

Trent Durham Task Force

A Path Forward: Recommendations for a Growing Campus

November 20th, 2023

Introduction

In 2023 Trent University's Chair of the Board of Governors and President launched the Trent Durham Task Force (subsequently referred to as TDTF) to assess a strategic path forward for the Trent Durham GTA campus. The growth of the university's GTA campus has highlighted key opportunities for an increasingly successful two-campus operation. Future enrolment projections show the Durham student body representing upwards of 25% of the university's total enrolments in the near future, underscoring its status as a key part of the Trent community.

Trent's longstanding collaboration with the Region of Durham and the City of Oshawa has aligned Trent Durham's academic offerings with local educational needs. This has attracted a unique and viable market of students looking for a small campus feel in an urban setting. The Durham GTA Campus attracts not only students from the region (who benefit from a closer commute from home), but also students from further afield both nationally and internationally, who are drawn to unique programming and a close-knit scholarly community in a diverse environment.

Since its inception in 1974, the Durham campus has undergone significant changes in academic offerings and land and building assets. Most recently, it has seen significant growth in international student enrolment in its graduate degree and post-graduate certificate programs. Their enrolment has almost tripled between 2022 and 2023. Similarly, the growth of its undergraduate student body continues to build across a variety of disciplines including Child and Youth Studies, Policing and Community Well-Being, Business and Computer Science, to name a few.

The Durham campus' successes propel the need to determine the most strategic path forward. The objective is to ensure that the Durham campus' growth is effectively sustained long-term in alignment with the university's vision and the needs of its community. Key to this is an understanding of the ever-changing educational landscape and infrastructural terrain that shapes potential opportunities and pressure points for decision making.

The strategic directions that guide the recommendations in this report include the university's commitments to: (1) academic achievement and scholarship (and the pursuit of it in a way that is committed to diversity, social, environmental and governance responsibilities); (2) continue to develop and maintain vibrant campuses that reflect the friendly, caring, personal and interconnected culture of Trent; and (3) financial health and sustainability.

The TDTF is a task force body that was convened to provide advice to the Board of Governors, in view of the Durham operation's current and future needs. Issues discussed by the task force include strategic enrollment, academic focus and excellence, campus facilities, student success, and financial sustainability. The task force consulted with various university stakeholders, including the Trent Durham Student Association, staff and faculty communities, and local and regional stakeholders (to understand

anticipated population growth and employment needs, and possible ways to expand and improve space at Thornton Road and the university's downtown location on Simcoe Street).

The TDTF identified five areas for examination and sub-committees were formed to further assess each: academic programs, communications, the college model, administrative structure, consultation with stakeholder groups, and real estate and facilities. This report outlines a series of recommendations that have arisen from consultations and assessment performed by the sub-committees, then brought forward to the TDTF as a whole for review and synthesis. The work of the TDTF and its sub-committees occurred between March and November of 2023.

Task Force Membership

Doug Kirk (Vice-Chair of the Board, Chair of the Executive Committee, and Chair of the Task Force)
Tariq Al-idrissi (Vice-President Finance and Administration)
Amber Ashton (Director of Campus Operations, Trent Durham)
Debra Cooper Burger (Chair of the Board)
Leo Groarke (President) Kristi
Honey (Board Governor)
Jennifer McGarrity (Board Governor)
Chris Nelan (Student Services, Trent Durham/Board Governor)
Scott Sinclair (Regional Representative/Governor Emeritus)

Vision for the Trent Durham Campus

The Durham GTA Campus is an integral part of the Trent Community. After fifty years in operation, it has grown from a distance education campus into an important institution in one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in North America. In many ways, the campus exhibits Trent's core values, comprising a tight knit community with small class sizes, access to professors, and cutting-edge research and researchers. The campus has developed in a way that aims to connect it to the needs and realities of its students, faculty, and staff within the Durham region.

While the continuity of Trent's ethos and vision for learning and teaching is central to all its operations, the development of the Durham campus will require a flexible and agile approach that responds to the needs of its student body, market demands within the region, and the challenges presented by enrolment growth and a growing international and post-graduate population. The university will need to adapt to this shifting terrain in a way that provides the resources required to support the campus' continued growth. This includes the realities of an urban campus with a large contingent of commuter, mature and transfer students who have distinct needs and perspectives compared to a more residential student body.

Expansion moving forward must hold true to the Trent experience, ensuring that student services are effectively scaled alongside the anticipated growth in enrolment. It is essential that the student environment meet the needs and expectations of new members of the community, holding true to Trent's reputation as Ontario's leading undergraduate university.

The recommendations outlined in this report serve as a blueprint for decision making moving forward.

A Brief History: Historical Timeline of Trent Durham Past to Present

- **1974** Trent's college for part-time studies, Julian Blackburn College, begins offering courses in Oshawa at Eastdale Collegiate and Vocational Institute.
- **1977** Senate approves the expansion of courses offered to part-time students in Oshawa.
Trent begins offering courses at Durham College.
- **1988** Trent's presence in Oshawa grows to 55 course offerings.
- **1993** Trent students enroll full-time in evening classes at the Oshawa Durham campus, marking the beginning of full-time university programming in Durham.
- **1995** Trent begins adding daytime courses to its evening offerings.
- **1998-1999** Ministry of Colleges and Universities initiates grant for university level programs to be offered at Durham College, allowing Trent to offer and stabilize full-time academic programs during the day and evening.
- **2001** Trent Durham continues to grow with over 25 summer courses and 95 full or half-courses in the fall/winter.
- **2003** Eight Oshawa-based tenure track appointments in five disciplines.
- **2008** Trent's offices are consolidated in the Simcoe Building, providing the first dedicated space for Trent University on the Durham College/Ontario Tech campus.
- **2009** Thornton Road property purchased.
City of Oshawa supports 75-year lease of lands and access to athletics facilities for Trent students.
- **2010** Thornton Road Campus opens.
Business Administration degree launches.
- **2014** Bachelor of Social Work Program, Human Resource Management Certificate, and FastStart entrepreneurship program established.
Trent Durham celebrates 40 years of delivering postsecondary education in the Durham region.
- **2015** Media Studies and Communications degrees established.
- **2016** Child & Youth Studies degree launches.
- **2017** City of Oshawa gifts 1.8 acres of land, with an estimated market value of \$1.44 million to support the growth of Trent University Durham
- **2018** Master of Management – Trent Durham's first graduate studies program – launches exclusively at the Durham campus.
- **2019** Campaign for Trent Durham launches with the goal of raising \$5 million towards the expansion of campus.
The Region of Durham gifts Trent University GTA \$1.42 million, becoming a key partner in future expansion of Trent Durham.
Policing & Community Well-being degree launches.
Enrolment nearing 2,000 in total, attracting more international students to the campus for post-graduate education.
- **2020** New 200-bed residence and academic building opens in September, featuring 100-seat tiered lecture hall, two 64-seat classrooms, research space, student common spaces, outdoor green space and faculty offices.
Trent Durham acquires three houses on King Street West in Oshawa.
Journalism & Creative Writing degree launches.
- **2021** Criminology degree launches.
- **2022** Computer Science honours degree launches.
University celebrates \$6.6 million Campaign for Trent Durham with ribbon cutting, donor wall unveiling and tours – funds raised support creation of new residence and academic building, student scholarships, bursaries and new experiential learning opportunities.
- **2023** Trent Durham GTA Advanced Learning Centre opens at 11 Simcoe Street North, marking Trent Durham's expansion into downtown Oshawa.
Durham Task Force launches to assess a strategic path forward for the Trent Durham campus.
Enrolment reaches close to 3,000 Durham students by Fall 2023.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Academic Programs

Under the direction of Senate and the Dean and in alignment with Trent’s Academic Guiding Principles, the Durham campus should continue to develop a unique academic identity, expanding and developing existing and new programs that address the current strengths of the campus and the needs of Oshawa and the Durham region. Addressing the needs for social work, policing, education, business development, and child and youth services should be a priority. Other programming should respond to labour market needs, while also being proactive with private and public partnerships to ensure ongoing labour market integration of graduates.

Next Steps – Academic Programs:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide additional support for key Durham programs• Ongoing |
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Recommendation 2 - Communications

In an attempt to promote the Trent Durham identity, the university should enhance the Trent Durham website. It can function as a major tool in recruitment, should ensure ease of access and a positive user experience for those using the website, and can bring together multiple sectors of the student body, including, for example, both domestic and international, and resident and commuter students.

Next Steps - Communications:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have Communications review the website• Provide the staff allotment required to accomplish this |
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Recommendation 3 – Colleges

Trent is a collegiate university. In the past, this has not included a college (or colleges) at Trent Durham GTA because the campus’ small size made them seem redundant. As the campus grows, the university should extend the college model to Durham, in a way that helps maintain Trent as a collegiate university (and ensures that students continue to be members of a small, close-knit community as campus enrollment grows). Developing colleges will require a partnership with the Trent Durham Student Association, adequate resourcing and space, and should aim to support Student Services in Durham.

Next Steps - Colleges:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue conversations with the TDSA regarding a plan and referendum to formally establish the college system at Durham• Assess distinct space requirements and required resources for delivery• Delineate key administrative steps required for the establishment of new colleges |
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Recommendation 4 – Administrative Structure

The university should keep some of its administrative functions central (to ensure consistency, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness). This should include, for example, finance, human resources, procurement, information technology, housing, food services and student services.

In addition to the centralization of functions, the university must also ensure adequate support for the growing numbers of international students in Durham, increasing the number of Trent International staff who have our operations at Trent Durham as their primary focus.

Alongside these improvements, the university must find ways to promote collaboration among administrative staff across both campuses in ways that respect their distinct identities but maintain Trent’s identity as a unified university. The objective should be to foster innovation, knowledge sharing, and the development of best practices that benefit the entire institution.

Next Steps – Administrative Structure:
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the Durham administrative structure after the appointment of a Vice-President Durham• Increase Trent International staff in Durham• Promote inter-campus collaboration within departments |
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Recommendation 5 - Governance

To ensure that the Durham Campus develops well and plays a central role in the development of the university, the university should establish a new executive role of Vice-President Durham Campus. This position should report to the President and serve as a member of the Executive Leadership Team. This new role will be responsible for overseeing campus-specific operations, addressing local needs, and maintaining relationships with the Durham community and government.

The creation of this new role will require the amendment of the existing Dean role at Durham to more strategically focus on academic programming and research, reporting to the Vice-President Academic and the Vice-President Durham. The Dean will ensure that academic programming and research at Durham will be consistent with Trent’s academic and research strategic plans and support the Vice-President Durham with community engagement and fundraising.

Next Steps - Governance:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board approval of new executive position, Vice-President Durham Campus• Refine the role for the Durham Dean• Enhance inter-campus procedures |
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Recommendation 6 – Real Estate and Facilities

Space is one of the most pressing challenges for the Trent Durham Campus. The development of the campus will require expansion in this regard. The Thornton Road campus, other than residence, is tight for teaching space, offices and common areas. There are immediate and urgent short-term needs,

medium term growth considerations and a long-term strategy required to cohesively plan the Durham Campus.

Durham Transit and Metrolinx have plans to develop transit links along King Street, adjacent to the Durham campus. As this occurs, Trent should consider making the south side of King Street the entrance to the campus, adding buildings on this boundary or on the lands the university already owns. The university should at the same time explore ways to extend the current campus by acquiring or leasing near adjacent land currently owned by the city or private businesses. Partnerships with the latter should be considered immediately as one possible way forward.

In the short term, the development of the campus will require the development of more teaching and learning space, both on the Thornton Road campus and on Simcoe Street. Plans to develop such space should proceed quickly as the university pursues longer term expansion.

The demand for residences on the Trent Durham campus, and its development as an urban campus, suggests that there is less need for residence development than there is on the Peterborough campus. The university should monitor this need carefully, while noting the immediate needs on the campus are for academic rather than residential space.

The Durham campus should further explore and establish partnerships with local government, business and community organizations to increase student access to food, medical services, and recreational facilities (among others). In doing so, the university should consider opportunities for public-private partnerships and other innovative ways to meet campus service provision needs.

Next Steps – Real Estate and Facilities:
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short-term – immediately explore rental and purchase options in close proximity to the Thornton Road campus to serve immediate needs and priorities; consider possible renovations to serve this purpose• Medium-term – accelerate consultative process with Durham Region, City of Oshawa, Metrolinx and Oshawa Centre to meet facilities requirements for next 3-5 years.• Long-term – continue the process already underway to develop and build a larger core campus for Trent Durham |
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Conclusion

The Trent Durham GTA campus has an exciting, long-term growth path ahead. The forgoing analysis lays out TDTF's priorities to enhance governance, course offerings and structures to accommodate ongoing growth while ensuring the Trent experience is maintained. Achieving consensus of the Board regarding directions moving forward will quantify specific requirements for governance, change and resource allocation.