRU to allow us to fulfill our provincial mandate as an institution. We believe that the present funding model is outdated and insufficient. The needs of our region and of our students have evolved, and the a fifteen-year-old funding model no longer allows us to offer the necessary services to our students or to offer a full service university to our region and our province. Areas such as co-operative education, academic advising, math and writing help centres, hands-on and experiential learning opportunities, summer school to reduce the time to graduation and transitions from high school to university to employment all need funding. These additional supports for our students will see them transition successfully into the workforce. Further, such investment would also allow us to invigorate our student assistance program to help students in need, addressing issues of affordability and access. TRU is home to many students who are: non-traditional learners; supporting families while studying, working while studying, or accessing education from remote areas. With increased funding improvement to student grants and bursaries would improve access opportunities to those unable to cover the costs of a life-changing education.

The TRU Board of Governors and Senior Administration, the TRU Student Union, and the TRU Faculty Association also believe that TRU's ability to focus on both teaching and research is currently being undermined by the existing funding model. TRU's graduate and undergraduate students are on the forefront of community-driven research in a range of fields. From new antibiotics to sustainability solutions for industry, research is a crucial source of the innovation our communities and society need. However, despite TRU being mandated to provide master's programs and to conduct research, it receives no government funding for graduate student seats. This is a disservice to both our institution and the region we serve. We again ask the province to invest in funding our graduate programs, and the students that make them successful. Reclamation, optimization, First Nations health, and multiple other areas of research in which TRU is becoming a leader should be as valued and supported as similar programs are in other institutions. We ask that our students and faculty receive equitable support to fulfill their legislated mandate; funding should be based on learning and innovation outcomes.



Thompson Rivers
University
Students' Union
Local 15 Canadian Federation Of Students



TRUSU
Local 15 CFS

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