

University responses to TRUFA communications

As at 8:45 AM, April 13, 2016

**1. TRUFA Question: “What are they hiding?”\***

A: In order to present the requested information in a clear and concise manner, all duplicated and draft copies have been redacted and clearly labeled “Duplicate”. The alternative would have been to send separate copies of a forty page document, which generated 160 sheets of duplication, to five people. All of the final agreements and contracts requested have been included and are complete.

\*TRUFA reference to redactions in FOI request responses

**2. TRUFA Question: “Is it true that, despite some Deans’ requesting funding for much needed sessional positions, the Provost has refused?”**

A: No, this is not true. All Deans are responsible for their own budgets and have built allocations for sessional faculty into their budgets. There may be a delay in approving the requests when they are contingent upon confirmation of student numbers, but this delay has been minimal, and these requests have been approved in the past 7 months.

**3. TRUFA Question: “Why is TRU administration persisting in allowing course evaluation questionnaires to remain open for 48 hours after class time, when the Memorandum of Settlement clearly states that the questionnaires must be administered “in class”?”**

A:

- The University agreed to TRUFA’s request to participate in the review of the student course evaluation process. Accordingly, this has already been discussed and clarified with the TRUFA President and understood as a responsible and controlled student centered measure.
- Evaluations are, in fact, administered in class – and we thank faculty for the successful process, now almost complete, for the first cycle of student course evaluations.
- The provision for questionnaires to remain open for 48 hours after class time, is to ensure that students who are absent on the day of the in-class student course evaluation can still submit their responses. This was one of the recommendations of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee.
- Following this first student course evaluation cycle, the Committee will be responsible for reviewing all aspects of the process (including the 48-hour submission allowance) and recommending changes, if any, for the next cycle.

**4. TRUFA Question: “Is it true that some departments in the Faculty of Arts that deliver service courses for other Faculties and Schools are not having these courses credited to them?”**

A: No this is not true. Whenever students or groups of students from other Faculties take Arts courses, the resulting enrolments are counted as enrolments in Arts courses.

**5. TRUFA Question: “Is it true that TRU language labs have been arbitrarily and unilaterally cancelled?”**

A: No, this is not true.

- There have been no changes to the Modern Languages Laboratory in the AE building either in terms of physical space or in how the lab is used to support all modern language courses in Arts.
- The Language Laboratory based in the IB building is being moved to be closer to where ESL faculty are based and where the main ESL teaching classrooms are located, in order to support course-specific learning.
- ESL faculty (in particular the Chair ESL and ESL coordinator) have been consulted and had input into the timing and location of the ESL Language Laboratory.
- Wider consultation, which included Chairs from the Faculty of Education and Social Work, has also taken place, led by the TRU Space Committee.
- Funding has been assigned for new furnishings and learning support materials to ensure this facility is an exciting, flexible, technologically advanced learning space that is an asset to the entire university.

In sum: given that the AE Language Lab remains in place, that a new OM-based Language Lab is to be created by Fall 2016, and that consultation has occurred at both Faculty and TRU-Committee levels, no language lab has been arbitrarily and unilaterally cancelled.

**6. TRUFA Question: “Is it true that some departments have lost dedicated classrooms without adequate consultation?”**

A: No, this is not true. Consultation regarding program delivery, including possible changes to classrooms in which programs are taught, routinely occurs at the Faculty level between the Dean and faculty members.

**7. TRUFA Question: “In November the TRU President signed an agreement with Maple Leaf Education Services (sic) a private corporation that offers Chinese students high school completion. Is it true that these students will be given preferential admission to our academic programs, and, is it true the TRU administration plans to offer public classroom space for the private corporation to conduct its business?”**

A: No, this is not true.

- All students must meet TRU admission requirements in order to enter TRU academic programs. Preferential admission is not extended to any students as this would contravene our open access commitments.

- TRU has not made, and will not make decisions that reduce the quality of education or education delivery to our current students.
- TRU does not provide classroom space to any external organizations; however, we regularly rent space, including classroom space, to external organizations. This practice has been in place for years.
- In our climate of declining provincial grants and domestic enrolments, TRU is committed to diversifying our revenue streams to provide more sustainable financing for TRU academic programs, student services and research. The University Village project was initiated with this in mind.
  - As one possible initiative within the University Village project, a potential agreement with Maple Leaf Education Services would be managed by the TRU Community Trust. For more information on TRUCT please visit [www.tru.ca/vpadmin/university\\_village.html](http://www.tru.ca/vpadmin/university_village.html)
  - Other Canadian universities – notably U Toronto, Vancouver Island University, U Winnipeg and MRU – successfully maintain private high school or conservatories within their campuses.
  - If it does come to fruition, an MLES high school will also present practicum and research opportunities for our TESL, B.Ed. and Master of Education students and faculty members.

**8. TRUFA Question: “Why have TRU senators not been given a detailed breakdown of the \$10 million budget for TRU World?”**

A: At the March meeting of Senate, a Senator asked a question regarding the increase to TRU’s expenditures when comparing fiscal year 2015/16 to fiscal year 2016/17. A discussion ensued but the budget was never formally requested at that time. After the meeting, a formal request for the budget was received by the University Secretary. In response, the TRU World budget will be brought forward at the April Senate meeting for information.

It is standard practice for Finance to annually post the Annual All-Funds Budget Report on the Budget Committee of Senate (BCOS) Filepro site prior to the BCOS meeting where BCOS considers recommending the University budget to the President for approval.

It should be noted that BCOS is a representative committee with 11 of the 18 voting members being members of TRUFA. This year, the All-Funds Budget Report was posted on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. Within the report, Committee members and Senators can find detailed breakdowns of ALL the faculty/school/departmental budgets (including TRU World’s). This report remains as a historical artifact on the BCOS Filepro site and is available for viewing at any time.

As always, the budget information is available on our web site. For your ease the following links are provided:

- Link to Budget Consolidation document along with BCOS FilePro login information:  
<https://tru.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/58847?preview=82618>
  - Username: bcos
  - Password: SenatesubBCOS
- Also of possible interest:
  - VP Admin & Fin website: [http://www.tru.ca/\\_shared/assets/2016-17 - Budget Presentation37589.pdf](http://www.tru.ca/_shared/assets/2016-17 - Budget Presentation37589.pdf)

**9. TRUFA Question: “All Faculties and Schools have been asked to cut their budgets by 2.48%. However, why are Deans not supplying Chairs and departmental faculty members with detailed academic unit budgets to work with? And is it true that the 2.48% budget cut request is being characterized as a result of the faculty salary increase despite the fact that the increase is being fully funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education?”**

A: No, this is not true.

- The 2.48% budget cut is applicable to *faculty operational* expenditures, whereas the salary increase – which, for this settlement, is fully funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education – is applicable to *faculty labour* expenditures.
- Deans are responsible for managing their Faculty/School budgets and work with Chairs and faculty to support effective decision making.
- One source of budgeting information available to all members of the TRU community is the website for BCOS – a committee whose members are primarily faculty representatives – where all faculty budgets are posted.

**10. TRUFA Question: “Is it true that certain programs like ESL, Horticulture, Culinary Arts, ESTR, and COPE/MECA are being targeted for elimination without invoking program redundancy provisions in the Collective Agreement?”**

A: No, this is not true. No program at TRU is “targeted for elimination”. However, some programs have low enrolments and there are standard processes for reviewing low enrolments. Per TRUFA collective agreement Article 3.8, program redundancy provisions are invoked only if decisions made in response to low enrolments result in layoffs, and this has not occurred in any of the programs mentioned above.

**11. TRUFA Question: “After a non-confidence vote by Trades faculty focusing on failures of the Dean, why is the hiring of yet another administrator – an Associate Dean – an appropriate and effective way to address the concerns of faculty members?”**

A: TRUFA is free to raise and discuss any collective agreement matters with TRU at any time. The decision to engage an Associate Dean to whom Trades faculty can address concerns is an academic matter and not a collective agreement matter.

**12. TRUFA Question: “Is it true that a department appointments committee unanimously recommended the best candidate for a tenure-track position, and the recommendation was rejected?”**

A: Yes, this is possible. Per TRUFA collective agreement Article 5.3, the appointments committee is made up of faculty members. Here is the process followed by the appointments committee:

- i. The committee makes a recommendation for hire to the Dean.
- ii. The Dean then makes a recommendation to the President (or designate) to either grant or deny the appointment.
- iii. The final step is for the President or designate to then either accept or deny the recommendation.
- iv. When an appointments committee’s recommendation is denied, the President or designate will provide written reasons to the committee.
- v. The committee can either consider other applicants or re-advertise for the position.

**13. TRUFA Question: “Is it true that Academic Freedom may be restricted by a decision to have an administrator moderate a Faculty e-mail distribution list? Is TRU administration trying to establish their version of a ‘respectful workplace’ that they were denied in bargaining?”**

A: No, this is not true. Academic Freedom and freedom of speech are championed and protected at Thompson Rivers University, as at any university. Respectful workplace communications are a separate and valued principle at TRU. Our guidelines for respectful workplace communications are aligned with existing harassment, human rights and workplace laws -- including those of WorkSafe BC requiring that all employees are kept safe from physical, mental and emotional distress by their employer. The operational decision to moderate a Faculty e-mail list was made in response to complaints of cyber-bullying made by members of that Faculty, and is in keeping with WorkSafe BC guidelines for responding to threats to employee safety.

**14. TRUFA Question: “Why is TRU administration refusing to implement a department Chair release algorithm?”**

A: TRU is not refusing to implement a department Chair release algorithm, and has discussed this measure with TRUFA along with the need to ensure the Letter of Agreement requiring a Chair job description was in place. The invitation to come to an agreement has sat with TRUFA since last fall.

**15. TRUFA Question: “TRUFA has requested that union and employer representatives on the Labour Management Consultative Committee meet more frequently to address a backlog of concerns that have arisen in the year since our last meeting. Why is administration reluctant to approve this request?”**

A: TRU is not reluctant to meet as frequently as TRUFA would like to address key concerns. Currently, the forum for such undertakings is the consultative committee, which first met on March 23 and met again on April 11. These

meetings can be scheduled as frequently (or infrequently) as either party requests.

**16. TRUFA Statement: “Non-confidence vote in Trades in November 2015 – Issues not addressed.”**

Response:

- In fact it was addressed by the Provost in a meeting with delegates of the Trades faculty on more than one occasion, including during a meeting in which an Associate Dean position was proposed and largely accepted by the faculty present at the meeting.
- The discussions that did take place resulted in an understanding that a positive way forward was needed. One possible measure to support this goal was a Dean’s advisory Committee. Another was the creation of an Associate Dean role.
- The Associate Dean’s role would be to provide operational oversight on a daily basis and to assist in effective communication on all matters.

**17. TRUFA Statement: “Low morale among faculty and toxic work environment – Issues ignored.”**

Response:

- TRU has no intention of ignoring these serious allegations. Our first course of action will be to seek clarification and specific information related to TRUFA’s assertion that faculty suffer from low morale and toxic work environment.
- In fact TRU has already formally investigated or assisted with mediation when faculty have claimed harassment at the hands of their colleagues.

**18. TRUFA Statement: “Cuts to faculty and school budgets – Addressed with more cuts?!”**

Response:

- Faculties and Schools, along with all other divisions within the University, were requested to try to find efficiencies that would amount to a 2.48% reduction in their operating budgets. However, it is important to note that, for this fiscal year, there was an overall 2.86% *increase* in the budget for academic provisions.

**19. TRUFA Statement: “Need to improve sessional working conditions – Sessional positions eliminated.”**

Response:

- TRU is engaging tenure-track faculty in a number of areas. A decision to discontinue a sessional position in an area may be due to work now being allocated to tenured or tenure-track faculty, or to other factors such as declining student enrolment in that area.