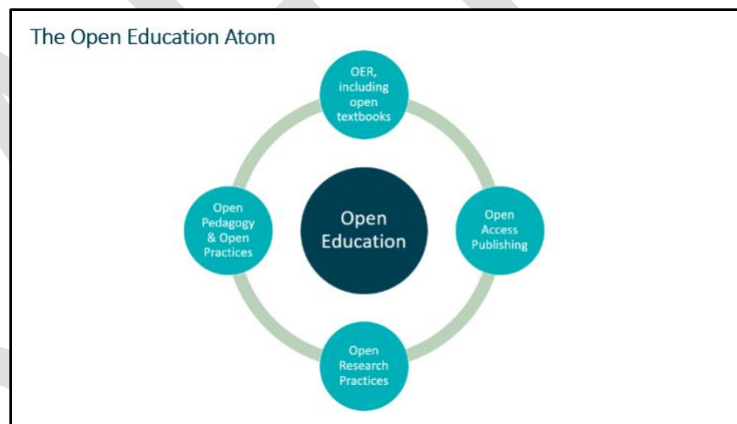


## Introduction

This report is presented to the Provost and Academic Vice-President of Thompson Rivers University (TRU) on behalf of the Open Education Working Group (OEWG). The report compiles information from a variety of internal and external sources about open education practices (OEP) in higher education institutions. Its purpose is to document OEP creation, development, and maintenance at Thompson Rivers University and to provide a starting point for discussions to establish a sustainable support system for the future. The report also documents open education (OE) support structures developed at other Canadian universities to provide a comparative analysis and insights into other practices in order to help frame future practice and how these initiatives are funded.

The report is organized into sections based on the terms of reference provided. Section 1 is a description of how OE support is structured. Section 2 is a stock-taking analysis of efforts at TRU. Section 3 reports on issues and trends, provided by an external scan of other institutions. Section 4 provides a discussion about external funding resources to support OE initiatives. Section 5 highlights issues for discussion about the future of OE at TRU.

OEP are defined in this report as the four elements of the open educational resources, open access publishing, open research, and open pedagogy and practices. This definition specifically excludes the concept of [\*open admission\*](#), which is a much more broad institutional policy of accessibility of student enrollment. Where OEP may support the policies that support open access, they can and do exist within institutions that are not “open admission” and affect issues that can be motivated by institutional mandates and individual staff and faculty practices.



As is typical of OE activities, this report was conducted in addition to the regular workload of all involved. As will become apparent not only at TRU but with few external exceptions, there is little dedicated institutional support for the development, implementation, and continued operation of OE activities at Canadian institutions, despite their importance to student priorities like affordability, accessibility, and equity, and to faculty priorities like academic freedom, content relevance, and capacity for indigenization and localization. The authors of this report therefore greatly appreciate the efforts of those consulted in the drafting stages to conscientiously document the activities that are completed to support OE, to participate in interviews, to provide feedback and guidance, and to otherwise participate in the creation of this report. The period of drafting this report, including all consultation time, was three months.

Given the time frame under which this report was drafted and the structural issues illustrated within, this is not a comprehensive document. It does however bring to light many of the obvious

and hopefully some of the more hidden features of OEP at TRU which are: OE is a core value of many members of the TRU community and that much of the work to support OE is not recognized as such. The report outlines models of OE support that exist at some Canadian universities without claiming to be exhaustive and where TRU fits along this continuum with the associated strengths and challenges.

In the end, what this report does offer to the Provost's office and the university community as a whole is a celebration of the multifaceted manifestations of OEP at TRU, a university with a rich and internationally recognized tradition of work in these areas. What is contained within represents a contemporary understanding of the strengths of OEP at TRU, a clear-eyed analysis of the challenges in supporting this work, and directions for discussion towards establishing a sustainable future for OEP at TRU. We hope this report becomes widely circulated and forms the basis for future discussions.

## Background: History of OE at TRU

Thompson Rivers University, through the efforts of committed stakeholders and Open Education enthusiasts, has a reputation of being a leader in the development of OE activities. This commitment to OEP is embedded in the DNA of the institution, dating back to the merger of BC Open University and the University College of the Cariboo into what would become TRU in 2005.

TRU's Open Learning (OL) division has a history of over 40 years of OE initiatives, and supports the culture of Open across the institution. Its [on-going mandate](#) is to provide open access to university courses to all residents of BC. OL's unique position as a post-secondary division specifically to develop and deliver open learning opportunities throughout the province, through courses and programs, enabled its staff to develop specific expertise in all aspects of the OEP. Initially content was developed and delivered in distance modalities that ranged from TV (the Knowledge Network) to mail based correspondence courses; now, most courses are delivered by computer over the internet. What is consistent through these years is that OL has always operated with limited direct student contact. This high-level online teaching and learning expertise serves the entire TRU community, as evidenced during crisis moments like the COVID-19 alternative delivery experience of 2020-21 and in the day-to-day expansion of OE practices among campus faculty.

Scroll down the page to this [interactive timeline, developed by the OEWG, which provides a brief history OE at TRU](#). Of note is the national and international reputation-building reflected in the case-studies in the timeline. Since the timeline was developed, OE advocates at TRU have continued to earn accolades from organizations here in BC and around the world. For example, over the past two years, five current TRU faculty and administrators have received Awards of Excellence in Open Education by BCcampus: Izabela Mazur, Christine Miller, Brenda Smith, Brian Lamb, and Michelle Harrison. In addition, the first such award went to Irwin DeVries when he was AVP-Open Learning. Furthermore, TRU community members were cited for three major awards at the OE Global conference in 2022:

- [Open Infrastructure Award](#) to the [OpenETC](#), a cross-province collaborative project largely housed at TRU and developed and maintained by Brian Lamb and Troy Welch.
- The Open Reuse/Remix/Adaptations Award to 25 Years of EdTech, a podcast companion to the book by Martin Weller, with participants from around the world, including Brian Lamb and Brenna Clarke Gray at TRU.
- The Open Innovation Award to the open picture book *Together*, developed by the Global OER Graduate Network; TRU's Verena Roberts is a co-author on the project.

TRU also has and continues to make a significant contribution to the development of open texts and other OERs for use around the province and beyond. According to BCcampus (see reports in Appendix A), for current adoptions, TRU faculty have produced 14 OER that are currently available in its open text collection. These OER have reportedly been adopted by 20 institutions in 67 different instances and downloaded 3,673 times since November 2021. And since creating OER for courses, BCcampus estimates that TRU created texts have save student over \$2.5 million. As a result, BCcampus recognizes TRU as one of the Top 5 institutions in both adopting and student savings from adoptions in BC.

Additionally, BCcampus reports that TRU faculty and staff have collectively held \$300,000 in BCcampus grant money for OER and ZTC development across 23 successfully completed projects. TRU's development work in this area does not rest on developing traditional textbooks, either; BCcampus H5P OER development grants have gone to TRU teams in both funding cycles, with two TRU-involved teams awarded grants in 2020 and one in 2021. These grants fund the improvement of existing OER with the development of interactive activities. This demonstrates both the past success and continued innovation of the TRU community's commitment to expanding access to OER for our learners and those outside TRU's walls.

In addition to externally-funded projects like these BCcampus grants, through TRU's Open Education Resource Development Grant (OERDG) program, TRU faculty have developed or are developing approximately 22 other resources that are available through its own PressBooks site. These resources are used internally in specific courses and can be shared with others, and encompass textbook offerings in the following disciplines: Nursing, Chemistry, Sociology, Biology, Math, Tourism, Economics and Adult Special Education and more. The OERDG is exhausted every year, with more applicants than can be funded. The faculty commitment to developing affordable, accessible resources is evidenced by the high level of interest in this grant program, as well as faculty commitment to using other funds granted to develop OER (e.g., the Return to Campus grants used to develop OER in Geology and ESTR).

## 1. The Structure of OE Support

Open Education activities are supported in a decentralized structure across TRU, primarily via staff and faculty working in Open Learning Division (OL), the Library, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELT), the Research Office, the TRU Students' Union, and the Open Education Working Group (OEWG).

Below are highlights of the reports provided by each of the primary bodies. The complete reports are attached in Appendix B.

### Open Learning

OL, as result of its origins, course development processes, and the expertise of its personnel, provides the greatest amount of OE support. With OE built into its organizational DNA through its open access enrollment policy and its orientation to provide accessible education, OL has established systems that encourage and support the implementation of OEP in its courses. This orientation spills over into the campus-based activities because there are many faculty that work directly with OL. In addition, Instructional Designers provide project and service support to campus-based OE initiatives. Furthermore, the Learning Design and Innovations group have dedicated resources that almost exclusively support campus-based educational technology needs in the form of the Learning Technology team, and OL supports campus-based OL development through its significant expertise in editing, copyright, and production of OER and open pedagogy platforms. The association between OL and OE is so strong that some associate one exclusively with the other. This is a misconception because, in fact, campus-based faculty have a long history of developing and using OER, employing open pedagogy in courses, and leading in the implementation of open publishing and open research. What is certainly true is that without the support of OL personnel in the design, support, and production of OER, the vast majority of projects that have defined the positive reputation of TRU as a leader in OEP would not have been completed.

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*The support from TRU by IDs, editors, copyright etc has been extremely positive and helpful, and for me, critical - I don't think I could create anything of the same quality without that support.*

*Comment from Faculty survey.*

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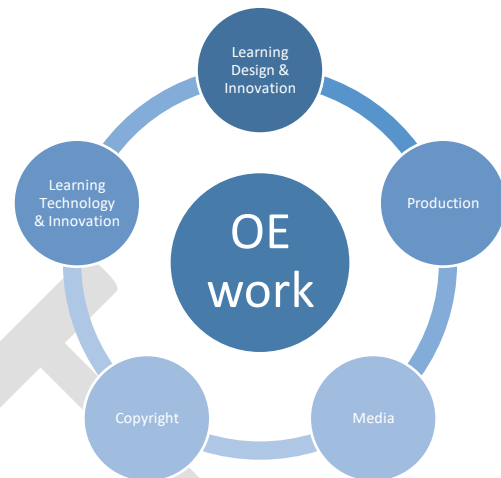
Based on the complete report from OL, the degree of support is described and measured in various ways.

The Learning Design and Innovation team provides many different support services: media development, production, and research and implementation of OE platforms. This work is ongoing and includes support and operations services such as system integration and security. Typical services provided:

- Consultation for planning the project.
- Input into platform and tool selection.

- Arranging assistance with theming, plugins, special features. In some cases, this ends up being referred to Production/Media.
- Ongoing assistance – usually in the form of meetings and support questions as needed, sometimes hands-on fixes. Those undertaking OE projects also have ongoing access to office hours staffed by the Coordinators, Educational Technologies, for advice and support.

Figure 1. Typical OE support groups within OL



Some successful projects include:

- [Indigenous Stock photos](#)
- [Faculty led – projects](#)
- [OER resources](#)

The suite of platforms available to TRU faculty using OEP is also significant; in-house, supported installations of WordPress and Pressbooks allow faculty to choose how their work will be developed and shared, supporting everything from ebooks to podcasts with entirely open tools. Institutions like Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) refer to these resources as an “Open Publishing Suite” and celebrate them as significant offerings. TRU’s development of these tools extends to innovation in form-based authoring (to allow for easy student and community participation in OE projects) and is extended to the province as a whole through the award-winning work of the OpenETC.

An estimate of the cost of providing all services is approximately \$78,000 per year.

OL Instructional Designers have led a number of different OEP initiatives in both workload and service. In workload they guided development teams in the implementation of Zero Textbook Cost courses and the Associate of Science program. As faculty members, IDs with Tenure or on Tenure Track contracts are required to complete service work. Currently, IDs choose to dedicate significant service to support OE. An estimate of the equivalent of one full-time position through service to the institution is provided annually to deliver workshops, work on OE projects and lead institutional initiatives.

The Coordinators, Educational Technologies and Learning Technologist roles are also housed within Open Learning, but are tasked with supporting campus faculty initiatives. OE projects, from pedagogical design to technical issues, are often supported by the faculty and staff employed in these roles. In addition, the Learning Technology support materials produced by this office are released openly with CC-BY-NC licensing, and are frequently used by colleagues at other institutions.

Within the OL Development unit, the editing and copyright units provide significant support to virtually all the OER projects. Typically, OERDG grant holders utilize the services of the editors



to review content for readability, structural coherence and grammar. Editors are also engaged directly by faculty who have received grants from BCcampus and/or ZTC course writers as they convert content to OER; this resource is consistently cited by faculty as a critical component of successful OER development. From the period of April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, for example, editors were involved in 14 OER projects and contributed 1,500 hours of work or almost one FTE at 35 hours per week. The financial contribution is estimated at \$52,500.

These offerings from OL are not comprehensively recognized in the budgeting of most projects undertaken and are a service OL provides to the community. The sustainability of funding this support work needs to be a consideration as we look to the future of Open Education at TRU.

## Library

The library provides active and important OE support in all areas of OE. It is vital in helping faculty and students find, store, and access open resources, research, and other materials that facilitate OE initiatives.

The TRU Library has a full-time tenured Librarian II Brenda Smith, who serves as the Open Education Librarian. She promotes the use of OERs to faculty and assists them in identifying and evaluating relevant OERs. Brenda maintains an extensive library guide (LibGuide) on [Open Education](#) and has been particularly active in OER development, Zero Textbook Cost course information collection and dissemination, and Open Pedagogy. The library also has a tenure-track Librarian I, Erin May, who serves as the Scholarly Communications Librarian. Erin maintains LibGuides on Open Access, TRUSpace (TRU's open access digital archive), and Creating and Running an Open Access Journal; this work support faculty with both Open Publishing and Open Research.

The Library is also the contract holder for the [Open Education Resource Development Grant \(OERDG\) project](#). The OERDG is the fund that directs monetary and other support services to faculty members for the creation of OER, and is coordinated by the OERDG Grant Coordinator. The project was initiated in 2018 and has supported 36 grant recipients to produce a variety of textbooks, ancillary resources, and other forms of OER. The grant is the only institutional funding for OE activities provided by TRU and is not guaranteed annually, but the commitment of stakeholders across the institution has ensured its continued success in spite of its precarious structural position with regard to funding. Specific information about the grant is available later in the report.

## Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)

CELT has been a partner on the OERDG since the initial 2018 round. As part of the steering committee, they support the design of the grant program, call for proposals, selection and monitoring. They are also involved in the onboarding and support of faculty members. The director also collaborates with the OERDG Facilitator in the scheduling and promotion of workshops, answering procedure-related questions, and monitoring interim and final reports.

While CELT receives no funding support for its OE support activities, in 2021 it reallocated \$27,644 of unused core funding towards the OERDG program. This was used to support the funding of Round 2 of the grant program, which would not have been possible without CELT's commitment.

### Research Office (RO)

Through its mandate to support researchers at TRU, the Research Office provides information and support in the Open Research area. Its services are provided by staff members within their existing duties, and as such receives no specific support for these activities.

With the emergence of Tri-Council Research Funding criteria including a need for applicants to demonstrate open research methodologies, including data management, the RO and Library are co-leading the development of Data Management systems that meet the required criteria.

There is anticipation of growth of open supports for RO-integrated projects, given that Tri-Council Research Funding increasingly requires not only open research practice, but open publishing. Supporting this work will be important going forward. The RO has also recently expressed interest in working with OERDG grant committee to provide project funding where project meet its criteria of knowledge dissemination.

### TRU Students Union (TRUSU)

TRUSU have long advocated for the development of OE practices and especially OER. In 2017, TRUSU submitted a proposal to Senate to start an Open Education Resource Development Grant program modelled after one at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Along with a detailed program model, TRUSU provided a petition that collected over 1,800 student signatures between 2016 and 2018.

Since that time, TRUSU has partnered with the Open Education Working Group on internal education and advocacy work, and has taken the lead on some projects like Open Education Week in 2020. TRUSU rates the implementation of OER practices consistently in the top five issues for students at the university because of equity and affordability issues, and in our site scan the commitment TRUSU shows to Open was cited specifically by BCcampus as notable within the province. A support letter from TRUSU is attached along with the unit reports in the appendix.

### Open Education Working Group (OEWG)

The mandate of the [Open Education Working Group](#) is “to foster and support a culture of Open Education (OE) initiatives at TRU.” The OEWG seeks to develop, coordinate, and support sustainable OE initiatives and collaboration amongst departments, divisions, faculties, and schools at TRU for both campus and online delivery. Membership in the OEWG is open to anyone at TRU who is interested in open education. The OEWG actively encourages key stakeholders from across TRU to participate to best represent the breadth of supports and interests across the institution.

The OEWG is a faculty led group that receives no institutional support. As such, it is reliant upon interested faculty, administrators and staff to provide their service or time to drive the collection of information and other initiatives forward.

The OEWG has in the past number of years been instrumental in organizing opportunities for faculty to participate in open pedagogy practices, such as the [UN Sustainable Development Goals Faculty Fellow Partnership Project](#), as well as to share information about OE in four different communities of practice. It also has partnered directly with TRUSU and the Library during events such as Open Education Week and at Open Houses.

In summary, these six different entities connect in various ways to meet very specific but distinct goals. This is the essence of a decentralized system. It works well to direct energy at specific operational issues at a particular moment in time. Its challenge is that on-going sustainability of this support energy is entirely dependent on the individuals in place.

## 2. Stock Taking: Current OE Activities

As a stock-taking exercise, the OEWG distributed surveys to students and faculty. The surveys were open between March 1 – 20. The complete survey results are shown in [Appendix C](#).

### Surveys

Once created, distribution to faculty was through the Faculty listserv, which reaches all faculty members, and through the OEWG listserv, which reaches the subset of interested faculty. The student survey was distributed through TRUSU to students directly, by instructors posting a link to the survey into their course in the LMS, and with social media pulses from TRU World staff and TRU Student Life.

### Faculty survey summary

In total 40 faculty responses were collected. All faculties were represented except Trades and Technology. Campus faculty accounted for 29 responses and Open Learning Faculty Members (OLFM's) were 11. There was likely some bias in the response due to the most active respondents also being OEWG members, given that the vast majority of respondents indicated they were familiar with OE and 68% indicate they had used

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*“TRU Open Education working group is doing a fantastic job - promoting open practices, educating faculty, supporting grant awardees etc - more support is needed from TRU Administration to keep encouraging these important activities, and due recognition given to Faculty who spend hundreds of hours creating or modifying OERs”.*  
*Comment from Faculty survey*

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*“It improves access and cost for students. Improves control over course content for instructor”.*  
*Faculty Survey respondent*

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OER in a course. The primary reason indicated for using OER was to increase affordability and availability of material for students and to improve their control over the course content.

Of those using OER, 40% indicated they would adapt an existing OER and 33% would create one. Of the 32% of those not using OER, none being available or available resources being of poor quality was cited as the reason by 44%, which speaks to the importance of funding the continued development of high-quality resources across the disciplines.

The most requested support for those thinking of creating an OER is:

- Content workshops (47%)
- Course release (45%)
- Session on technology (45%)

OLFMs indicated a desire to participate in OER creation, but do not have a model or payment mechanism to do so.

Open pedagogical practices are used by 25% of respondents, and 42% indicated they publish and share data openly. We anticipate significant growth in the latter category, given the shifting priorities of most national funding bodies towards open.

In responding about their experience in creating or using OER the responses can be organized into three main areas: funding, support, and quality. Funding was generally appreciated but considered inadequate. Support was acknowledged as essential to completing a quality OER and thoughts of using different team approaches provided. A number of faculty expressed concern about the quality of OER in their discipline and that was the reason for not considering its use, which suggests the importance of resourcing both the work of OER development and the critical support functions like editing and production.

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*"I have benefitted from TRU funding. More funding would be a good idea".*

*"We are currently building an OER text and an OER supplement in our department. The supports from the OER group on campus, especially including the funding for a research assistant have been invaluable".*

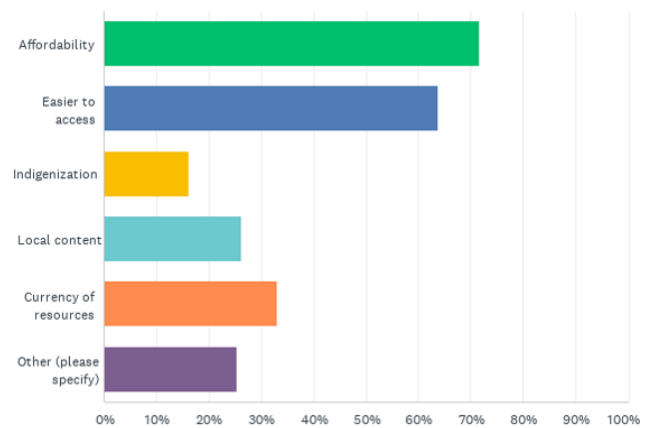
*"I have yet to find any OER materials for the various topics that I teach that are of sufficient quality that I would adopt/adapt".*

*Some comments from faculty respondents*

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## Student survey summary

Total response received was 156 with the Top 3 faculty enrollments being Arts (37%), Science (29%) and SoBE (20%). Open Learning students accounted for 62% of responses and this may be correlated to high response rate (71%) of students having accessed OER in courses. Although overall 35% of students indicated that less than 25% of their courses used open resources. Students valued open resources for affordability (71%), Ease of Access (63%), Currency (33%) and Local Content (26%). This was reinforced through the open-ended responses where topics of affordability and accessibility were the largest positives. Where critical comments were made, they related mostly to the quality of the resources and the lack of them.



When asked if they have chosen not to take a class due to not being able to afford the assigned materials, 74% indicated no. However, 35% also indicated that they have delayed purchase of the material to the point where their ability to succeed in the course was impacted.

Also of interest was that 60% of students stated they enjoyed assignments that required them to use open pedagogy practices to share their knowledge in the community. This aligns with general research findings that students prefer “authentic” assignments that engage community stakeholders.

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*“Needless to say it makes a tremendous difference when forming a decision to pursue a desired path in education for students to save hundreds of dollars in not needing to buy much needed books and supplies”. Student survey comment*

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### Williams Lake Campus

The Williams Lake campus reports that it is primarily a user of OER as staff assist students find and access open resources that are appropriate. Staff have created a resource, Citing Sources in APA Style: A Nutshell Guide. In another instance faculty applied for a TRU OER Development Grant but was unsuccessful. The faculty member has continued to work on the resource but is hampered by lack of institutional resources. Faculty have identified other content that could be replaced with OER but again cite lack of funding and support as barriers to achieving this.

## Open Education Resource Development Grant (OERDG)

As indicated, OE at TRU is currently supported by people in a variety of divisions and units: Open Learning (OL), the Library, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), and the Research Office.

The activities of these people intersect through the primary support program of OER creation; the Open Education Resource Development Grant (OERDG). Although there are increasingly more independent efforts in OER and OP practices on campus as evidenced by work beyond OER that has garnered recognition, the only specific internal program to fund this work is the OERDG.

This program was started in 2018 through a Strategic Initiative Funding grant. The initial proposal reinforced that “The OER Development Grant aligns with TRU’s mission and mandate at the highest levels,” citing not only from the contemporary Academic Plan and Strategic Priorities, but also from the Thompson Rivers University Act itself, which “explicitly states that the purpose of TRU includes the promotion of “teaching excellence and the use of open learning methods.” The initial grant provided was \$40,000 to support 6 faculty projects at \$6,500 each. As well as support travel for dissemination (\$2,500) and technical support offered by OL (\$5,000).

The grant program was subsequently supported through a two-year SIF grant in the 2019/ 2020 and 2020/ 2021 years. Each year’s budget was increased to \$79,000 in order to support 8 faculty projects at \$6,500 each, as well as a Project Facilitator at two section releases (\$15,000), faculty travel (\$4,000), and technical support from OL at (\$8,000). In each year of the grant offering, there has been an oversubscription of funding requests, and in fact, as the program has become better known over the years, the number of proposals per round of funding has consistently increased. For example, in the funding 2020/2021 year, 10 projects were funded while 21 applications were received. In these years, the Provost’s Office directly contributed \$25,000 to the budget for additional support of grant recipients to ensure their success; in 2021, this top-up came from CELT’s pandemic-related surplus budget.

A absolutely critical component in the success of the OERDG is the Grant Coordinator, who supports grant holders with the development of their projects and coordinates individual and group support. The resources developed by the Grant Coordinator are also accessed by those developing projects not funded by the OERDG, which makes the impact of the two course release for the role significant to the overall culture of Open at TRU. Further, the Grant Coordinator organizes celebrations and recognition of the work developed under the OERDG, which assists in discoverability and impact of the projects.

It should be noted that, in spite of the success of this program in increasing locally developed OER for the TRU community, the funding has not been predictable or sustainable. As of March 20, 2022, a proposal by CELT for continued funding of the OERDG in the 2022/23 year was not approved as part of its operating budget. The proposal has been sent directly to the Provost’s office for consideration.

The future success of developing OER at TRU is dependent on a predictable, sustainable funding commitment from the University.

#### [UN SDG Faculty Fellows Partnership Open Pedagogy project](#)

[TRU entered into this project in May 2021](#). The project was initiated by members of the OEWG who now also form the part of project leadership team. Six faculty members participated in the initial cycle of developing sustainable assignments; the purpose of the program is for Faculty Fellows to work in interdisciplinary teams to create assignments that enable students to learn, but also to create local understanding about a particular UN Sustainable Development Goal. Students choose a Creative Commons license and post their work in a format that is accessible to the public. In this way, the assignments are also renewable because the knowledge created can be added to by students in future course iterations.

This project has recently added two partner universities from Costa Rica and Aruba and is poised for continued growth over the years ahead. It represents a unique approach to open pedagogy delivery while providing an experience of international collaboration with colleagues. It also aligns with TRUs local and global commitments to sustainability.

For reference, three samples of work come from:

- [Sharon Brewer, Chemistry](#)
- [Dawne Bringeland, Open Learning, Leadership](#)
- [Bala Nikku, Social Work](#)

#### [Communities of Practice](#)

One issue that threatens the forward momentum of OE at TRU is the lack of a central organizing role to coordinate the work. The OEWG works to fill this gap, but more oversight, mentorship, and guidance is required that can be provided off-the-side-of-the-desk of the Chair and Vice-Chair. In order to recognize community leaders in open and help to connect more people who are interested in open projects, the OEWG in 2021 created Communities of Practices to align with the Open Atom: Research, Publishing, Pedagogy, and Resources. The Communities of Practice meet on a regular basis to support work being undertaken within the community, and while each CoP has a facilitator or two, the focus of each group is shaped by the membership. CoPs have only been in existence for one academic year, but have already connected OE developers to global experts in open education, like a guest talk from the Open University's Martin Weller, and to experts in copyright, editing, and open platforms. The CoPs are well-placed for the growth of open at TRU.

### 3. External Scan

This section provides insight into how OE activities are developed and delivered in other institutions in BC, Alberta, and Ontario. Those interviewed were selected based on recommendations of the Future of OE Advisory Committee, who are people with strong knowledge of OE activities in Canada. Given time constraints, the list is representative of the Canadian OE environment, but does not claim to be comprehensive. The complete list of interviewees is available in Appendix D.

The interviews were conducted under the provision of preserving interviewee anonymity and, as such, what is presented below discusses the overarching general themes.

#### Structure of OE support

In the external institutions surveyed, OE was supported in both decentralized and centralized models; however, there were clear thematic similarities across programs, even given different institutional prioritizing of OE. In general, a Librarian or Teaching and Learning specialist has the role of supporting OE as part of their job description. This person (or people, where the work is shared) support faculty on an individual basis, offering guidance on open licensing as faculty express interest in adapting or adopting OER. Through these efforts, instructional support in admin, faculty, and staff roles build and create awareness about the “[5R's of Open](#)”: the ability to Retain, Reuse, Revise, Remix and Redistribute content for educational purposes. As awareness grows, instructional faculty join instructional support in becoming champions of adopting or adapting open practices and may even apply for grants to create or adapt an OER. There is often parallel energy from student unions, who correctly see OE as a solution to equity and affordability issues.

However, as OE activities grow, additional dedicated positions to support OE are typically not increased; instead, others may become involved out of personal or professional interest. This typically leads the creation and continuation of the decentralized model, and this is where the “working on OE off the side of the desk” originates and is perpetuated particularly the case when the development of original OER (or large-scale adaptation) is pursued, because each project requires a team in order to produce the content, operate the open text platform, create and integrate media, review copyright, and edit the document.

In the decentralized model, projects are driven by faculty interests, funding is generally not flexible to meet project timelines, and institutions may develop pockets of expertise within faculties based on the desire of faculty to work with OER, but this ebbs and flows.

A centralized model develops where a senior administrator at the institution makes a conscious decision to support the organic growth that has occurred at an institution with the explicit goal of spreading it throughout. At U of Windsor, the Vice-Provost Academic created the Office of Open. At Vancouver Community College, a Vice Provost of Innovation was created with some responsibilities directly associated with open education initiatives. And at KPU, Open Education initiatives are supported both in a dedicated Office for Open and throughout the institution under the coordination of the AVP-Teaching and Learning, who has sought to embed open as a value in the [Strategic and Academic Plans of the institution](#). A specific intent of this office is to place



dedicated funds to positions that are defined and become part of the work of the institution and are therefore succession proof.

In the centralized model, offices tasked with supporting open are fully funded and are empowered to support the growth of OE as well as secure external grants. They are also better able to maintain sustained interest and facilitate growth. They are also better able to record and present the results of their efforts. For example, KPU knows that 31% of enrolled students chose to do so because of the 900 Zero textbook costs courses have lower the amount they can expect to pay for their education.

While open initiatives often begin as grassroots initiatives, institutions that invest in centralizing organizational and financial functions – and especially in taking the effort to embed openness in policy and strategic governance – of supporting this work appear to see better sustained outcomes over time.

### Policies

Policies supporting OE activities are rare. For the most part, OE support develops organically without institutional support and there is no governance body that can propose or implement an institutional policy. And if policies are made that encourage and/or require faculty to use OER, for example, these policies are largely meaningless due to academic freedom considerations.

There are initiatives that are changing this situation, usually with faculty support. Some institutions, including TRU, at the faculty council level are recognizing OE activities within their Tenure and Promotion standards. This kind of professional recognition enables faculty a benefit of participating where previously there was none. Likewise, some institutions are moving towards open-first policies for teaching and learning centres, where all the work produced and distributed is expected to be openly licensed (except where there might be good reason not to, such as with the sharing of traditional Indigenous knowledges). At the funding level, within the specific area of research, the Tri-Council federal research funding agencies [explicitly supports the open access policy on publications and data sharing, and also explicitly require open knowledge mobilization strategies.](#)

The development of Research Councils and the push for open data is further ahead in the UK and could provide a model to follow in Canada as open research expands in practice. Faculty will increasingly require support from their institutions to undertake this work if institutions are to remain credible and competitive in the quest for Tri-Council funding.

BCcampus supported the development of [an Institutional Self-Assessment Tool for OEP Initiatives](#). This tool is available openly for anyone to use and reporting on the initial research conducted during the project is available

### Successes

Successes are most commonly measured in the increase of OER used in courses, which in turn increases the affordability of education to students; we see this as a priority at all institutions, but

especially at those that share student demographic profiles akin to TRU. This aspect of success is the easiest to measure, and this is why the development of OER continues to dominate the conversation of open education. When a faculty member selects a freely available, open text in place of a for-profit publisher's textbook, the dollar amount saved can be calculated by the cost of the textbook multiplied by the number of enrollments in perpetuity. In mid-September 2020, [BCcampus recorded student savings of \\$20 million](#) due its investment into open textbook creation since 2012.

There was also some success expressed in open pedagogy as way to engage students with learning and community. While this success is more nebulous to demonstrate, it is based on sound educational practices which have been employed for decades – authentic learning, project-based learning and more. The representatives we spoke to highlight both student and faculty satisfaction from working openly in the community as central to their ongoing commitments to OEP.

Other successes noted were the [AU Press](#), which has openly published academic monographs for years, with a recent example being Martin Weller's [25 Years of Ed Tech](#).

### Challenges

Each person interviewed at some point expressed disappointment that OE has not grown sufficiently at their institution. In some cases, this was described as an existential crisis going to the heart of post-secondary education, where institutions have not moved from acting as barriers to information sharing rather than disseminators of information, and are similarly falling short in their role to make education accessible and inclusive. An emphasis on the university as a business construes OER as a threat to the viability of the book store or otherwise increases expenses. In other cases, OE was described as simply one of many issues that senior administrators must reckon with and, without a passion for it, OE simply does not rise up to the level of priority as other issues, e.g., meeting the TRC Calls to Action. Where OEP can be seen as working hand-in-hand to achieve goals in Indigenization and decolonization, as well as equity, affordability, and access, it has greater potential for success. However, time and time again, we see that without strong support in the executive offices of a university, OE is relegated to a piecemeal, course-based approach. It is clear that the leaders in this field are those whose institutions have committed to equity, access, and student success, and who see open as the pathway to getting there.

Typically, the challenges expressed were the need to rely on informal support for OE activities due to lack of structured institutional support. The level of interest in using OE practices is greater than the support services can provide at almost every institution surveyed, and thus instructional support administration, faculty, and staff who work to support open are typically overworked; as with burnout across our sector, these individuals become somewhat demoralized over time. And faculty who have developed OER consistently state that their work is under recognized and undervalued, even when uptake of the resources they have created is significant.

Some interviewees drew attention to the growing influence of publisher-produced content and the failure of institutions to meaningfully grapple with the privacy implications of for-profit

educational technologies. Publishers are creating more fully developed products ranging from textbooks to content within proprietary learning management systems, and the requirement is that students be delivered both at a significant cost even compared to traditional textbooks. These systems can be attractive to some faculty as they provide an integrated approach to content delivery; however, for others, it infringes upon academic freedom and raises issues of affordable access, equity and privacy. It is important to note that the issue of the proliferation of these high-cost resources is a key issue for many student unions and for the national student union bodies. Interviewees raising these concerns noted that the development of OER provides greater faculty control over content delivery while facilitating a more equitable experience.

## Future

Open Education is to some degree facilitated by hope for a more equitable educational system, and this was indeed expressed by most. Again, some in a more provocative manner described the movement towards open as a backlash against exorbitant vendor fees of software companies or publishers, while others focused on the slow growth of OEP benefiting students and faculty too much to simply stop. But within that range of views, there is agreement on the need to be more explicit about presenting the successes and labeling them as success of “open,” and more than grassroots leadership is required. In the words of one interviewee, open initiatives are traditionally “led from the middle,” and we have seen that while this can have a lot of positive momentum and community good will, it also caps the possibility for growth.

Where pessimism about open was clearly expressed, it was directed mostly toward the inertia of universities and the business model of delivering students to publishing companies ostensibly as a means of saving money, but really at a cost of student choice and privacy. Publishers pushing forward the product of “inclusive access” is one example of the kind of effort collaborative between administrators and companies that seems to be based exclusively on financial calculations. Not only are these calculations often inaccurate because there is limited history to accurately understand the model, but the agreements also undermine students and faculty in a variety of ways, including their capacity to access affordable, localized, and up-to-date learning materials. [SPARC details many issues](#) including research based on implementation of the model to encourage more transparent discussion.

Similarly, many interviewees indicated pessimism with regards to institutional commitments to fulfilling their mandate of providing inclusive and affordable education to Canadians. They see a lack of investment in open as indicative of shifting institutional priorities away from access.

## 4. External Funding

Within the discussions over the course of this project it became apparent that external sources of funding for OEP are very limited. Virtually all funding is secured through grants primarily administered by provincial organizations that are created to support OE at post-secondary institutions such as [BCcampus](#) or [eCampus Ontario](#). Both of these organizations have committed millions of dollars over the years to produce Open Texts. These organizations may also consolidate funding from larger private foundations, such as the Hewlett Foundation as a way to maximize investment.

However, even these organizations are subject to the political environment that allocates money through the Ministry responsible for distributing funds. Survey respondents noted that funding was initially provided to build a portfolio of OER, however funding required to maintain the currency of portfolio is more difficult to acquire.

There is still grant money available and as noted earlier, TRU faculty have received significant funding from BCcampus for specific initiatives. As is typical in this sector, money seems to beget money; institutions that invest in structures to support open education see better success in external funding competitions; reputationally, these institutions are viewed as leaders and have been approached by external funders to undertake significant open projects. Increasingly, BCcampus and other granting bodies require institutions to match funds; these funds will need to be available for TRU to continue to achieve high levels of success moving forward.

Other avenues for external funding suggested were through the federal government, specifically Social Sciences and Human Resource Council (SSHRC) grants. Some indicated a willingness of this organization to fund OER in relation to open publishing and research. This has been a relatively new stream of funding and would take directed effort to connect with.

Another opportunity suggested was to engage with the Alumni Association in a fund raising effort specifically for the creation of OER. Alumni may have an interest in supporting the enhancement of affordability for current students. This proposition could be addressed directly to TRU Foundation as a program the Limitless Campaign.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion of the Future of OE at TRU

TRU has a strong history of working in the OEP space; indeed, many of the interviewees we contacted spoke highly of TRU's historical leadership. From the beginnings of the OL division over 40 years ago through to today, TRU has established an institutional reputation within the province and internationally that is quite remarkable for a relatively small institution. While OL has been a leading part of TRU in OE, campus-based units, faculty and students all participate significantly in OE work and in manifesting and enjoying its benefits. In fact OE, is a truly pan-institutional issue, as demonstrated by the range of respondents to this report and the vibrancy of the OEWG and its Communities of Practice.

We note that:

- OE supports the historical mandate of this institution and continues to provide paths to meet the established [Strategic Change Goals](#) particularly in the areas of eliminating achievement gaps and leading in community research and scholarship.
- OE facilitates all of the central TRU values from the Envision TRU process: by making course materials more affordable and inviting new voices into the classroom,
- OE facilitates Inclusion and Diversity; by allowing for localized content and inviting students to share knowledge in community,
- OE facilitates Community-Mindedness; by seeing students and co-creators of knowledge and by allowing faculty ways to broadly disseminate their materials,
- OE facilitates Curiosity; and as our commitment to the UN SDG project shows,
- OE facilitates sustainability,
- OE provides a framework and tools to respond quickly to the Indigenization of content, which is a significant part of the change goal to honour truth, reconciliation, and rights.

The approach of OE at TRU is a decentralized model with a variety of different divisions or units, as well as the Students' Union, involved in the creation, support, and advocacy of OE. And while a large part of the effort to date has been on the creation and distribution of OER, other elements of open such as: open pedagogy, open research and open publishing are gaining traction.

This model has created some significant successes as demonstrated by all the accomplishments and positive reputation that TRU has in this area. And in fact, instead of just pockets of faculty developing expertise, OE activities are conducted to some extent in all faculties. The Library, CELT, and the Research Office all help to support and engage faculty in open and to help them undertake their projects. Additionally, faculty who have been active in OER creation generally express they have received good support from a wide variety of faculty and staff such as: instructional designers; coordinators, educational technologies; graphics designers and web developers; production staff; copyright experts; and editors. Faculty are, however, keenly aware of the work required to produce an OER, and are concerned about the lack of financial support as well as professional recognition. Students view the implementation of OE generally from the perspective of affordability and ease of access to resources. This means the most important part of OE to them is the creation and distribution of more OER in courses in order to reduce the amount of for-profit textbooks and homework systems being used. It is clear from our consultations with the TRU community via survey that the most important component of OEP for both faculty and students – OER development – is also the most resource-intensive. For this work to achieve what every stakeholder wants, more stable investment is needed.

Some OE areas such as open publishing and open research have support committed through the job descriptions of Librarians and within the Research Office, but we must remain aware of the imminent growth in these areas. More pressing, though, is that the areas of open pedagogy and OER development are very dependent on the “off the side to desk” efforts of faculty and staff. The OL division currently provides a significant subsidy to much of the OER creation happening on TRU's campus. It is involved heavily in all aspects of this work through the nature of its history and mandate; however, its staff and faculty have been increasingly used as a resource for the whole of TRU without any increase in personnel to do this work. This does not seem to be a sustainable situation.



The only explicit institutional support for OE has been the OERDG grant program. This program existed for the past three years and has committed \$79,000 to resource development and support for the past two. Given that the institution's publicly available Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows in 2021 shows an Annual surplus [of \\$17,405 million](#), and in 2020 an additional \$20,246 million, the 2021 funding represents less than 0.5% of that year's surplus. As of April 22, funds have been allocated to allow the Program Coordinator to continue supporting the existing grant holders to complete their projects, but no further investment in creating new OER has been allocated.

OEP projects and support have developed in a decentralized structure that while effective, seems to have run its course as the institution has not to this point committed significantly towards investing to a level commensurate with the skill, interest, and commitment of the faculty, staff, and students working in this area.

OE is one area in which TRU campuses and OL offerings, interests, intentions, and energy align. The desire to make courses affordable, accessible and to have better control over the content are equally prioritized by all. Moreover, in the past months substantive pilot projects that were implemented through the ZTC program have shown tremendous potential and interest for campus and open learning faculty members for broader implementation. For example, 10 Math faculty member expressed interest in implementing on online homework system within their courses after been shown a demonstration resulting from the pilot. This is very positive and creates the stories of OL and campus personnel working together to create affordable resources and sustainable learning experiences for students are good news stories for the whole community to celebrate.

We believe there is an opportunity for the Provost to call on the university community to discuss how OEP can be integrated fully into the university's academic planning for the future. Circulating this document as widely as possible can raise awareness to the issues and opportunities in place. While in this research, there was no direct contact with Deans, we acknowledge their importance in the moving the academic direction forward. Circulating this report to the Dean's for information would be an important part of further consultation. Support from Faculty Council's is also crucial to further discussion and to a strategic implementation of OEP. And finally, the six units and entities that have supported the implementation of OEP should continue to be engaged.

## Appendices

### A: BCcampus reports

- Projects with BCcampus
- Student Savings
- Current Adoptions

### B: Reports from Division/Units

- OL
- Library
- CELT
- TRUSU

### C: Surveys

- Faculty
- Student
- Williams Lake

### D: External Interviewees

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