

The background image shows a group of students at an outdoor event. In the foreground, a man with a beard and an orange turban is talking to another student. To the left, a person is wearing a red and white backpack and holding a yellow banner that says '14, 2018', 'UCUS', and 'SU.CA'. In the background, there are trees and a brick building. A large blue semi-transparent rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text.

Report on the Student Budget Consultation 2019/20

Thompson Rivers University Students' Union

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This report provides students' priorities and perceived service gaps for consideration in the development of the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Budget 2019/20.

Since 2014, the Thompson Rivers University Students' Union (TRUSU) has worked with TRU to develop a means to ensure proactive and meaningful consideration of students' interests in university budgeting. To that end, a Student Budget Consultation process was established to identify priorities and perceived service gaps for consideration in the development of unit-based service plans and budget requests.

This process continues to engage increasing numbers of students, and to register their opinions in nuanced ways. Improvement also continues in responses provided by university administrators and decision-makers across all priority areas and recommendations. Moving forward, more collaborative responses remain desirable, as well as a more systematic incorporation into unit-plans and budgets.

The Students' Union remains committed to this continuous improvement. In this spirit, and to provide a balanced approach of both request and recognition, the report now identifies areas of excellence, improvement, and responsiveness in addition to priorities moving forward. Excellence is recognized in Library services, Study Abroad, and the Writing Centre. Improvement is recognized in academic advising, course and program offerings, and classroom technology and equipment. Responsiveness is recognized in food services, course materials, Student Awards and Financial Support, and classrooms.

This year, budget priorities and service expectations were developed through a two-stage consultation involving a survey of opinions on a comprehensive inventory of experiences and a Town Hall to investigate the key priorities in depth.

The *Student Budget Consultation Report 2019/20* identifies and reinforces previous calls for action on five priorities: parking, food services, study space, academic advising, and course materials. Because each of these priorities has been identified and reported in previous Student Budget Consultations, consideration has been given to any actions taken, in progress, or planned by the university that may address the related concerns.

Students' top priority is that parking and transportation be addressed in a consultative approach to realign needs, realities, expectations, and possibilities. This should be complemented by improved data on vehicle use, demand management, and use of alternative transportation; the investigation of pricing rates and structures that improve demand management, flexibility, affordability, and fairness; greater promotion of the 20% commuter parking discount, the Rideshare, and Zip Car; and collaborative efforts with the City to improve services and infrastructure connecting campus by transit, cycling, and walking.

Students' second priority is food service. Focus remains on variety and options, price and value, and hours of operation, with attention to catering in addition to food outlets. Students seek a continuation of the responsive efforts by Food Services, particularly in the expansion of food trucks. They further support the pending campus consultation and implementation of its findings to reshape food service for the future.

Students' third priority is study space that is dedicated and appropriately managed, particularly for quiet study. They are further interested in better study space amenities and electrical outlets, and greater cleanliness. Finally, they want a balance between central study space and study space in classroom buildings. To these ends, students recommend consideration of interim renovations to better reflect students' needs, development of study space in classroom buildings that reflects students' needs, and continued student consultation in the planning of the proposed 'collegium'.

Students' fourth priority is academic advising that improves accuracy and knowledgeability, continuity and consistency, program mapping, and client service experience. Students support continued efforts towards these ends through *Degree Works* implementation and the *Service Excellence Initiative*.

Students' fifth priority is affordable textbooks and course materials. They want both the university and individual instructors to pursue and support open educational resources and other low and no cost materials as well as a Library textbook reserve program.

Students request and look forward to service plans and the allocation of resources that address these priorities and service gaps.

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Methodology

Methodology

The *Student Budget Consultation Report 2019/20* identifies and describes budget priorities and service expectations through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. A comprehensive survey served to quantify student opinions of and priorities amongst an inclusive inventory of experiences as well as to collect open qualitative comments. A subsequent Town Hall on key topics from the survey provided further qualitative data.

Quantitative Measures

Quantitative data were gathered through the online survey.

The survey was administered between February 05 and 16, 2018 and participants were recruited through electronic newsletters, social media, campus advertisement, and hand billing. The profile of the 391 respondents closely resembles the student population across age, gender, Indigenous/non-Indigenous identity, domestic/international status, and faculty of study.

The survey utilized three quantitative indicators of students' priorities, allowing for tests of convergent validity.

The first indicator is a direct response. Respondents were asked, "If you were in charge of TRU, what would your top three priorities for improvement be?" by category, and then asked "Is there a specific area that is particularly important to you?" in each prioritized category. A weighted calculation identified the most highly prioritized items. This allows students to report their own priorities with minimal analytic abstraction.

A second indicator is a satisfaction-importance gap analysis. Respondents provided both satisfaction and importance ratings for each of a comprehensive series of items on four-point, forced-choice scales. Items for which the importance assigned is greater than satisfaction are flagged for attention and ranked by the degree of the difference. This provides strategic focus on areas that are not only important to students, but also where efforts to improve have greater potential.

A third indicator is a derived-importance measure. Respondents provided a satisfaction rating for their overall TRU experience on the same four-point, forced-choice scale, and these ratings were correlated with satisfaction ratings of individual items. A greater correlation coefficient indicates a greater "derived importance" of an item to overall satisfaction. This provides further strategic focus on areas where potential for improvement is also more likely to improve satisfaction with the university overall.

Comparison of the priority list, the gap analysis, and the derived importance provided for the selection of the top five items.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data related to the top five priorities were compiled from open-ended comments in the survey and discussion in the Town Hall.

The Town Hall on the five top priorities identified in the survey was held on campus on March 28, 2018. Facilitators led participants in semi-structured discussions in which a series of questions on each issue were posed to prompt dialogue and probing questions provided clarification or investigated emerging themes. Discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The survey provided a number of opportunities for open-ended responses related to the full range of experiences explored. Those recorded for the top five priorities were identified for consideration.

Qualitative data from all sources were analyzed using a grounded theory approach. A process of coding based on a close reading of the data lead to the iterative development and focusing of concepts that were then grouped thematically.

Excellence

Excellence, Improvement, and Responsiveness

The Student Budget Consultation offers an opportunity to not only identify students' priorities for future improvement, but also to recognize and celebrate the ways in which Thompson Rivers University excels, improves, and responds to the needs of students.

Excellence

These areas are recognized for excellence as represented by significantly above average levels of student satisfaction in this and previous Student Budget Consultations.

Library Services

The Library provides a comprehensive range of academic services from research assistance to resource identification to citation that critically complement the classroom learning experience.

Library services have consistently achieved exceptional student satisfaction, including the highest of any item surveyed for the last three years. This satisfaction, furthermore, has increased in each of the past three years. In 2018, nine of ten respondents were satisfied with library services, and more than half were very satisfied.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation and congratulations to the faculty, staff, and administration of the Library on a job well done.

Study Abroad

Study Abroad offers enriching student opportunities including exchanges, field schools, practica, and internships.

Study Abroad has consistently achieved excellent student satisfaction, regularly amongst the top items in the survey and third highest in 2018. This satisfaction, furthermore, has increased significantly in each of the past two years. In 2018, nine of ten respondents were satisfied with Study Abroad, and more than a third were very satisfied.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation and congratulations to the Study Abroad staff and student ambassadors, as well supporting faculty, staff, and administration, on a job well done.

Writing Centre

The Writing Centre provides students with a wide range of assistance in academic writing as a foundation of student success.

The Writing Centre has consistently achieved excellent student satisfaction, regularly amongst the top items in the survey and fourth highest in 2018. This satisfaction, furthermore, has increased significantly in each of the past two years. In 2018, nine of ten respondents were satisfied with the Writing Centre, and more than a third were very satisfied.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation and congratulations to the Writing Centre staff and student tutors, as well community, faculty and staff volunteers, on a job well done.

Improvement

These areas are recognized for improvements in student satisfaction, particularly as a result of initiatives to respond to students' prioritization and recommendations in previous Student Budget Consultations.

Improvement

Academic Advising

Academic advising is a foundational service, facilitating students' selection of meaningful educational goals and planning efficient paths to program completion and graduation. Students have identified academic advising for improvement in every *Student Budget Consultation Report* from 2015/16 to 2019/20.

Enrolment Services and advisors across the university have responded with both systemic reform and front-line service improvements. While there is more work to be done, efforts so far are paying off as student satisfaction with academic advising has increased in each of the last three years (1.63/3.00 in 2015; 1.66/3.00 in 2016; 1.82/3.00 in 2017; and 1.85/3.00 in 2018).

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation and congratulations to the staff and administration of Enrolment Services, as well as faculty and staff program advisors, on successful efforts toward improved service.

Course Offerings

Course offerings are the central purpose of a university. Students identified course offering for improvement in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2016/17* and again in 2018/19 in relation to academic advising.

The university has invested in both curriculum development and curriculum governance. As a result, student satisfaction with course offerings has increased in each of the last three years (1.73/3.00 in 2015; 1.80/3.00 in 2016; 2.00/3.00 in 2017; and 2.01/3.00 in 2018). Although continued improved is desirable, students are now as satisfied with course offerings as with their experiences on average (1.96/3.00).

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation and congratulations to all the faculty, staff, and administration across the university who contribute to curriculum planning, development, review, and delivery on successful efforts toward continuously improved teaching and learning.

Classroom Technology and Equipment

Classroom technology and equipment is an important part of the learning environment, and, like most technology, has changed rapidly in recent years. Students identified a need to upgrade and manage classroom technology and equipment in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, as part of improvements to classrooms overall.

Information Technology Services committed to a series of improvements including leasing the latest classroom technologies, removing obsolete equipment, and investigating new wireless display connectivity options. As a result, student satisfaction with classroom technology has increased in each of the last two years (1.90/3.00 in 2016; 2.11/3.00 in 2017; and 2.18/3.00 in 2018). In fact, classroom technology is now one of the highest rated items in the survey.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation and congratulations to the staff and administration of Information Technology Services, on successful efforts to improve the classroom experience.

Responsiveness

These areas are recognized for undertaking initiatives that respond to students' prioritization and recommendations in previous Student Budget Consultations, and that may be expected to improve student satisfaction going forward.

Responsiveness

Food Services

Food is a critical part of the university experience, from well-being and success to diversity and campus life. Students identified food services for improvement in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20*.

The Food Services department has worked since 2017 to address students concerns by, for example, permitting food trucks, providing greater dietary information, extending hours, and providing more timely service. The TRU Board of Governors subsequently committed to use the opportunity presented by the spring 2018 expiry of the exclusive food service contract to fulsomely consult the campus community on the future of food service. Food Services has since led the planning of this consultation, which is expected to begin September 2018.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation to the staff and administration of Food Services, as well as the Board of Governors, on the commitment to respond to students' priorities and recommendations for campus food. Impacts on the student experience are eagerly anticipated.

Course Materials

Textbook affordability is a crisis at TRU and beyond. Students identified course materials for improvement in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20*.

In the past two years, the university has increased its support for free, open educational materials (OER). Open Learning was awarded funding to support the development of OER. Subsequently, the Students' Union, the Library, Open Learning, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, and the Faculty of Arts developed a successful funding request for an OER Development Grants Program. The program has now funded eight development projects in 2018/19.

At the same time, the Library has committed to investigate textbook reserve practices at other universities in consideration of establishing a comprehensive textbook reserve program at TRU. This could provide critical immediate aid in the textbook affordability crisis whilst OER are developed.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation to the faculty, staff, and administrator champions from across the university on the commitment to respond to students' priorities and recommendations on affordable course materials. Impacts on the student experience are eagerly anticipated.

Student Awards and Financial Support

In the face of rising tuition fees and other costs, access to financial aid is increasingly important. Students identified Student Awards and Financial Support for improvement in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18 and 2018/19*.

The Student Awards and Financial Support department has consistently recognized students' increased need, and worked to secure the resources to meet it. In 2017/18, it undertook a project to categorize its awards based on eligibility requirements to better align with student needs. In 2018/19, an Awards Coordinator position to improve service delivery and planning was funded. Finally, the department engaged a consultant to help improve its organization, processes and workflow to be more efficient and effective.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation to the staff and administration of Student Awards and Financial Support on the commitment to respond to students' priorities and recommendations. Impacts on the student experience are eagerly anticipated.

Responsiveness

Classrooms

Classrooms are where students spend most, and the most impactful part, of their time at university. Students identified classrooms for improvement in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*.

In May 2018, the university announced and began significant renovations to Old Main, which houses nearly half of all classroom space on campus. The renovations reflect many of students concerns including resizing rooms, new flooring and paint, new seating, better lighting and natural light, soundproofing, and more electrical outlets. Impacts on the student experience are eagerly anticipated.

On behalf of our members, the Students' Union offers appreciation to the staff and administration of Facilities Services on the willingness and commitment to respond to students' priorities and recommendations. Impacts on the student experience are eagerly anticipated.

Parking & Transportation

Priorities and Service Gaps

The Student Budget Consultation 2019/20 identified five priorities: parking, food services, study space, advising, and course materials. The following presents, for each priority, a background and context outlining previous recommendations, commitments, and actions, as well as external and anticipated changes; the priority's quantitative ranking in the survey; a thematic report of qualitative data; and a conclusion summarizing recommendations.

PRIORITY 1: PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION

Students' top priority is a comprehensive and consultative approach to parking and transportation – creating shared understanding and responsive design of commuting options that meet needs. This includes refining the parking system to better manage demand and continue to maintain sufficient spaces while providing pricing rates and structures that are more affordable, equitable, and flexible. It also includes efforts to make alternative transportation options more viable.

Background and Context

Parking has been an issue of concern and contention on campus for some time. This is the fourth *Student Budget Consultation Report* to identify it for attention. The past year, however, has been the first under the new *Sustainable Parking Framework* as well as construction that disrupted parking access. Going forward, the university will need to continue to both monitor the experience and work constructively with the community to better facilitate commuting.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2016/17* parking was a student priority for improvement. The dominant concern was price, but students also raised six more pointed issues: affordability, value, use of revenue, space and demand management, rate options, and viable transportation alternatives.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, parking was recorded in the data as students' highest priority. Rather than reiterate the priority, the Report simply noted the lack of formal response or action to that point.

By February 2017, however, the administration released the *Sustainable Parking Framework* with a series of actions that came into effect in September 2017. Demand management was to be addressed through conversion of employee lots to reserved lots with a student-employee ratio for efficiency and fairness. Five price tiers were created to push parking to the edge of campus. Transportation alternatives were to be addressed through incentives for the Rideshare carpooling program and the introduction of the Zip Car car-sharing program. Unfortunately, rate options and use of revenue were not addressed. The availability of parking spaces was to decline as central lots are replaced with buildings, and affordability would worsen through a series of future rate increases, on top of rate increases under the new tiered system.

The *Student Budget Consultation Report 2018/19* was released just as the *Sustainable Parking Framework* was implemented. Parking was again students' top priority for improvement. Students remained concerned with affordability, demand management, rate options, and viable alternatives. A lack of parking became increasingly important in anticipation of fewer spaces. In the context of the pending changes, the Report 2018/19 recommended monitoring and reporting on demand management and alternative transportation while considering more affordable and flexible rates and building structured parking.

In January 2018, the administration responded. Unfortunately, reports on the early experience with demand management and transportation alternatives were unclear or underwhelming. Efficiency of space use under the new five tier system was not reported to the Students' Union, but a report to the Parking Appeals and Advisory Committee suggested permitted lots were underutilized at 70%. Tracking of single-occupancy vehicle use was not available, while daily permit sales and UPASS utilization were indirect indicators. Neither the Rideshare nor Zip Car services met target utilization. On the other hand, affordability was improved by the

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cancellation of rate increases for 2018/19. And while administration disagreed with the need and feasibility of structured parking, it committed to create temporary lots at the edge of campus to address demand during construction.

TRU will begin its second year of experience with the *Sustainable Parking Framework* in September 2018. The interaction of changes and construction, as well as the need for better data, creates challenges to improving the outcomes of Framework to meet needs. It is in the context of this change and uncertainty that students' continued prioritization of parking and transportation improvements must be considered.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data from the 2018 Student Budget Consultation survey rank parking as students' top priority overall. At the same time, alternative transportation facilities (campus infrastructure to support transit, cycling, walking, etc.) are ranked sixth overall, up from tenth in the previous year as satisfaction dropped. While receiving lower prioritization, TRU's other transportation services, the Rideshare and Zip Car, also garnered amongst the lowest of all satisfaction ratings. Together, the data point to a need for attention on how students commute.

	Prioritization	Gap Analysis	Derived Importance
Parking	1st <hr/> out of 70 items	0.79 Satisfaction -2.60 Importance <hr/> -1.82 Action required	2nd <hr/> out of 70 items
Alternate Transportation	24th <hr/> out of 70 items	1.45 Satisfaction -2.48 Importance <hr/> -1.03 Action required	3rd <hr/> out of 70 items
RideShare	51st <hr/> out of 70 items	1.34 Satisfaction -2.03 Importance <hr/> -0.69 Action required	4th <hr/> out of 70 items
Zip Car	70th <hr/> out of 70 items	1.46 Satisfaction -1.82 Importance <hr/> -0.36 Action required	11th <hr/> out of 70 items

Parking & Transportation

In a weighted prioritization, parking ranked first of seventy (1/70) items. In students' own evaluation, parking must be targeted for improvement. While alternative transportation facilities attracted less student attention, they were not seen as unimportant, ranking twenty-fourth of seventy (24/70) items. The Rideshare and Zip Car have, however, largely failed to capture students' consideration, ranking fifty-first (51/70) and last (70/70) in direct prioritization. This suggests that students identify commuting as a challenge, but are either unfamiliar with, uninterested in, unconfident in, or unable to use the current alternatives to driving.

The prioritization of parking is corroborated by the satisfaction-importance gap analysis. Parking received a very poor and by far the lowest of any satisfaction score (0.79/3.00). Most respondents (74%) had negative opinions of parking, and the majority were 'very dissatisfied' (55%). At the same time, parking received a critical importance score of 2.60/3.00 with most (76%) describing it as 'very important'. This provides for the greatest gap analysis (-1.82) in the survey and significant opportunity for improvement.

The satisfaction-importance gap analysis dramatically raises the prioritization of alternative transportation facilities. Alternative transportation facilities received the fourth lowest satisfaction score (1.45/3.00) of all items, with nearly half of respondents (46%) holding negative opinions. Nine out of ten respondents (88%), on the other hand, held alternative transportation facilities as important, leading to an importance rating of 2.48/3.00. This provides for the fourth greatest gap analysis (-1.03) in the survey, and suggests a strategic opportunity for improvement.

The satisfaction-importance gap analysis also demands greater attention to TRU's other transportation services. The Rideshare and Zip Car received the third and fifth lowest satisfaction scores (1.34/3.00 and 1.46/3.00, respectively), and half of respondents had negative opinions of both (54% and 47%, respectively). However, the considerable dissatisfaction with these services is coupled with ambivalence. The Rideshare and Zip Car are not seen as relatively important (2.03/3.00 and 1.82/3.00, respectively). This nonetheless provides gap analyses greater than most other items (-0.69 and -0.35, respectively). Current alternative transportation services are neither raising nor satisfying expectations, but improving this type of services may still prove a strategic opportunity.

Finally, alternative transportation facilities, parking, the Rideshare, and Zip Car had the second (2/70), third (3/70), fourth (4/70), and eleventh (11/70) highest derived importance, respectively, for improving overall satisfaction with TRU. Commuting is proving to be a consequential experience. In the case of alternative transportation facilities, the correlation of its satisfaction rating and overall satisfaction (0.39) was among the highest of all items. Combined with its high levels of dissatisfaction (46%), this makes it a clear strategic choice for improvement. In the cases of parking, the Rideshare, and Zip Car, their correlations with overall satisfaction (0.24, 0.30, and 0.27) are decidedly lower. However, the overwhelming levels of dissatisfaction with these items (75%, 54%, and 47%, respectively) maintains a strategic value in improving parking and other transportation services.

Overall, the quantitative data on parking and transportation suggest a considerable frustration. This is underscored by the fact that transportation items received four of the five worst satisfaction scores in the survey. At the same time, students prioritize improvements in parking while showing ambivalence towards current alternatives, contrary to the intended direction of the university. This suggests that a comprehensive and consultative approach to realign transportation needs, expectations, and realities could yield considerable benefits.

Qualitative Results

In the 2018 Town Hall and open survey comments, students identified five concerns related to parking. These include affordability, a need to maintain space, a need to rethink space and demand management, a continued lack of rate options, and a need to make alternative transportation more feasible. Each of these concerns was shaped significantly by the experience of the Sustainability Parking Framework and campus construction.

Affordability

The predominant concern about parking remains price, with students describing it as too expensive. For example, these students protested:

Parking & Transportation

“ *I think our parking is insane. It's extremely expensive...*

“ *Parking is unbelievably expensive!*

“ *Parking is way too expensive.*

More specifically, it was noted, as in previous years, that the price is a particular hardship for the typical student, given limited income and growing educational expenses. These students contextualized the price of parking in terms of budgeting, tuition fees, living expenses, and other educational costs:

“ *Parking is very expensive. I can barely afford it. I am already paying for tuition, fuel, and insurance.*

“ *It's ridiculously expensive and not practical in terms of students not necessarily having money in advance to be able to afford an expensive parking pass as tuition, rent, and textbooks have to be paid for first.*

“ *The rates are too high for a student budget ... There should be more places to park and at a lower cost.*

This was further emphasized in the context of the *Sustainable Parking Framework*. Its five tier system provided the same or more expensive options, and some previously ‘general’ spaces became ‘premium’. For example:

“ *The parking situation is even more terrible then it was last year, and making certain lots premium and reserved is crazy. We are already spending so much money at TRU and on top of it you want us to pay more for reserved spots?*

A new concern with pricing was raised in the context of construction and its impact on the value of higher-tier lots in particular. These students were frustrated by the idea or experience of paying more for proximity in parking, only to have it undermined by construction:

“ *There has been a lot of construction going on which defeats the purpose of creating [premium] parking passes which are closer to your – the areas you're actually supposed to be going to.*

“ *[A student] purchased a reserved spot close to Science behind the Clocktower, and, unfortunately, the construction then blocked off that entire road and made her whole route to AE, where most of her classes are, that much longer... She feels like she was pretty much robbed having to pay for this reserved spot and then walking basically the same distance as parking from Lot N.*

The price of parking is more than an inconvenience for many students because they are already financially stretched thin. While the cancellation of 2018/19 rate increases will provide relief from further demands on students' finances, greater consideration of affordability and differing means is still needed following the recent changes. Finally, the rigidity of the reserved pass system for lots is proving to make pricing for value a challenge, particularly given rapid and substantial campus change that impacts the desirability of lots.

Maintaining Sufficient Space

There is a growing sense that parking space is lacking, exacerbated by the current impact of construction, enrolment growth, and the anticipation of permanent losses of lots. The growing consensus over the past years is illustrated in these examples:

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- “ *Parking here is atrocious. For the university that TRU wants to be, they cannot keep increasing their enrolment if they cannot accommodate for more vehicles.*
- “ *The parking is the worst I have ever seen and will continue to worsen as spots are taken away for development.*

Again, this challenge was exacerbated by construction. These students were frustrated that the impact of construction on parking space was not properly compensated for:

- “ *There's a certain amount of personal responsibility of – okay, you know there's construction – you have to show up on time and try to find a spot ahead of time. But, at the same time, if you show up and you can't find a spot anywhere on campus, is it your fault after that?*
- “ *There is nowhere to park, not even Lot N. I have gone to Lot N where there are actually no spots available! This construction is absolutely horrendous.*

The plans to accommodate for construction in the coming year with temporary lots at the edge of campus will be important. Further, many students, such as these, recognized that the current impact of construction is not permanent:

- “ *Parking situation is very poor. We can understand why parking prices are the way they are. However, if we pay for a parking service, we should be certain there is a spot available for us when we arrive. Yes, it won't be long before we get a lot space back from construction, but the congestion has seemed to increase immensely.*
- “ *The parking situation is awful. Perhaps it is better when there is no construction. But right now, unless you are here prior to 8am, it is very difficult to find a parking spot.*

Beyond the short-term, however, students continue to see a need for parking supplanted by buildings be permanently replaced, as these students suggest:

- “ *There needs to be a replacement for these spaces being lost. Kamloops is not public transit friendly and cannot support a campus with limited parking.*
- “ *I understand the reason for removal of parking, however currently Kamloops is a car based city and we cannot ignore the students who commute. A solution to this might be a parking garage (I understand how expensive this is).*

Lack of parking space is both a short-term and long-term challenge for students who commute. The university has taken steps to address the short-term, but students will be interested to see plans going forward to accommodate the significant portion of the campus community for whom driving is the only feasible commuting option – as discussed below in relation to alternative transportation.

Improving Space and Demand Management

Beyond the total amount of space, students continued to identify a lack of parking availability, or, in other words, a need for space and demand management.

Parking & Transportation

Demand management was one of the primary features of the *Sustainable Parking Framework*. However, many students continued to note a need in relation to peak hours. Further, while the inefficiency and unfairness of employee-only lots has been addressed, the design of the new system of reserved lots has presented its own inefficiencies and inequities.

These students experienced a challenge in finding parking during peak hours, or, alternatively, were able to park in off-peak hours:

- “ *There is often, in the middle of the day, not enough spaces available.*
- “ *I find, between 9:30AM and probably 12:30PM, it's almost impossible to park in Lot N unless it's the very far back, and even then we could be waiting.*
- “ *My classes are earlier in the day so there is always parking for me and so I just come and go easily.*

These comments suggest that students remain interested in means to better manage the existing space by distributing demand across time.

Many other students noted that the attempt to better distribute demand across campus through the reserved lot pricing system needs improvements. These students explained this challenge:

- “ *Clearly the new cost system isn't working because you put signs up to try to get more people to buy the expensive spots. But surprise, surprise, most students can't afford an extra \$1,000 dollars for a premium spot. So now we have the cheaper lots packed full, and the expensive ones going more unused.*
- “ *The reserved parking was a waste – valuable parking spots cannot be used. The cost is very unreasonable.*

The shift from the employee-only restriction to pricing exclusive use of higher-tiered lots does not seem to have achieved the desired efficiency. Perhaps a pricing adjustment could improve the effect. However, other students suggested that managing use strictly by financial means was also not better than employment status in terms of fairness:

- “ *I don't know why you created premium parking. It is just a money grab and limits the parking for people who are spending every penny they have to get an education and then can't park because you created parking for rich people.*
- “ *The parking bracket in place is designed to divide those who can pay for more and those who can't, and it does not seem to be quite fair enough to the students and staff.*

As in previous years, students showed an interest in pricing based on use, as opposed to reserved passes, and this may be both more efficient and better received. This has often been expressed in terms of rate options, as here:

- “ *It's ridiculous that there is not more – that it's all flat rate. If you want to park for an hour or you want to park for a day, it's the same. That doesn't make any sense at all.*
- “ *The idea of pay-by-use is now also directly associated with the limitations of the reserved pass system:*
- “ *I want more affordable parking options like a parking punch card, for example. I would also like to be able to use the punch card or just pay per day in all lots.*
- “ *More options for parking time. Decrease prices. Get rid of pass holder, premium, etc. spots as they are always empty.*

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“ *More options for parking times and prices. Less ‘permit only’ spots.* ”

Whatever the solution may be, concerns about fair and effective demand management remain to be satisfactorily addressed. As noted in the background and context, reports on the efficiency of space use under the Sustainability Parking Framework support students’ assessment that demand management measures need to be adjusted to achieve the better and fairer use of space that was intended.

Improving Alternative Transportation Options

Finally, parking difficulties are frequently justified in terms of the potential to encourage more sustainable transportation choices. While some students spoke to this effect, many others suggested that it has been undermined by the limitations of current alternatives. Some such limitations may be unavoidable, but students provided suggestions for improvement that can be acted upon.

For some, the price and limitations of parking is an effective mechanism to encourage more sustainable behaviour. This student, for example, expressed pressure to avoid driving:

“ *I am thankful I live close enough to campus to walk/bus, but I feel bad for students who come from out of town every day, and have to pay outrageous amounts to park on campus.* ”

However, as the student above also suggests, the impracticality of alternatives for some students limits the scale of positive behavioural impacts. In general, many students identified the geography and infrastructure of the city at large as car-centric, making alternative choices challenging:

“ *I understand the reason for removal of parking, however currently Kamloops is a car-based city and we cannot ignore the students who commute.* ”

“ *As someone who lives in Westsyde, driving to TRU in the morning is the best option for transportation.* ”

The primary alternative, transit, is often not a viable option, particularly for students who are out-of-town commuters or have work and other commitments to travel to in addition to classes. These students highlighted the limits of transit as an option in a geographically dispersed city and region:

“ *As someone who lives a distance from TRU, it is not easy to carpool or take public transit.* ”

“ *I don't live close enough for transit, and I don't want to be penalized with the added cost of \$600 per year on top of my tuition and such just to be able to get to school.* ”

“ *Parking has become worse and worse over the years and without any kind of betterment to the transit system the cut to parking is leaving students without an efficient way to get to school. Not everyone has access to buses or car share options and so their only way to campus is by car.* ”

These experiences emphasize the importance of the 20% parking discount for those living outside the transit service area. The extremely limited use of the discount reported in the 2017/18 year suggests better promotion is warranted. In related effort, the Students’ Union will work with the City of Kamloops and BC Transit to expand the UPASS opt-out provisions to better reflect challenges for those at the limits of transit service.

Parking & Transportation

It is also worth noting that transit use can be challenging for those within its service area. For example, these students explained that transit could not facilitate commuting needs beyond simply getting to and from campus:

- “ *I have to drive to school because the bus cannot get me to and from work on time after class and something needs to be done about parking.* ”
- “ *I have to drive to school to get to work right after. I drive in with my three other siblings and we all drive home together when we're off work later in the evenings.* ”

Others highlighted issues of frequency and transfers as limiting the feasibility of using transit to get to campus:

- “ *I understand the push for a greener campus with the emphasis on taking transit instead (I totally agree with that), but the transit system in Kamloops is good in certain areas but lacks severely in others. I live in Juniper Ridge and a bus comes once an hour, so for domestic students who have to drive to get to campus, this is not a good system for parking.* ”
- “ *[Route #10] is totally fulfilling all my needs because it is not necessarily serving as a connecting bus. Whenever I take the #7 or the #9 it gets pretty inconvenient with wait times of maybe thirty plus minutes waiting at the Lansdowne Exchange.* ”

Many of these challenges will require action from the City of Kamloops and BC Transit, which the university should continue to encourage in coordination with campus stakeholders. However, the university can also work to better accommodate students for whom transit is not an option and for whom price disincentives for parking are ineffective.

Bicycling, another often promoted alternative to driving, presents similar challenges and opportunities. Overall, cycling has fixed limits on its potential due to environmental conditions, as these students explain:

- “ *I wish Kamloops was more bike friendly – the weather, hills prevent this.* ”
- “ *It snows like crazy here and is cold for the majority of the school year. It is not safe to bike.* ”

At the same time, many students are willing to cycle to campus where and when they can. However, they identified a lack of related infrastructure in the city and on campus to facilitate this as a safe option:

- “ *My commute mostly takes place on the highway... I'm not super comfortable biking.* ”
- “ *Kamloops and TRU need more bike lanes, I feel like I'm going to die when I try to bike to school.* ”
- “ *I would like to ride my bike to school, but there are no bike lanes outside of the university. It is ridiculous to get to the school on a bike.* ”
- “ *The campus and city, which is out of TRU 's control, are both not really that bike friendly.* ”
- “ *Bicycle infrastructure needs to be better getting from the city to the school.* ”

To make the most of interest in cycling as an alternative, the university should also work with the City of Kamloops on developing the needed cycling networks to integrate the campus and surrounding neighbourhoods. Here also, the university can work directly on its own facilities and services. In particular, students, like these, identified bicycle theft on campus as a major problem:

Parking & Transportation

“ I lost two bikes last year, which is by the end of the summer and starting this year in September. Both of them I informed the security about and it was at almost the same time. I used it to have class from 5:30PM to 8:30PM, and then I came out and didn't find my bike. Then I called security and security told me, 'Okay.' Then nothing. After a while, the same thing happened by the staff parking lot by Old Main. / Yeah, I've also had my bike stolen. I was living in New Rez and had my bike locked up outside. And they have security cameras, but it happened at night so the camera didn't pick it up. / I think I was part of the same hit too.

Finally, TRU operates or hosts two further alternatives transportation services, the Rideshare and Zip Car. As noted, the quantitative data suggest that students are ambivalent about these services. The qualitative data supports this, and further suggests this is due to unfamiliarity. These students called for better promotion:

“ I have never been informed of any of the carpooling/ Zip Car/ ride sharing programs.

“ These car services sound awesome but I've never heard of them before now. You should advertise them.

“ I did not realize there was a carpooling program. There needs to be better advertising.

Those students who were aware of the services suggested means to make them more attractive and functional. For the Rideshare, these students suggested the incentives be dramatically improved.

“ Make parking free for people that carpool with two or more people.

“ I should not be expected to pay for parking when I carpool.

For the Zip Car, the service was welcomed but limited in its current form. These students explained that the Zip Car worked in some circumstances, but the requirement to return to one campus location made it broadly impractical:

“ The biggest problem is that you have to always bring the car back to campus even if you are going – like if you stay in Aberdeen and if you're coming back late, you have to come park the car back in its spot. And if there is not a bus then it's a big issue.

“ I had the same experience too that if they have drop off zones, it would make everything simpler. Because when you have all your groceries and you come back down, but you live very far away, you still spend the same amount on a cab.

These types of services offer a specific utility, but are not an alternative to commuting on their own due to the single drop-off location.

Overall, a balance between the disincentives to park and the viability of and incentives to choose other transportation methods is needed to realize the environmental and space use benefits intended. Steps incorporated in the *Sustainable Parking Framework* to accommodate commuters and incentivize alternatives are a start that ought to be better promoted and expanded. Additional steps, including both campus efforts and cooperation with the City are needed to improve transit and cycling.

Parking & Transportation

Conclusion and Recommendations

In sum, students' top priority for improvement in 2019/20 is parking and transportation to and from campus. Students seek continued consideration of affordability and equity, reconsideration of space and demand management strategies, and greater rate options, which have both affordability and demand management potential. The early experience of the *Sustainable Parking Framework*, construction, and subsequent changes provide the context for these expectations. Further, as parking becomes more challenging, students are placing greater focus on improvements to alternative transportation.

The price of parking continues to be an affordability concern in the context of growing educational and living costs. The cancellation of 2018/19 rate increases is welcome, and future rate increases should be sensitive to issues of affordability and equity for those of differing means.

The total amount of parking is declining despite growing enrolment, and particularly during times of construction. However, the accommodation of construction with temporary lots at the edge of campus will help to address the short-term need.

Demand management measures implemented since September 2017 should be considered for revision or refinement. Both students and data from the university have reported that the new reserved lot system has introduced new challenges of efficient use of spaces, and students continue to be concerned with fairness.

Both affordability and demand management could be furthered advanced by flexible rate options, particularly short-term rates, that would connect pricing closer to actual and desired use. Plans continue to lack this aspect, which should be reconsidered.

Efforts to shift transportation away from single-occupancy vehicles will only be effective if alternatives are viable. Existing measures of the 20% commuter parking discount, Rideshare, and Zip Car require greater promotion. Further efforts are called for to improve transit service and cycling infrastructure, in coordination with the City of Kamloops.

Finally, a critical finding of both the quantitative and qualitative data is a profound dissatisfaction and frustration with commuting. The rapid and significant changes to campus have enormous potential, but have also been disruptive. Attempts to address concerns with transportation will be most effective if the campus community feels involved and engaged.

As a result, students request and look forward to service plans and the allocation of resources that:

- **Adopt a consultative approach to campus commuting to constructively realign needs, realities, expectations, and possibilities, including any response to the following recommendations;**
- **Improve monitoring and public reporting on the implementation of the Sustainable Parking Framework and pricing rates and structures in terms of the effect on total single-occupancy vehicle use, demand management, and shifts to use of alternative transportation options;**
- **Investigate pricing rate, structure, and augmentation options that improve demand management, are more flexible to needs and use, and are sensitive to affordability and fairness;**
- **Actively promote and publically report on the use of the 20% discount on passes for those living outside the transit service area;**
- **Expand efforts, in coordination with campus stakeholders, to work with the City of Kamloops and BC Transit to improve service and infrastructure connecting campus by transit, cycling, and walking; and**
- **Continue to promote and incentivize the Rideshare and Zip Car to achieve target utilization**

Food Services

PRIORITY 2: FOOD SERVICES

Students' second priority is food service with variety and options, accommodation of dietary needs, value for price, event catering that supports campus life, and extended hours of operation. These issues should all be taken into consideration as part of ongoing changes in response to the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18* as well as in the pending food service consultation.

Background and Context

Food services on campus have changed as the campus has grown, but have not always satisfied the growing and changing demands of the student body. This is the third *Student Budget Consultation Report* to identify food service for improvement. Changes in the recent past have yet to fully address students' concerns, but a fulsome campus consultation to shape food service provides an opportunity for more comprehensive change.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, food service was students' top priority for improvement. Above all, students sought the introduction of market competition to food services in order to empower student-consumers. This was seen as a means to outcomes including greater variety, dietary accommodation, better value, extended hours, and prompt service. In addition to competition, students were open to other efforts towards these ends.

In December 2016, the TRU Food Services department reported on actions intended to address these concerns. Variety was to improve through permitting food trucks on campus, allowing independent food service providers in Community Trust properties, and redeveloping offerings in existing outlets. Dietary and nutritional information was to be made available through the TRU Food Services website, the TRU Go mobile app, and signage outside each food outlet. Hours of operation for The Den and Tim Horton's were extended, and extended hours were to be considered at other outlets. Timely service was to be addressed by streamlining processes and installing 'line up' cameras at Tim Horton's and Starbucks. Unfortunately, value for price was not addressed.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2018/19*, food service was students' second priority for improvement. It was recognized that the improvements announced in December 2016 had either not yet been implemented or had been for only a short-time. Therefore, it was unsurprising that concerns with food service remained unchanged – students wanted greater variety and options; better price, value, and food quality; longer hours; and more timely service. Perhaps more importantly, students maintained, above all, a strong desire to rethink the campus food service system altogether. The spring 2018 expiry of a five-year exclusive food service contract presented a rare opportunity for the campus community to do that. As a result, the Report 2018/19 recommended that, in addition to monitoring ongoing improvements, the university conduct a full and meaningful campus consultation to shape any new or renewed campus food service contract(s).

In response to the recommendation, and a December 2017 presentation from the Students' Union Hungry for Choice campaign demonstrating wide campus support, the TRU Board of Governors agreed to consult the community on the future of campus food services. Upon this direction, administration has since established a Food Services Review Committee responsible for overseeing a consultation leading to a new or renewed long-term contract by April 2019 based on recommendations for improvement or change of provider from the consultation. This consultation is expected to begin September 2018.

It is in the context of recent changes, the pending consultation, and the resulting decisions on the food service system that students' continued prioritization of food service improvements should be considered.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data from the 2018 Student Budget Consultation survey rank food service as students' second priority overall.

In a weighted prioritization, food services ranked fifth of seventy (5/70) items. In students' own evaluation, food services should be targeted for improvement.

Food Services

This prioritization is corroborated by the satisfaction-importance gap analysis. Food services received a very poor satisfaction score of 1.22/3.00, the second lowest of any item in the survey. A majority (60%) of respondents had negative opinions of food services, and one in three (32%) was 'very dissatisfied'. At the same time, food services received a critical importance score of 2.67/3.00 with three in four (75%) describing it as 'very important'. This provides for the second greatest gap analysis (-1.45) and provides significant opportunity for improvement.



Finally, food services had the highest derived importance (1/70) for improving overall satisfaction with TRU. Eating on campus is not just an afterthought for students; it is a critical part of their daily experience. The correlation of satisfaction with food services and overall satisfaction (0.37) was greater than most items. Combined with the high levels of dissatisfaction (60%), this makes food services a strategic choice for the allocation of improvement efforts and resources.

Qualitative Results

In the 2018 Town Hall and the open survey comments, students continue to make many of the same requests as in previous years.

They continue to want increased variety, and food trucks are seen as a solution with more potential. Options for health, meal types, and dietary accommodation remain unsatisfactory. They continue to seek better value and food quality for the prices paid – an issue not addressed in the previous university response. A new concern in relation to variety, options, price, and value was reported in relation to event catering. However, calls for extended hours of operation have softened with recent improvements, and lines and wait times for service are no longer a significant concern.

While some issues with food services have advanced, improvement remains possible. The upcoming food service consultation will be an important opportunity to establish both trust and systematic improvements in food at TRU.

Variety and Options

The most consistent issue students have raised about campus food services is the need for more variety and for options both for the sake of appeal and to meaningfully accommodate dietary needs, cultural diversity, and nutritional requirements.

Many students continue to note the challenges associated with eating consistently on campus without access to variety:

“ *Food services on campus have been a huge disappointment. Living on campus and not having food options made it very difficult considering residence does not have full kitchens.* ”

“ *The food choices are abysmal. All of my classes are in Old Main, as are many other students. There are* ”

Food Services

only two food choices, one of which has sold the exact same thing every day since September.

“ *They don't change the menu at all. I feel like its standard the entire year.*

“ *There is a limit of subs and pizza that I can eat in a week. I do not want – as much as I love Tim Horton's – I do not want to go every time to the same place and have the same food.*

Variety was also a concern in terms of access to healthy food, which, where available, was also seen as unaffordable or overpriced. These students explained this challenge:

“ *Desperately lacking affordable healthy options on campus. Definitely decreases quality of life while living on campus.*

“ *I don't think there are enough healthy food options on campus, and the ones we do have are extremely expensive.*

“ *Food services also need to get better on campus. There are not enough healthy options and the healthy options are way overpriced.*

“ *I understand the food is not going to be cheap, but when a small snack or lunch costs \$10 - \$12 it is going to cause students to make unhealthy decisions (especially when there are not healthy options on campus other than a \$12 salad).*

Students also noted an overall lack of differentiated food services options, serving neither variety nor a range of meal types. For example, these students noted that food service outlets on campus are fewer and with limited types of offerings:

“ *I remember there was something like a food court here on the second floor [of the Campus Activity Centre]. They provided pizza and burgers – that kind of thing. It was really good. I'm not sure why they got rid of that.*

“ *For those of us at TRU long hours, campus offers limited breakfast and no supper.*

The introduction of food trucks has been identified as a good start to increasing the variety available on campus. These students expressed support for the food truck experience:

“ *Buying food off a food truck is so much more emotionally satisfying that buying food on campus.*

“ *It was the best options we've had all year.*

“ *I think everyone has seen that they were successful during the TRUSU events – their movie thing. I think that's where they were last fall. I think they were super successful.*

Thus far, however, only two trucks have operated on campus one day per week each. Students, like this one, suggested that this will need to be expanded considerably be a meaningful addition to variety and options:

“ *I didn't get a chance to get something from the food trucks because they were here like once or twice. That's not enough. It's something we want to try over and over again to see what we like.*

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Finally, there was significant concern expressed regarding the accommodation of dietary restrictions, dietary choices, and food cultures. The most common of these concerns was the need to better accommodate vegetarians and, increasingly, vegans. Some of the many related comments included these:

- “ *This campus needs to bring in more diverse food diet options, such as dairy free, gluten free and vegan alternatives. Many students here either are allergic to these foods or are making a conscious choice about the food we consume, and it is quite disappointing to have to venture off campus in order to find a meal to eat.*
- “ *No variety in food for international students.*
- “ *There are so many students from India. Everyone feels hungry on campus so for them there should be something available to eat in [terms of] proper vegetarian food.*
- “ *More alternatives to eat, including vegan and healthy food.*
- “ *More vegan options please!*
- “ *There needs to be more food options at affordable prices. More vegan options would be great, as plain vegetables and salads that are over-priced are not always satisfying.*
- “ *I think there are like three places on campus that... vegans can go to comfortably, and have – without any fear that there might be something else in it. Three options that I rotate through.*

Students spend long periods of the day on campus and expect food services to meaningfully fulfil their nutritional needs over the course of that time. This includes providing the necessary variety to satisfy interest and balanced diets, and, importantly, to accommodate the allergies and the personal and cultural dietary restrictions of campus communities. Additional food trucks may provide some variety, but the need for options for health, nutrition, meals, and dietary accommodation will require much more fundamental changes.

Price, Value, and Food Quality

The next most consistent theme of students' comments on campus food services continues to be price, value, and food quality, and their relationship to each other. Students are disappointed in not finding affordable foods options and in finding that, at the prices paid, the products often fail to meet a corresponding standard of value and quality.

Many students are looking to campus food services for means to eat on a budget, and continue to be disappointed. For example:

- “ *They don't have a variety of pricing. So something that's quick to grab at a fairly low cost is non-existent. It's only high prices and it gets higher from there.*
- “ *Food is far too expensive on campus too. It makes it hard to justify buying a meal if you're in a rush and can't bring yourself some food.*
- “ *Spending most of my money on food every day, with the number of classes that I have is a huge impact on my budget.*

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“ *The food services on campus are costly and many of the students don't find it efficient to dine in on campus.*

To an even greater extent, however, students expect that the dollars they are willing to spend will purchase food of decent value and quality. These students suggest that campus food services are not delivering on this expectation:

“ *Food services are awful as well. There aren't enough alternatives offered to students and prices doesn't relate to quality.*

“ *I think some of the places where you can actually have food have ridiculous prices. If anyone's ever gone up to that place, the [U&M Deli], in Old Main, it's decent food, but for a samosa it's five dollars and I don't want to spend fifteen dollars on [a meal].*

“ *The quality and quantity don't reflect the price at all. I bought a cup of vegetables, a banana, and a bar of some sort and it was, like, eighteen and a half dollars. How does that make sense at all? It just doesn't. So it's not reflective of the money you're spending.*

“ *There's no really good vegetarian or vegan options that are reflected in the price. I'm not going to pay seven dollars for a vegetarian wrap.*

Of concern for the university's bottom line, students are choosing to take what dollars they are prepared to spend elsewhere:

“ *It's more expensive than nearby restaurants that you can go to and eat over there. / Yeah, price is one of the main reasons why people want to go to other restaurants/ Yeah, why would I go to the Den when I can go to Lucky's and get better food for a better price.*

Students will inevitably rely on campus food services for at least some of their meals. They expect that those food services will not take advantage their convenience to charge prices that are not justified by quality food. Students are and will avoid patronizing services in favour of those few alternatives on campus, and the growing number in proximity to it.

Event Catering

This year, students raised the preceding concerns with variety, options, price, value, and quality in relationship to the event catering aspect of campus food services. This presents an additional understanding of those issues to be considered. Further, students raised a specific concern that event catering could better support campus life activities by addressing these issues and increasing its flexibility.

In terms of variety and options, the same concerns expressed with food outlets were expressed with event catering. For example, these students highlighted both variety in terms of appeal and options in terms of dietary accommodation:

“ *I've been on campus for a while and I've been to quite a few events, and I'm even starting to see that even the food at events are the same as well.*

“ *Variety is also questionable. Last year, the [program] organized an event for outgoing students, and we requested vegetarian options. We got eight trays of cucumbers.*

Food Services

Similarly, concerns with price, quality, and value were echoed in relation to event catering. These students provided examples and explanations of how these concerns play out with campus events:

“ Last year in the summer we organized the [Club event] and it was huge. Around two hundred people showed up. I asked them one-by-one. No one said the food was good, although we spent around eleven thousand dollars for that event. The same event happened... in January with just pizza. It was supposed to be for one hundred fifty people, but one hundred and one people showed up. It was not enough at all... So forget about whether it was good or not – the quantity did not equal what we agreed to!

“ The prices that students get charged as well, and organizations, is, I think, atrocious because you rent a room for a lot of money and you are forced to use a catering company with no other options for significantly more. And, in some cases, it's like what was talked about before where you don't actually get the value of the food or for the numbers that you get.

A final example summarizes many of these concerns in terms of a need for greater responsiveness and flexibility, and, importantly, demonstrates the troubling effect on campus life:

“ When I was trying to organize a trivia night for [Club], I looked at the Den first because it's a convenient location on campus and accessible for students. They weren't very accommodating. They wouldn't close down the restaurant for us. They wouldn't help us sell tickets. They wouldn't offer us a deal, like a package deal that we could sell with the tickets. They wouldn't actually extend their hours either, and if we wanted to we had to pay an incredible – a huge amount of fees for them to operate outside their hours. So we ended up going with a company down that were incredibly accommodating and very reasonable on their pricing. They pushed us off campus when the event could have been held on campus.

Students have reported food service as a priority for improvement in terms of its role in supporting their daily activities. They are also highlighting the role of food in supporting a vibrant campus community, and call for improved responsiveness to the needs of campus events that provide that vibrant activity.

Hours of Operation

One concern with campus food services that has improved is hours of operation. However, students continued to note that hours still fall short of their activity on campus, and may continue to limit growth of that activity as hungry students seek food off-campus.

Students are on campus for classes, studying, and other activities spanning more than sixteen hours of any given day, and on weekends. Students, such as these below, are seeking hours of operation that more closely match that activity:

“ Studying late on campus once everything is closed, there is nowhere to eat, and I would really prefer not to eat out of a vending machine.

“ Consider hours so it's available on the weekend, late night times, and things like that.

“ I come here to study on the weekends all the time – there is nothing. You can't eat.

Students not only want food service to be available when they need to be on campus, but also cite it as a factor in remaining on campus. For example, these students simply leave campus once food service is unavailable:

Food Services

“ I either go off-campus to a place that’s open or I just keep going. There’s not many options, right?

“ I bring food or I leave campus, which sucks because I prefer to study non-stop to get something done.

TRU has expanded hours of operation at two outlets, as noted in the background and context, with success. However, students continue to want the university to consider expanding hours at additional outlets, particularly in the evenings and on weekends. While administration has indicated that outlets operate at a loss after 5:00PM, it may be that a commitment to making amenities available will need to precede and generate the related activity and demand.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In sum, students’ second priority for improvement in 2018/19 is food service, and they continue to seek improved options and variety, price and value, and hours of operation. They further drew attention to these issues as they relate not only to food outlets, but to event catering as well. Improvements, particularly regarding lines and wait times, have been noted, but more remains to be done. The coming food service consultation provides an opportunity for more fundamental changes that can address these issues.

Some variety has become available to students with the introduction of food trucks. However, the number food truck vendors and the frequency of their presence will need to grow substantially to be meaningfully distinct. Unfortunately, the intention to broaden offerings at existing outlets has not been realized, and this also contributes to students’ continued call for variety. This call includes, specifically, a desire for affordable healthy options and diverse outlet and meal types.

Concerns with options as they relate to accommodation of dietary restrictions, choices, and traditions remain. Greater nutritional information has been helpfully made available, but students continue to seek further improvements in terms of the food offerings themselves.

Similarly, concerns with price, quality, and value remain. Unfortunately, no initiatives have been announced to directly tackle these concerns. Further, growing competition from food trucks and particularly from establishments in the surrounding neighborhood are attracting campus business, but it has not yet had an effect on campus food price or value.

Hours of operation have improved, particularly in the campus pub, and this is reflected in diminished focus for improvement in students’ evaluation. Nonetheless, further expansions at these or other outlets would be welcomed, and this may need to be done not only to react to demand, but also to generate demand and related activity on campus.

In terms of lines and wait times, work on service processes and ‘line up’ monitoring at Tim Horton’s appears to have successfully addressed most concerns.

Students are showing appreciation of many of the efforts to respond to concerns raised in previous years. There is an opportunity to build on this positive momentum through the food service consultation. Because this consultation will, ideally, facilitate discussion of options to address the needs and desires of the campus community, recommendations here will be limited to conducting and implementing results of that consultation as well as expanding on the existing food truck initiative.

Students request and look forward to service plans and the allocation of resources that:

- **Expand the permitting of food trucks on campus to provide greater availability and greater variety; and**
- **Carry out the pending full and meaningful campus consultation to shape any new or renewed campus food service contract(s) and implement resulting recommendations**

Study Space

PRIORITY 3: STUDY SPACE

Students' third priority is study space that is dedicated and appropriately managed, particularly for quiet study. They are further interested in better study space amenities, electrical outlets, and greater cleanliness. Finally, they want a balance between central study space and study space in classroom buildings. To these ends, students recommend consideration of interim renovations to better reflect students' needs, development of study space in classroom buildings that reflects students' needs, and continued student consultation in the planning of the proposed 'collegium'.

Background and Context

As TRU has grown in terms of its diversity of programs and its number of students, the need for more, dedicated study space has grown. This is the second *Student Budget Consultation Report* to identify study space as a priority for attention. There have been efforts to address study space since it was first raised, and small projects in the Arts & Education Building and International Building, for example, have been completed. However, an institution-wide approach has remained unfinished.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, study space was students' third-highest priority for improvement. Students primarily identified a need for more study space, but saw that need as a function of management rather than infrastructure. They called for spaces dedicated specifically to studying, and appropriately managed to facilitate these types of activities as distinct from socializing and other activities. Students further specified that they wanted a greater focus on purpose-built spaces for group work as well as individual study to complement open spaces. The spaces, to be fully functional, also required amenities to support both personal needs and productivity. Finally, because students often engage in university-related activities throughout the day and night, they sought additional hours of operation and the expansion of successful 24-hour study spaces.

Responding to these calls in December 2016, administration announced the development of a proposal to convert the House of Learning into a 24-hour study and student service space. Unfortunately, the proposal ran into opposition from impacted members of the campus community who did not feel properly consulted. The project was temporarily, and then indefinitely, delayed.

By summer of 2017, the university implemented a new capital projects planning process intended to improve collegiality. In September 2017, the Dean of Students submitted a similar proposal, under the term 'collegium', for co-located study space, support services, and other amenities. While this proposal was approved by the Board of Governors in June 2018, its implementation remains uncertain in a number of ways. It will form part of TRU's 5-Year Capital Plan, but this does not guarantee its completion in this time frame. Funding and other circumstances will dictate its prospects including whether it would occupy a purpose-built structure or a renovated space.

In the meantime, it is worth noting that a number of smaller study space projects have been completed between 2016 and 2017 in various classroom buildings, including the second and third floors of the Arts and Education Building and the second floor of the International Building.

It is in the context of new or renewed study spaces in classroom buildings, and the planned 'collegium' that students' continued prioritization of study space improvements must be considered.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data from the 2018 Student Budget Consultation survey rank study space as students' third priority overall.

In a weighted prioritization, study space ranked tenth among seventy (10/70) items. In students' own evaluation, study space should be targeted for improvement.

Study Space

This prioritization is corroborated by the satisfaction-importance gap analysis. Student satisfaction with study space is poor (1.67/3.00), lower than with their experiences on average (1.96/3.00), and even dropping substantially since study space was prioritized in 2016 (1.84/3.00). Further, study space received the highest importance rating of any item in the survey (2.82/3.00) with an overwhelming majority (84%) describing it as 'very important'. This provides for the third greatest gap analysis (-1.15) in the survey, and provides significant opportunity for improvement.



Finally, study space had the sixth highest derived importance (6/70) for improving overall satisfaction with TRU. The correlation of satisfaction with study space and overall satisfaction (0.38) was amongst the very highest of all items. Combined with the considerable levels of dissatisfaction (39%), this makes study space a strategic choice for the allocation of improvement efforts and resources.

Qualitative Results

In the 2018 Town Halls and open survey comments, students identified a need for dedicated study space and better space management, particularly for the purposes of quiet study. They further sought improved study space amenities, electrical outlets, and cleanliness. Finally, as the campus has developed, including the addition or renovation of study spaces in classroom buildings, students are interested in the university maintaining a balance between general, central study space and specific or cohort-based, distributed study space.

Dedicated Study Space and Space Management

As in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, the central theme of students' comments on study space remains a need for more of it. As before, that need is seen primarily as a function of space types and space management rather than infrastructure.

Some students did express their concerns in terms of an overall lack of space or a lack of space at peak hours:

- “ We do not have near enough study space and it is detrimental to my learning.
- “ There is not enough room to study during school hours. So hard to find places to work.
- “ I find that there is not enough space to study in the middle of the day.

However, the overwhelming consensus is that the management of existing space is the fundamental problem. This was repeatedly raised in terms of the need for quiet study space where appropriate behaviors are maintained. In particular, these students identified the House of Learning as requiring better management:

Study Space

- “ I really enjoy HOL for studying as it is a newer building with lots of space; however, it gets very loud and once it gets closer to exams there is never any free space unless you get here very early!
- “ I usually study in HOL first floor since it has an open environment and comfortable computer lab. However, it's more than three times I have experienced some groups of student came and start chatting, sometimes even singing and dancing really loud. I know it's an open space and common area but personally I think the majority of students who are there either want to study or to relax. So it will be considered annoying for most of people there.
- “ I am actually a student who likes quiet study space. That's a huge issue here. We have no study spa – when people tell me they are going to HOL to study, I laugh.

Many others identified 'libraries' as the space where noise and activity management are needed, although it is unclear whether these reference the Main Library or the House of Learning:

- “ Please make the computers at the library quiet so that people can study in peace. This is my third university, and they both had many quiet computer labs where people can study in peace. Even at the library it is just a place where people have wide open conversations. I thought libraries are supposed to quiet spaces to study. I'll take anything for a quiet computer lab!
- “ How about we make the libraries quiet like libraries are supposed to be? It is crazy and so messed up that we allow the libraries to be talking areas. At any other university that would be a huge no-no. There are no places to study on campus where there are computers and it is a quiet area. This is a university. TRU needs to step up its game for quiet study spaces.

One student summarized the challenge of clearly defined and managed spaces across the campus:

- “ The HOL has become a social space because there are very few social spaces on campus. Very difficult to quietly study there. The old library is better in terms of noise level but there are very few outlets for laptops. Student Street and Students' Union areas are always full. It would be much more functional to have more distinct, quiet study, group study, and social spaces.

The comment above also introduces another theme, which is students' desire for distinct group and individual study spaces. These students expressed concerns that group study spaces were lacking in number or design:

- “ Most of the time the assignments and group discussions come at the same time for all the students, and the places to study either in the House of Learning or the Main Library will be reserved for two weeks or one week in advance. So if you want to find a place you have to sit in the buildings outside of the rooms.
- “ The study rooms that are in HOL are not soundproof so you can pretty much hear whatever the project is that is going on in the next room.

Others suggest that furniture designed for specific purposes would improve the distinction between group and individual work.

- “ In the Main Library, the cubicles are the only place for quiet study.

Study Space

“ I think something that’s important is to have a portion for individual study and a group place. So like the tables – when you even go to IB at 12:00PM you can see lots of individuals taking entire tables... [H]aving individual tables or little cubicles would be way more efficient.

Finally, a number of students believe that one solution to avoid conflicting uses of space for quiet or group study is to make classrooms available for these purposes. Classrooms represent a consider amount of space that is not always in use. These students suggest making more efficient use of that space as study space:

“ Maybe allowing students to use the classrooms. Most of them – not all of them – would be helpful so that they can practice their presentations or if they have a project coming up. That would give them some space.

“ Opening the classrooms would be a huge, huge improvement on the weekends and stuff like that. I understand that is a safety concern for them, but I think that’s talk about a lot more than it needs to be.

In conclusion, students want campus to be a place that supports their education, and an important aspect of that education is time spent on reading, reviewing, writing, and other activity outside the classroom that requires specific and dedicated spaces. Currently, those spaces need to be better defined, distinguished, and managed.

Study Space Amenities, Electrical Outlets, and Cleanliness

The next most consistent theme in students’ comments on study space continues to be quality as determined by amenities, electrical outlets, and cleanliness. Students continue to note that for a space to function well for studying, they need to be comfortable and support productivity.

“ A common theme in the discussion of amenities is furniture other space design elements with both comfort and function as key elements. For example:

“ We need more study space and somewhat quiet ones with comfy benches like the grey ones in CAC.

“ We need more comfortable study spaces both inside and outside.

“ The study spaces should be spacious enough because I would love to spread out my textbooks and materials on the table, which I don’t find in HOL.

“ TRU lacks good study spaces particularly places with natural light and fresh air. Need more opening windows!

“ I like having natural light when I study, and I also like to be able to stand up.

More than any other particular amenity, students continued to highlight the need for electrical outlets. This has been a consistent theme in *Student Budget Consultation Reports* in relation to both study space and classrooms as students are increasingly using technology. Again, these students called for more working electrical outlets in study space:

Study Space

“ *It would be nice to have a place where I could access somewhere to plug in my laptop so I don't have to think about whether the battery will die. And also for the plug to actually work. I find there are a few places in HOL where the plugs aren't working.*

“ *When it does get busy, especially in the old library and HOL – the old library especially – it's not that there are no spots. It's that there are no spots with plug-ins, which is a bit of an issue, right? That's what I need.*

This year, cleanliness in study spaces, which was raised with regards to classrooms in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, was also a concern. These students explain that some buildings, particularly the House of Learning, are not maintained to a level that invites use for studying:

“ *TRUSU and old main library provide best kept building to study in for space and cleanliness – HOL is lacking.*

“ *The library tables in HOL and group study rooms are incredibly dirty not a comfortable place to study. The Science Building needs improved hygiene as well.*

Students are looking for spaces that facilitate their study activities, and, in addition to better designation and management, that may require additional amenities to be appealing and productive.

Balancing Study Spaces Across Campus

An emerging theme in students' comments on study space is a need to balance the development of central study spaces, such as in library buildings, and study spaces in classroom buildings. In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, it was reported that students felt that study space was lacking in certain buildings. Students are continuing to develop an assessment of how study space is distributed across campus, and expressed a desire for a balance to be maintained.

As in previous years, students called for more study space in classroom buildings that they feel are underserved. For example, these students highlighted the need for study space in the Science Building:

“ *Almost no quiet study spaces in the Science Building. Would like just one large room dedicated to just studying and working on the computer.*

“ *I think Science is particularly disadvantaged. There isn't a lot of places to study. And since they've started closing down classrooms on the weekends and stuff, it's been really difficult.*

Others mentioned the benefits of study spaces that currently exist in classroom buildings in terms of cohort interaction and proximity to course work:

“ *I like to study with people from my discipline. So it's kind of nice being able to go somewhere and find someone that I might not be super good friends with but it's still nice to see them from my class and be like, 'Hey, you're working on this assignment. How's that going for you?' It's really nice doing that.*

Study Space

“ We have areas in the Science Building that most of the Science students use, and areas in this building that most of the AE students use, and then we have the centralized areas, which are the two libraries... As a Science student way over there, I don't want to walk all the way here just to do some studying. I'd rather stay in the building.

Still others extolled the benefits of centralized study space for the purposes of interdisciplinary interaction:

“ I like the centralized [study space]. The reason is that I see a lot of students. They get assistance from other students, so if there is a Computer Science student beside me and I have a problem with what I am doing, it's a simple thing in just a minute they can help you.

This student summarized the desire for balance, recognizing the benefits of both spaces connected to programming and spaces that can bring together resources of common need by all students:

“ I feel like it makes sense for Computing Science students and Engineering students to have their own [study space], just because there is so much technology involved in that... I wouldn't want to take his spot, for example, when he needs certain technology to do his assignment. There's a certain logic to that, but I wouldn't mind to have centralized space. I love the old library. It's nice.

In the context of a rapidly developing campus, students are not only seeking dedicated, well-managed study spaces with amenities, but they are also interested in a combination of easily accessible spaces in their classroom buildings and central spaces to meet common needs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In sum, students' third priority for improvement in 2019/20 is study space, and they are seeking action to improve space designation and management, amenities, electrical outlets, and cleanliness. They further support continued work to develop study spaces in classroom buildings in addition to plans for common spaces such as the 'collegium'.

Students request and look forward to service plans and the allocation of resources that:

- **Establish space usage intentions and related space management practices, particularly for designated quiet study space;**
- **Consider interim renovations of existing centralized study space to better reflect students' need, such as electrical outlets, natural light, improved seating, etc.;**
- **Ensure future development of study space in classroom buildings reflects students' needs; and**
- **Continue to consult students in the planning of a 'collegium' as part of the 5-Year Capital Plan to ensure it meets needs at the time of development**

Academic Advising

PRIORITY 4: ACADEMIC ADVISING

Students' fourth priority is academic advising that improves accuracy and knowledgeability, continuity and consistency, program mapping, and the client service experience. Students support continued efforts towards these ends through *Degree Works* implementation and the *Service Excellence Initiative*.

Background and Context

Academic advising has been one of students' longest standing priorities for improvement. This is the sixth *Student Budget Consultation Reports* to identify it as a priority for attention. Facing considerable challenges with limited resources, Enrolment Services and advisors have been working diligently to address concerns with success reflected in gradually rising satisfaction scores since 2015. Further, systemic reform to provide consistent, updated information and planning tools is now on track following previous delays.

The *Student Budget Consultation Report 2015/16* listed advising as students' top priority for improvement. It raised concerns of program mapping tools, service continuity, timely service, and idiosyncratic and often cumbersome upper-level advising.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2016/17*, academic advising was students' second highest priority. The concerns identified were a lack of accessibility and capacity, lack of service continuity, inaccuracy and lack of information, and a poor service relationship. Further, course offerings were recorded as students' highest priority. A lack of systematic course delivery, which exacerbated advising challenges, was the primary concern.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, academic advising was recorded in the data as students' third highest priority. Rather than reiterate the priority for the third year in a row, the Report simply noted the lack of formal response or action at that point.

It is, again, critically important to note that student satisfaction has improved. This is likely due to improved front-line processes and service delivery. However, systemic reform to provide clear, accurate and consistent advising, particularly through the implementation of the *Degree Works* advising software, has been more challenging. The intent to implement *Degree Works* was communicated as early as 2014, but only officially started in March 2016. It quickly fell significantly behind schedule due to coding complexity, revision of complicated academic programs, and a lack of necessary resources. The University Registrar requested funds in the 2017/18 budget cycle to support timely implementation, but was unsuccessful.

Finally, in the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2018/19*, academic advising was identified once again as a priority. Students' concerns reflected the systemic problems *Degree Works* would address – lack of continuity, inaccuracy, and the relationship with problematic course delivery. The Report recommended that well-recognized delays in the project be addressed, and all necessary steps be taken to ensure the full implementation of *Degree Works*, including use by students, for all programs by the Fall 2018 semester.

In the 2018/19, the University Registrar again requested funds for a full-time ongoing Audit and Articulation Officer to support transfer credit articulation and *Degree Works* implementation and support. Fortunately, this request was granted. This is expected to make *Degree Works* available to advisors for all programs by January 2020 and to students by September 2020. Students across the university will be eager to see the benefits in their programs.

It is in the context of both incremental service improvements and the renewed progress toward systemic reform through *Degree Works* that students' continued prioritization of academic advising must be considered.

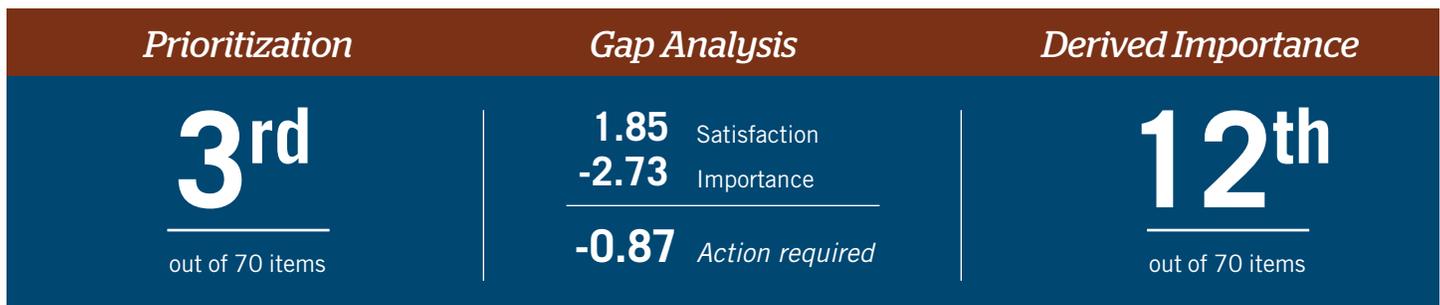
Academic Advising

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data from the 2018 Student Budget Consultation survey rank academic advising as students' fourth priority overall.

In a weighted prioritization, academic advising ranked third among seventy (3/70) items. In students' own evaluation, academic advising should continue to be targeted for improvement.

This prioritization is corroborated by the satisfaction-importance gap analysis. Students are nearly as satisfied with academic advising (1.85/3.00) as with their experiences on average (1.96/3.00). However, students see academic advising as an imperative service (2.73/3.00) with virtually all (96%) assigning it some importance and a large majority (77%) describing it as 'very important'. This provides for a gap analysis of -0.87, and provides opportunity for improvement.



Finally, academic advising had moderate derived importance for improving overall satisfaction with TRU (12/70). This is because the relatively modest levels of dissatisfaction with academic advising (31%) reduce the scale of potential improvement. However, the correlation of satisfaction with advising and overall satisfaction (0.41) was amongst the highest of all items. This maintains academic advising as a strategic choice for the allocation of improvement efforts and resources.

Qualitative Results

In the 2018 Town Hall and open survey comments, students identified a need for greater knowledgeability, consistency, and continuity of advising services. Further, they seek further successes in establishing a standard of service delivery that ensures a welcoming and helpful experience. Happily, concerns with the relationship between advising and course delivery were much diminished. This is reflected in improved satisfaction with course offerings highlighted in the 'Excellence, Improvement, and Responsiveness' section above.

Knowledgeability, Consistency, and Continuity

The most common of all concerns with advising is the need for more knowledgeable and consistent advice provided with continuity throughout a student's academic career.

Often students felt that the advisors did not have adequate information to provide the advice they needed. For example, these students repeated concerns that advising could not guide them appropriately across TRU's comprehensive breadth of programming:

Academic Advising

- “ Advisers need to be knowledgeable in all courses or they need specific advisers for specific degrees. Personal experience is that I was advised to take courses that I ended up being unable to take and as a Science student it's hard to optimize my degree if I don't get science specific advice until my 3rd year. So tailoring advisers to the different degrees early on would be better.
- “ Advising needs to be more knowledgeable. I was told my program didn't exist and had to bring it up on my phone to show her that it did in fact exist. I was offered several courses that she then told me aren't actually offered at TRU, but would have been good to take if they were ... I have yet to have a positive experience in that office but have some hope there may be one in the future.
- “ There tends to be a disconnect between some programs and academic advising. Advising should be versed in all programs offered. If there are too many programs offered, then perhaps there could be advisors specific to programs. I have experienced a lot of confusion and ambiguity which adds to my frustration of trying to figure out which courses I am to enroll.

In many cases, this led students to be frustrated with receiving different information across advising interactions. This often leads them to question the accuracy of any of the advice they receive:

- “ I can't even tell you the amount of times I've needed help, gone in there, saw three different women three different times and heard three different things. It's confusing. You literally hear different things every time you go in and there have been times I've gone back to fix a problem from a previous meeting just to get more confused and led in another direction.
- “ When I started my first semester here, the first advising I got was over the phone. They suggested a course schedule. And then as soon as I got on campus I went and talked to the advising in the building, and they told me that the courses I had been told to go to were the wrong courses. And they changed four out of five of my courses. So there's a disconnect somewhere.
- “ I had a subject for which I had to do a prerequisite. So, one of the advisors said, 'Okay, you have to do it,' and the other one said, 'No, you don't have to do it.' ... It was very misleading and very confusing. So, I think they should be given a proper training on a certain subject and they should be given it together so that their experiences match with each other and don't clash.
- “ I'd taken a summer course at another Canadian university. So I went to general advising, and they told me that I couldn't get any credit for that course at TRU. So I went to my program advisor, and it turned out I could get credit for two lower-level electives. So it's just reinforcing that inconsistency.

A closely related challenge arises as students interact with different advising points from central to program advising throughout their educational paths. These students described their experiences with this lack of advising continuity:

- “ I've always had really good advising once I got into my program, but I had a lot of difficulty at the beginning. Because when I first applied to be a student, I went to the academic advising, and they put me in one Natural Resource Science course and four Arts courses that I didn't actually need to take. And then once I actually went and talked to my program advisor I realized that was different. But it was

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really hard – even though I knew I wanted to be in Natural Resource Science and I knew what program I wanted to take, I thought that academic advising would be able to help me in that way. Instead it was my program advisor. So there was no connection in-between the program advisor until I actually took one of his courses.

“ *My experience as well with program advisors was very good. I think there is just discourse [sic] between the program advisors and the academic advisors because half the time the academic advisors tell you one thing and your program advisors tell you something completely different.*

One of the reasons that students believe that advising services struggle to provide consistent and accurate advice is that they are not given up-to-date information as changes are made to curriculum. For example:

“ *I was in a double bachelor program for two years of business and computer science, and my biggest problem with advisors is you enrolled in courses you were told will go towards that list of being in a double bachelor. And you take those courses and you go and they're not a part of it because it was not approved by this person or actually they made a mistake ... I mean, the program updated and they took like – oh my goodness – six meetings to figure out where I was.*

“ *There used to be Business 4030, let's say, and now it's Management 4720. I didn't know there was any kind of equivalency between those two, but there is. So if you take that course, no one will tell me. It still fulfils my requirement, but it's the same course. I don't get credit for that so I just paid tuition for nothing.*

“ *In certain programs, in certain years, the course changes. Quite a lot of the program changes. [Academic advising] did have the old one [program sheet]. So I would go in and have a discussion with them, and they would give me five or six courses I was supposed to take, and then I would go to my program advisor and he would get mad because I was in the old program and not the newer program. And there is no consistency from that perspective.*

Academic advising at TRU faces enormous challenges to providing the service that students expect. The expansive and rapidly changing curricula are a lot to be familiar and updated on, particularly across multiple Faculties and Schools without an integrated system. Fortunately, this should be addressed as *Degree Works* implementation rolls-out. The critical nature of this work is underscored by two consequences students are reporting in the interim. First, was the effect of inaccurate or inconsistent advice on increasing the time to graduation. For example, these students felt that advising had not directed them on an efficient path to their goal:

“ *I have to attend a whole extra semester because they told me I had everything I needed when I didn't. When asking questions their answer is always 'I don't know.'*

“ *I was often told incorrect info on programs/courses etc. and if I would have listened my graduation would have been delayed.*

“ *They have caused hundreds, if not thousands of students to be forced to stay longer because the student was given incorrect information and then denied graduation.*

Academic Advising

“ *Disorganization between different advisors caused me to take additional courses in order to complete my program costing me time and money.* ”

A second and related effect is a decline in the reputation of the service that leads students to avoiding it, as described here:

“ *Being a student that's coming in and only talking to academic advising in the beginning and then you talk to all of the other students you realize it's – there's a very good chance you're going to end up taking courses you don't actually need and that's not – it's scary...* ”

“ *It's easier to figure it out on your own than get help.* ”

Students place enormous importance on academic advising due to its significant consequences on their educational experience and outcomes. As a result, they have high expectations. There is no doubt that advisors are working hard in challenging circumstances to meet these expectations, and all necessary support including *Degree Works* should be provided.

Mixed Service Experiences

A second theme of students' comments on academic advising was a mix of positive and negative experiences of service delivery. Perhaps understandably given the challenging circumstances of the work, academic advising did not always provide the welcoming and helpful experience that students expected.

“ *It is important to note that academic advising often provides high quality and personable service. The increased student satisfaction recorded in recent years is reinforced by glowing reviews many students, like these, provided of the advisors they interacted with:* ”

“ *I had a great experience with the Science-specific third and fourth year advisors. You actually meet them in person and talk about what you want to do with your degree and how to get there. / Yeah, the program advisors are awesome.* ”

“ *Personally, I had a nice experience with all the advisors in the three years I have been here.* ”

“ *The process I've experienced with the Science program advisors has been really good. When it comes to reinstating previously cancelled courses, they've been extremely open and adaptable to that and very accommodating towards what the students want to take.* ”

“ *Just from my experience being an ambassador for the Study Abroad program, if you go on Study Abroad, they are pretty accommodating. They're really helpful.* ”

Unfortunately, this is not the case for a notable number of students. For some, service is lacking in terms of being approachable and personable:

“ *My experience with academic advising has usually been a struggle and a difficult process. They don't seem to want to put their best foot forward to provide the service that they should be offering.* ”

“ *Some advisers are not welcoming.* ”

Academic Advising

- “ Sometimes at the registration or speaking to secretaries at academic advising I am not spoken to with respect.
- “ I had a really bad experience, because, after I finished my ESL program ... I went to my academic advisor. She sent me like two links, about the courses I had to take, for a website. And I just still don't get it, so I go back to her and she told me that I'm wasting her time and I should make my own schedule before I talk to her.

Others felt that advisors did not have the time to address each student as a unique individual. For example, these students describe feeling quickly processed without truly being addressed:

- “ I have had very poor experience with academic advising as they just seem to want to get through as many people as they can and don't actually help you. I had talked about wanting to try a different program, but I said I would be interested in similar things to that program as well. I was struggling to find things similar and the answer I got was, 'Okay, we will put you in that program,' not, 'Oh, well, you have a couple options here and some similar courses are...' This has by far been my worse experience at TRU.
- “ After just listening to what [student] said about how they can advise you if you want to do this with your career, if you want to do this with your education after, and stuff like that – I've never had that with [Faculty]. They were just like, 'This is your major. This is what your requirements are. Go fulfil them. Just make sure the courses meet the requirements and stuff. Take them whichever you want.'
- “ Building on what he said, sometimes academic advisors do misguide students. They try to push the students in classes which don't have a lot of students. And instead, when a student tries to reason that this doesn't fit into my schedule or I don't want to take this course this semester, they don't listen to the students.
- “ I feel like our advisors are often unpleasant to deal and don't seem like they have my best interest in mind.

A worrying consequence of poor service experiences is a lack of trust and loss of reputation. These students, for example, no longer value engaging with academic advising:

- “ I try to avoid the advising office regarding my courses as when I applied for my program they told me it didn't exist. I was then told I wouldn't pass the required test to get into my program, but thankfully the course administrator overheard this conversation and stepped in. I was told at orientation that TRU is a positive open atmosphere where information was easily accessible. I have found the opposite and unfortunately have not had a positive experience in either the [department] or the admissions office. Maybe I keep catching them on bad days so I'll keep my fingers crossed for the future.
- “ [Program] advising has let me down so many times and overall been uncooperative to the point where I don't even consult them anymore, try to be diligent and plan everything myself, and hope for the best.

Academic Advising

Academic advising has made considerable strides to improve front-line services and processes. However, continued work is required to ensure that these services are consistently delivered in an open and responsive manner.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In sum, students' fourth priority for improvement in 2019/20 is academic advising, and they are seeking action on knowledgeability and availability of accurate information, consistency of advice, and continuity of service. Further, they are looking for continued success in improving the service experience to build up a relationship of trust with this critical service.

Academic advising has struggled with challenges of helping students navigate expansive and changing curricula. Advising staff are also not well connected with each other in order to provide seamless service with the same information and advice provided to students. Fortunately, a powerful tool for addressing this range of problems, *Degree Works*, is being implemented. Students remain anxious for continued focus to complete this project.

At the same time, the manner of service delivery under challenging circumstances has not always met the standard TRU has set for itself. The *Service Excellence Initiative* was undertaken to "Establish a culture of student-centered work and customer service, including but not limited to the tone of offices, how advising is delivered and discussed, how students are greeted and escorted between services and how students are represented in communications and online." Continued work is needed to achieve this objective.

Students request and look forward to service plans and the allocation of resources that:

- **Ensure the full implementation of *Degree Works*, including use by students, for all programs by the Fall 2020 semester or earlier; and**
- **Ensure, through the *Service Excellence Initiative* or otherwise, that all advising staff are provided the appropriate working conditions, training, and support to maintain consistent service standards.**

Course Materials

PRIORITY 5: COURSE MATERIALS

Students' fifth priority is affordable textbooks and course materials. They want both the university and individual instructors to pursue and support open educational resources and other low and no cost materials as well as a Library textbook reserve program.

Background and Context

Textbook affordability is a growing concern for students throughout North America and beyond, and TRU is no different. This is the third *Student Budget Consultation Report* to identify course materials as a priority for improvement. This prioritization is increasingly reflected at TRU, and growing efforts to create alternatives will need continued support.

In the *Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18*, course materials was students' fifth highest priority for improvement. At that time, the issue was investigated only in direct connection with the Bookstore. On course materials themselves, students identified price and affordability in a predatory publishing industry as their overwhelming concern. Their frustrations were tempered by hope for an improved 'buy-back' program, a textbook reserve system, and, to a lesser extent, digital textbook formats. At the same time, students touched on an opportunity to turn the publishing industry on its head – open educational resources (OER).

In the 2017/18 budget cycle, the Bookstore committed to seek greater value from the buy-back program and savings from used textbooks by encouraging longer-term use of textbooks by faculty. On the other hand, the Library rejected a comprehensive textbook reserve system on budgetary grounds.

The Students' Union itself recognized the potential of OER to provide substantial financial and pedagogical benefits. The Open Textbooks campaign was launched in August 2016 to scale and mainstream OER through a call for an Open Textbook Grants Program. The campaign also established a greater understanding of OER amongst students and faculty. Nearly 2,000 students signed a petition in support of the program and greater OER use. Presentations were made to each of the Faculty Councils, leading to a presentation to and endorsement from the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee of Senate. The University Librarian and the Interim Vice President Open Learning committed to help develop a funding request for the Open Textbook Grants Program. Further, Open Learning was awarded funding for a staff position to provide supporting services for the development of OER.

In the Student Budget Consultation 2018/19, course materials were investigated as a stand-alone item and were students' fifth priority for improvement. In this more targeted investigation, students provided focused concerns on the price and affordability of course materials, and reiterated two desired alternatives in a textbook reserve system and greater use of OER.

Since the previous year commitments on OER, a partnership had formed between the Students' Union, the Library, Open Learning, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, and the Faculty of Arts. This partnership developed a funding request for an OER Development Grants Program, which was successful in the 2018/19 budget cycle. Students will be eager to see the grants program produce OER that will make course materials at TRU more affordable in the future.

Further, the Library reconsidered the request for a textbook reserve system and committed to investigate current practices at other universities to determine the possibility of establishing a program at TRU. Students are also eager to see the feasibility of this initiative, which could provide critical immediate aid in the textbook affordability crisis.

It is in the context of these promising efforts to support affordable access to course materials, through a textbook reserve in the immediate term and OER in the long term, that students' continued prioritization of course materials must be considered.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data from the 2018 Student Budget Consultation survey rank course materials as students' fifth priority overall.

Course Materials

In a weighted prioritization, course materials ranked sixth among seventy (6/70) items. In students' own evaluation, course materials should be targeted for improvement.

This prioritization is corroborated by the satisfaction-importance gap analysis. Students are not very satisfied with course materials (1.68/3.00), and substantially less so than with their experiences on average (1.96/3.00). Further, students placed significant importance on course materials (2.47/3.00) with a majority (57%) describing it as 'very important'. This provides for a gap analysis of -0.80, and provides significant opportunity for improvement.



Finally, course materials have the eighth highest derived importance (8/70) for improving overall satisfaction with TRU. The correlation of satisfaction with course materials and overall satisfaction (0.35) was greater than most items. Combined with the substantial levels of dissatisfaction (41%), this makes course materials a strategic choice for the allocation of improvement efforts and resources.

Qualitative Results

In the 2018 Town Hall and open survey comments, students restated the unaffordability of textbooks and other course materials as their primary concern. They continue to call for the university to pursue alternatives by supporting the creation and use of open educational resources and a comprehensive Library textbook reserve system. A more fundamental point that students made about reversing the trend of unaffordability in course materials was the power of instructors. Students request and support instructors in engaging with open educational resources and other low or no cost course materials, making more effective use and reuse of commercial course materials, and participating in the Library textbook reserve services.

Price and Affordability

The primary concern that students have about textbooks and course materials is affordability. Textbooks constitute a significant and growing proportion of the rising cost of post-secondary education. These students express a frustration with this cost in these comments:

- “ I estimate that, typically, in each semester, textbooks add at least another twenty-five percent on my tuition fees.
- “ Most people can barely afford to get into school and then when we do we have to sacrifice our grocery money for textbooks that's not okay!
- “ I think first year is especially expensive. I think Science students or anyone who has to take a lab – you have to buy a lab manual as well on top of your course textbooks ... So, the lab costs and course costs

Course Materials

is quite high for your first year.

“ *This isn't going to surprise anybody, but our textbooks are ridiculously overpriced.*

The situation, however, goes alarmingly further than frustration to substantially undermine the quality and integrity of students' education. A disturbing theme of students' comments relate their decisions to avoid, delay or not obtain course materials due to cost. For example:

“ *I did everything – like went on Amazon, got the PDF wherever I could – so I probably spent more time looking to get free textbooks than I did – in the time I could have saved just buying them.*

“ *I knew that what the professors do is summarize the notes, which are in the book. So you don't really sometimes need the book. You already have the presentation to take notes from. So, at times, it was a risk for me. Should I go ahead and buy the book just in case or should I not?*

Affordability is a growing problem in post-secondary education, but perhaps the challenge is mounting with the least justification and least constraint in terms of textbooks. Students are looking to the university to continue promising efforts to tackle this issue.

Open Educational Resources (OER) and Low or No Cost Course Materials

Students understand that the driving force behind the unaffordability of textbooks and course materials is the publishing industry. One of the most promising alternatives to the publishing industry and its affordability problems are open educational resources (OER). OER can provide free or low-cost course materials to students while providing instructors with real influence over their curricular choices.

As use of OER at TRU increases, students are expressing their support and appreciation:

“ *[Using an open textbook] was great. It was free. She also supplemented it with a lot of relevant articles and stuff because it was an American one. She hadn't adapted it for Canadians, specifically, so she brought in a lot of outside, a lot of diverse opinions into it from a Canadian standpoint.*

“ *I have a course this semester, which has an open textbook, and the professor actually told us she's actually pursuing the people who are the authority who are actually taking the decisions on textbooks. There is a group of faculty who are pushing them that most of the courses should have open textbooks.*

As noted in the background and context, TRU has established an OER Development Grant Program to support the creation, adaptation, and supplementation of OER. Students will continue to support these efforts. Students are also recognizing other means that instructors can and are using to provide low or not cost course materials. For example:

“ *Some of the good things my prof did – I'm taking a Computer Science course and I'm a Marketing student so it's like a foreign language to me but – he kind of like took several chapters from a huge book, and he downsized the cost from like \$300 to \$50. It was awesome...*

“ *I don't think I have had a class with an open textbook, but I do have a lot of professors who love photocopying and putting out PDFs of certain materials that are required. And I just want to say that those teachers are great. They're the best ones and TRU should actively promote teachers who use those kinds of materials.*

Course Materials

“ One of my professors ... made a workbook for accounting students. For accounting one and two, as well as each individual video for every single topic that I know students use even if you're not in his class. It is the most valuable resource I have ever used because I'm so not into numbers or accounting. But he sits there and he explains it. You can watch a video over and over again. / I have him right now actually. He's an amazing prof, and for us, as students, he made all of it available. No payment at all. As long as you're a student in his class, he had a little thing with the student number and you can access it all for free for that semester.

There are a wide range of options, aside from traditional commercial textbooks, that can be used or created as course materials. Students are supportive of instructors who explore these options and encourage others to do so as well.

Effective Use and Reuse of Course Materials

Students also recognize that not all instructors or courses are going to immediately adopt OER or other low or no cost course materials. In the meantime, an area that students have identified for improvement is the effective use and reuse of commercial materials. This is critical to ensure that, where students are required to purchase materials of significant cost, they receive a commensurate value in terms of learning through the course and in terms of the possibility of resale.

The most common theme of these comments was a frustration with spending large sums of money on course materials that are underutilized. These are some among many examples of this complaint:

“ Better communication between [instructors] and, I guess, the TRU Bookstore on when they list textbooks that are required or just 'you might use them.'

“ Students will be expected to purchase a textbook that is \$150+ but then use it once in class.

“ I've had a couple of professors put into their course required texts that we do not even open or use at all, and I don't know why they do that but it's really annoying.

“ Last year I bought a \$145 textbook, and I used it three times for four pages. That was it.

Beyond the lack of use, students were also frustrated with being unable to sell back their used copies to the Bookstore as a result of textbooks not being used more than once:

“ Most of the professors don't use the book again, and then you can't give it to a friend or you can't resell the book.

“ Textbooks shouldn't be so expensive with little to no buy back opportunity.

This can often be a result of the publishing industry tactic of edition changes, but may also be due the use of an entirely different textbook from year to year. In any case, students want instructors to be considerate of the impact of changing texts and editions. Another industry tactic that drives up costs is the sale of ancillary resources. These students called on instructors to consciously counter this trend as well:

“ Some of the business profs make you buy online access to certain courses, or else you get 0% on all homework and assignments.

“ My Math Lab, or Mastering Biology, or anything similar to that is a program that's kind of accessory to

Course Materials

the textbook that you buy that is required for the course should be illegal. Flat out. / I just really want to echo what he said because I have probably spent about \$600 in the time I've been here on Pearson and everything else, because you need to get it and it's \$100 for three months. / I'm echoing that as well and another problem is you buy a textbook and it has say, Mastering Biology in it. You cannot resell that textbook because students need to buy it new from the Bookstore to have the Mastering Biology in it. You can't pass that along.

While students are most optimistic about the use of OER and other low and no cost course materials, they also want instructors using commercial textbooks to be wary of industry tactics that drive up costs and to make considered choices about the use and reuse of materials to provide the greater value.

Library Textbook Reserve System

A final option students continued to identified for saving money on textbooks was to access copies of textbooks on reserve in the University Library. The current practice at TRU is limited to instances where course materials are proactively provided by departments or instructors.

A number of students expressed an appreciation and demand for the practice and its expansion, as in this example:

“ *I definitely would have failed organic chemistry had it not been for [instructor] sliding in some additional textbooks in the Library. There were two reserved copies at all times [...] There's never been an incident where I haven't been able to sign it out. It's always has been very accessible, except during midterms.*

This example, however, also leads into one of the more common concerns students raised with current textbooks on reserve – availability based on the number of copies. This concern was further expressed by these students:

“ *One of the biggest problems is that there's not enough books for every student. There's only one. For example, one of my professors used a book. It was not a course material, but something he wanted us to reference and there was only one book available.*

“ *For my specialized courses, it was easier to access that, but for more general courses when there's a lot of students and sections it was much more difficult.*

“ *Just simply having more [copies] because I've had so many classes where the professor is doing his best and he says there are two available, but it's a one hundred forty-person class.*

While availability of copies is a common concern for the current practice of textbooks on reserve, the aspirations for the practice expand to other notions of reliability to include the comprehensiveness and clarity that systematization could provide. For example, these students were disappointed by the scope of the practice:

“ *I've never been able to issue a reserved book that was put in the Library. It was never available for any of my courses.*

“ *One of my professors this semester didn't know about that, and a student asked him in the first few weeks of class. And so he has reserved it, but it takes a while. So I think most of the students bought the book.*

Course Materials

“ *Having an online inventory where you can check which ones are there [would help].*”

Without a purposive, systematic approach to textbooks on reserve, it is difficult for financially stressed students to plan their access to course materials in the most affordable or effective ways. Fortunately, as noted in the background and context, the Library has committed to investigate current practices at other universities to determine the possibility of establishing a program at TRU.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In sum, students' fifth priority for improvement in 2019/20 is affordable access to course materials.

Textbook affordability is becoming a crisis, with costs rising 88% in the last decade – four times the rate of inflation. The causes of this problem may originate in the larger textbook industry, but the university and individual instructors have the capacity to challenge the broader trends.

Students are encouraged that the university is beginning to use that capacity. In the immediate term, a textbook reserve system is an important way the university can support the quality of education for students in the greatest financial difficulties. The investigation of textbook reserve practices should be continued and supported. The OER Development Grants Program is a critical support for change in the long-term and should also receive continued support.

Finally, students demonstrate an appreciation for the choices that instructors can make to reduce the cost of course materials in the courses that they teach. This includes creating or adopting OER and other low or no cost course materials, making effective use and reuse of commercial materials, and actively participating in the Library textbook reserve practice.

Students request and look forward to service plans and the allocation of resources that:

- **Expand and make permanent the Open Educational Resource Development Grants Program as demonstrated by demand; and**
- **Complete the environmental scan of current practices related to University 'textbook on reserve' programs, and develop an informed plan to implement such practices as deemed feasible and effective**

Students further request that instructors:

- **Identify open educational resources applicable to a course, and create, adapt, and supplement such resources as necessary, making use of supports available through the Library and other departments;**
- **Identify and adopt other low and no cost course materials applicable to a course, including but not limited to course packs, book chapters, and journal articles, making use of supports available through the Library;**
- **Make effective use and reuse of any commercial course material to maximize the value to students; and**
- **Place copies of any commercial course material in the Library reserve system for those students who cannot afford to purchase a copy**



Summary

Summary of Recommendations

The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union requests that the following priorities and service improvements be considered in the development of relevant administrative and academic unit service plans and requests for the Thompson Rivers University Budget 2019/20:

1. Parking and Transportation

- a. Adopt a consultative approach to campus commuting to constructively realign needs, realities, expectations, and possibilities, including any response to the following recommendations;
- b. Improve monitoring and public reporting on the implementation of the *Sustainable Parking Framework* and pricing rates and structures in terms of the effect on total single-occupancy vehicle use, demand management, and shifts to use of alternative transportation options;
- c. Investigate pricing rate, structure, and augmentation options that improve demand management, are more flexible to needs and use, and are sensitive to affordability and fairness;
- d. Actively promote and publically report on the use of the 20% discount on passes for those living outside the transit service area;
- e. Expand efforts, in coordination with campus stakeholders, to work with the City of Kamloops and BC Transit to improve service and infrastructure connecting campus by transit, cycling, and walking; and
- f. Continue to promote and incentivize the Rideshare and Zip Car to achieve target utilization

2. Food services

- a. Expand the permitting of food trucks on campus to provide greater availability and greater variety; and
- b. Carry out the pending full and meaningful campus consultation to shape any new or renewed campus food service contract(s) and implement resulting recommendations

3. Study space

- a. Establish space usage intentions and related space management practices, particularly for designated quiet study space;
- b. Consider interim renovations of existing study space to better reflect students' need, such as electrical outlets, natural light, improved seating, etc.;
- c. Ensure future development of study space in classroom buildings reflects students' needs; and
- d. Continue to consult students in the planning of a 'collegium' as part of the 5-Year Capital Plan to

Summary

ensure it meets needs at the time of development

4. Academic advising

- a. Ensure the full implementation of *Degree Works*, including use by students, for all programs by the Fall 2020 semester or earlier; and
- b. Ensure, through the *Service Excellence Initiative* or otherwise, that all advising staff are provided appropriate working conditions, training, support, and community of practice to maintain consistent service standards.

5. Course materials

- a. Expand and make permanent the Open Educational Resource Development Grants Program as demonstrated by demand; and
- b. Complete the environmental scan of current practices related to University 'textbook on reserve' programs, and develop an informed plan to implement such practices as deemed feasible and effective

For instructors:

- c. Identify open educational resources applicable to a course, and create, adapt, and supplement such resources as necessary, making use of supports available through the Library and other departments;
- d. Identify and adopt other low and no cost course materials applicable to a course, including but not limited to course packs, book chapters, and journal articles, making use of supports available through the Library;
- e. Make effective use and reuse of any commercial course material to maximize the value to students; and
- f. Place copies of any commercial course material in the Library reserve system for those students who cannot afford to purchase a copy

TRUSU
Student Caucus



Finance



Leadership

Democracy



choice

A graphic featuring four speech bubbles with icons: a pizza, a leaf, an eye, and a group of people. Below the speech bubbles are four stylized student portraits in red and white. The text 'choice' is written in white on a dark blue background at the bottom left.

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STUDENT CAUCUS
COMMUNITY. BUILD OUR