

# CONSULTATION REPORT

## To innovation and beyond! What being a “hub of innovation” means to TRU

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

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



Figure 1. Participants

### What does being a “hub of innovation” mean to you, and why is it important for TRU?

In total, 117 students, alumni, faculty, and staff participated in this exchange (Figure 1). Sixty-two thoughts were shared and contributed to the discussion, while 1,343 ratings provided insight into community agreement regarding these comments and ultimately formed the basis for the emergent themes (Figure 2). The largest group of participants were staff/admin (36), followed by on-campus faculty members (34).



Figure 2. Emergent Themes

## Top Thoughts

The two top-ranked thoughts from this exchange were consistent throughout and addressed themes of research, development, and originality:

“Innovative, original research is fundamental to a modern university. In order to grow its reputation, TRU must emphasize research, and provide (...) support to help researchers succeed”

“TRU should be a place that emphasizes innovative faculty research. Faculty research brings national and international recognition to the university, attracts students, and aids in innovative teaching methods”

## Research- & Development-Driven

A frequency analysis (Figure 3) of key terms, within the 62 thoughts that were shared, revealed that research and development were a central focus of this exchange. This was also reflected in each of the emergent themes.



Figure 3. Word Cloud

## Diverse Perspectives

While participants generally seemed to agree that research should be a top priority in being a “hub of innovation,” what this looked like in practice varied by stakeholder groups. For example, top thoughts for staff/admin also highlighted the importance of originality and creating synergy, while those for alumni emphasized overall growth and development.

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

## Emergent Themes

### Research

Research was discussed primarily in relation to the perceived role of a university in conducting innovative research that contributes to and fosters the development of knowledge across many different areas.

**“Research, research, research** Universities can play a role in the societal innovation process through knowledge creation.”

#### **“Becoming more research intensive**

The university role in innovation is to produce basic research. We need to hire more and higher quality research active faculty”

### Originality

Participants generally agreed that part of being a hub of innovation involves being creative and recognizing what makes an institution, like TRU, unique when compared to all the others.

**“Innovative, original research is fundamental to a modern university** In order to grow its reputation, TRU must emphasize research, and provide (...) support to help researchers succeed”

**“The nature of the University (how it runs, who it serves, how it measures success). We could leverage the flexibility of a smaller system.”**

### Growth & Development

Students were recognized as the core on which many universities are built. But, while focusing on student development may be considered an important part of being a hub of innovation, the idea of growth was also extended to include the greater community as a whole.

**“Our goal is not only to educate others, create knowledge, but to also make what we do useful in a creative impactful way.** Ultimately we want to make a difference and be helpful to individuals and collectively society.”

**“A "hub of innovation" is an institution which allows academics and professionals to examine and develop solutions to real-world problems.** All universities, including TRU, should be considered to be "hubs of innovation" because they provide opportunities and resources for innovation.”

### Synergy

As public institutions, participants seemed to agree that universities should inherently be centres that encourage collaboration with others and in doing so create a collective whole that is greater than the simple sum of its parts.

**“(…) a central place both physical as well as connection point to communicate with others globally.** You want to be a one stop shop, create synergy (...), and have an identifiable place (...)”

**“TRU is obliged as a public university to work WITH communities. We should cultivate a reputation for creative thought; (...)”**

## Emergent Themes (cont.)

### Mentorship & Coaching

Mentoring and coaching was strongly related to the concept of synergy. Participants observed that, while adapting to changes in TRU's student demographics may be a challenge, bringing in other professionals could allow for more sharing of ideas and best practices.

**“bring in leading experts in fields that we teach here at TRU they can share their innovative ideas, projects, learning experiences, travels etc. with our faculty and students; mentor with small group discussions”**

**“Lead innovation in being a campus that welcomes and serves our culturally diverse student body Our students come from across the country and globe, we need to adapt to these demographic changes”**

### Technology

Comments around technology generally focused on how publicly funded universities can create greater opportunities for work and innovation through the use and development of open-source software and tools.

**“Many people go to Uni to find work. AI and tech has/will continue to shift towards "high touch" kinds of work - human services, entrepreneurship etc. More interdisciplinary and integrative work in later years of education [sic] -so people can aim to work on complex problems.”**

**“We need to have Open Technology. Things like 5G, fibre networks and open computer resources for the public after hours. majority of innovation today is tech related - so need to provide tools”**