

Trent University Course Inventory

Project Report

Ned Struthers

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Abstract:

The Trent University Course Inventory Project (TUCI) was conducted on behalf of the Trent Centre for Community Based Education (TCCBE) during the 2007-2008 academic year to inventory all current and 'on the horizon' courses at Trent, to determine to what extent the community contexts of research, teaching, and learning were addressed within existing university course offerings. The student researcher, the director of the TCCBE, and a Project Advisory Group (PAG) composed of faculty and community members designed a survey to answer the project question which was sent to 351 faculty members at Trent. The 3.4% response rate to the TUCI project survey rendered the results inconclusive, and consequently the research question remains unanswered. While the TUCI project failed to deliver the required data to meet project goals, the experience of designing and administering the survey revealed several problems with online surveys as a research tool, as well as issues related to conducting research on Trent faculty. The TUCI project survey also identified several Trent faculty members who are interested and committed to community based education at Trent who may be interested in future projects with the TCCBE. Therefore, while the results of the TUCI project did not meet the original project goal – to determine to what extent the community contexts of research, teaching, and learning were addressed at Trent – the experience of conducting the TUCI project resulted in valuable information for future research projects conducted by the TCCBE or others that utilize either online surveys or have Trent faculty as the research sample.

Introduction:

Since its formation in 1996, the Trent Centre for Community Based Education (TCCBE) has been providing Trent University students with the opportunity to conduct community based research for academic credit. As a fundamentally different pedagogical approach to learning, Community Based Education (CBE) gives students experience outside of the classroom that complements their theoretical work within the university. As a longstanding part of university and college education in the United States, CBE has recently been adopted by a number of Canadian post-secondary institutions. As one of a handful of Canadian CBE organizations partnered with a university, the TCCBE has been heavily focused on the promotion and growth of CBE within Trent and the Peterborough community over the last few years. The expansion

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and enhancement of services is one of the primary goals listed in the TCCBE 2007-2010 *Strategic Plan*, as is the commitment to raising the public profile of the organization.¹

In pursuit of the goals of the *Strategic Plan* objective, to expand the scope and profile of CBE within Trent University and the greater Peterborough community, the TCCBE created the *Trent University Course Inventory* (TUCI) project which began in the fall of 2007. The stated goal of the TUCI project was to inventory all current and ‘on the horizon’ academic courses at Trent, to determine to what extent the community contexts of research, teaching, and learning were addressed within the existing university course offerings. This information was to be used by the TCCBE to improve TCCBE-related projects, generate dialogue, and increase the profile of community-academic work at Trent. If the TUCI project identified sufficiently large gaps in CBE content within existing Trent courses, the creation of a CBE specific course may have been proposed by the TCCBE.

Project Summary:

As part of my undergraduate political studies and history degree, I choose to participate in the TUCI project as the student researcher for a fourth year political studies credit. In my capacity as the student researcher for the TUCI project I, along with Todd Barr the director of the TCCBE, and a Project Advisory Group comprised of Trent faculty and community members from Peterborough and Haliburton Counties, worked together on the TUCI project to choose and design a research tool.

As the goal of the TUCI project was to determine the extent and depth of CBE education at Trent, it was decided that all departments and faculty members needed to have the opportunity to participate in the project. Several different methods for surveying all of the courses at Trent

¹ TCCBE 2007-2010 Strategic Plan: <<http://www.trentu.ca/academic/tccbe/mission.html>>

were discussed by the TUCI project stakeholders. Conducting focus groups with faculty members, or interviewing department chairs were both considered as viable research options; however it was decided that a survey would be the most appropriate research method to use, considering the number of faculty that needed to be contacted, and the importance of ensuring that each faculty member would have equal opportunity to respond to the research question. The choice of a survey as the research tool presented several challenges, as it was essential to develop questions that would generate meaningful responses, while ensuring that the survey could be completed relatively quickly by respondents. After formulating the questions and designing the survey on paper, it was decided to administer the survey online, as it was believed that a web-based survey would improve the response rate. An online survey would take a minimum amount of effort for faculty to complete, and it would be easy to distribute and collect after completion.² Dr. Jocelyn B. Aubrey, Trent University's Associate Dean of Arts and Science, was contacted by Todd Barr and asked to provide a cover email introducing the TUCI project to faculty. The introductory email prepared by Dr. Aubrey invited faculty members to participate in the TUCI project by following a link to the online survey.³ After a three week response window, the results of the survey were collected on March 7th 2008. While it was expected that the survey response rate might be low due to several factors which will be subsequently discussed, the receipt of only twenty surveys out of the three hundred and fifty one administered was surprising. Re-sending the survey to faculty was discussed as a possible way to increase the response rate and generate sufficient data to meet the TUCI project goal. However, due to time constraints and the fact that without significantly changing the survey the response rate would most likely remain low, it was decided to end the research phase of the TUCI project.

² See Appendix A

³ See Appendix B

The low response rate to the TUCI survey and the subsequent lack of data forced a major revision of the TUCI project goals, and necessitated a thorough review of the project process. While the TUCI project failed to gather enough data to discover the extent of CBE course content offered at Trent, the process of conducting the project delivered some valuable insights for future research projects utilizing online surveys or focusing on Trent faculty.

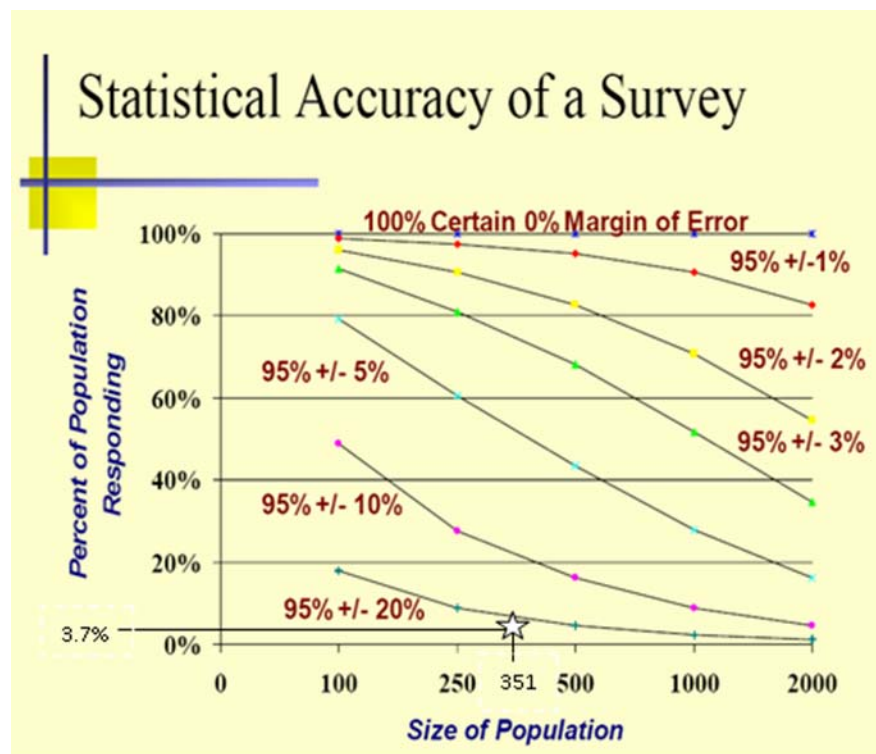
Discussion of the Data:

Out of twenty surveys that were begun by faculty, seven failed to answer a single question after providing informed consent. After eliminating the seven blank responses, the thirteen remaining surveys result in a response rate of 3.7%. Using a graph taken from the text *Customer Surveying: A Guidebook for Service Managers*, it is possible to plot the response rate for the TUCI survey to determine the margin of error of the results.⁴ A response rate of 3.7% with a sample size of 351 delivers a margin of error greater than +/- 20% rendering the results of the survey statistically inconclusive. Based on the graph, in order to be 95% certain of the accuracy of the results within a margin of error of +/- 10%, a survey with a population size of 351 needs to have a response rate of about 25%, roughly eighty-eight responses. Factors which may have contributed to the low response rate of the TUCI project survey will be discussed in a separate section. However, it is important to note at this point that the data which was obtained through the survey cannot be presented as representative of any specific department, faculty, or Trent University as a whole, since the margin of error of the results is too great.

⁴ Frederick C. Van. Bennekom, *Customer Surveying: A Guidebook for Service Managers* (Customer Service Press: 2002) http://www.greatbrook.com/survey_accuracy.pdf

Though the original goal of the TUCI project – to determine how the community contexts of research, teaching, and learning were addressed by existing courses at Trent – has not been met, several of the survey respondents provided meaningful insights related to their own experiences including CBE content in their courses. The first four questions of the TUCI survey were designed to identify courses that contained a CBE component and establish its relative value compared to other course work. It was hoped that the responses to these first four questions would reveal broader

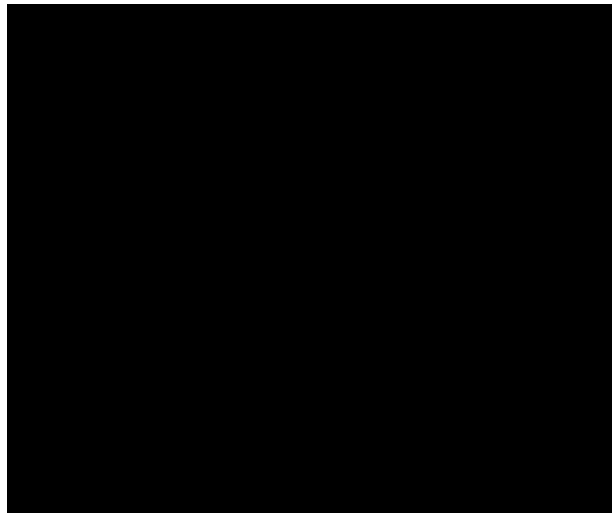
patterns about how CBE was being taught in courses at Trent, however due to the low response rate it is not possible to extrapolate the answers to any university wide patterns.



Twenty-one courses from six different disciplines were identified by survey respondents as addressing some aspect of CBE. In courses identified by the respondents as having a CBE assignment that was assigned a grade, the assignment was generally worth between 25 and 50 percent of the total course grade, see Chart 2. Only 4 out of 17 CBE assignments were listed as optional, and less than 25% of students chose to complete the optional assignment in 3 out of the 4 courses listed

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(between 25-50% of students chose to complete the assignment in the 4th course). In cases where the CBE component replaced another type of assignment or part of the course, the survey results indicate that it was generally a major section of the course, in one case replacing, “the research proposal, literature review, and primary research paper component of the course.”⁵ Therefore in the majority of courses identified as having a CBE component, the component was mandatory and formed a significant part of the total course grade. In cases where the CBE component was optional, it replaced a significant amount of other course work and was generally worth over 25% of the total course grade. Due to the low response rate of the survey overall it is not possible to hypothesis any departmental or university-wide trends from this data. While it is clear from the responses received that when CBE course content took the form of an assignment, it was generally worth a significant amount of the overall course grade, this may not be true at a university-wide level.



The information obtained from the first four questions of the TUCI survey has marginal value do the impossibility of generalizing these answers into trends. However, the last three questions that focused on determining the attitudes of faculty about CBE education did turn up useful results. Faculty identified a variety of different ways that CBE content was integrated into their courses and teaching. Due to ethical requirements that respondents remain anonymous, information about specific courses and identifying information about survey respondents must be omitted. In cases where specific answers are used, the respondent will be referred to by a three digit anonymous number.

⁵ Survey respondent 258, question 4.

In several of the responses to the fifth question on the TUCI survey, faculty identified the value of CBE course components as allowing students to link their theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Seven out of eleven respondents to the fifth question indicated that creating a link between theory and practice was one of the main reasons they chose to include a CBE component in their courses as in the words of respondent 722, “[CBE] is valuable because it demonstrates [sic] the intersection of theory, policy action and consequences = better pedagogy.”⁶ The importance of creating a link between the university and the broader community has been identified as a benefit of CBE by scholars in the field of CBE research. In the collection of articles about CBE titled, *Higher Education for the Public Good*, edited by Adrianna J. Kezar et. al. numerous authors argue that the fundamental purpose of post-secondary education is to serve the public good, and that the educational system is founded on the idea of a social charter between the university and society. Creating a link between the university and the community was identified by faculty respondents as a primary reason for including CBE in their teaching in question five. Allowing students to become involved in the community outside of the university and creating “a sense of interconnection with others”⁷ is a theme mentioned by several of the respondents, and relates to the idea present within CBE research of forging a connection between the community and the school.

The response to the sixth question asking professors to relate the types of feedback they have received from students about CBE work after the conclusion of courses was unanimously positive. Students had a positive experience completing CBE projects and found them to be both personally and educationally rewarding. Two common responses to this question were that students reported enjoying CBE projects as they provided both a practical application of their

⁶ Survey respondent 722, question 5.

⁷ Survey respondent 029, question 5.

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skills, and allowed them to engage in independent work. Several of the respondents wrote that students reported the experience of a CBE project changed their plans for future careers and that the opportunity to work independently was greatly beneficial for graduate school.⁸ No faculty reported specifically negative feedback from students participating in CBE activity, however two mentioned students having difficulties with effective time management of their projects.⁹

Several different barriers were identified by faculty preventing or limiting the inclusion of CBE components in their courses. The most common barrier indicated as a response to question seven was related to the logistics of CBE. Difficulties associated with the transportation of students to community placement locations were identified in four out of the twelve responses to question seven. Logistical problems relating to time management were also indicated in several of the responses. CBE projects were generally considered to be more work than traditional assignments for both the instructor and the student involved, and required both to possess good time management skills in order to avoid becoming overwhelmed.¹⁰ Logistical difficulties related to finding community partners for CBE projects were also listed by faculty as a barrier to providing CBE in their courses, as were the availability of TCCBE projects related to course content.¹¹ Two of the respondents to question seven indicated that a CBE specific course would be an asset for students participating in a CBE project. As several of the respondents indicated that the amount of work required on their part to administer and supervise a CBE project was a barrier to implementing CBE course content, the availability of a CBE course would remove a significant barrier preventing the inclusion of CBE content at Trent. One faculty member who had a large CBE component in her course wrote that:

⁸ Survey respondents, 258, 064, 584, question 6.

⁹ Survey respondents, 258, 029, question 6.

¹⁰ Survey respondents, 584, 112, 996, 064, question 7.

¹¹ Survey respondents, 497, 048, 258, question 7.

... by third or fourth year, [students] have not yet been adequately prepared for this type of project. i.e., they don't necessarily yet have the planning, research, project management skills. There was some really good work done, but it took a tremendous amount of extra time and support to help walk them through this. I think it would be good if they had a course earlier on in "Preparation for community research and practica" or something like that.¹²

Respondent 029 incorporated CBE content into her courses through assignments outside of TCCBE projects, therefore the creation of a CBE specific course would therefore be beneficial for students engaged both in formal research projects brokered by the TCCBE, and for students involved in CBE in other ways in their courses. As one of the possible future outcomes of the TUCI project is the creation of a CBE specific course created with the help of the TCCBE, respondent 029's answer provides some evidence indicating that such a course is necessary at Trent.

The eighth question of the TUCI survey asked faculty what would be their ideal use of CBE course content if resources were unlimited. Only four respondents answered question eight, and thus the discussion of the responses will be brief. The desire for access to modern technological resources to aid course material was mentioned by one of the respondents, and two indicated that splitting their classes would be beneficial as it would lower the student/teacher ratio.¹³ Respondent 064 wrote that allowing students to conduct CBE projects in Oshawa would

¹² Survey respondents, 029, question 7.

¹³ Survey respondents, 951, 996, question 8.

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be greatly beneficial for all parties involved. Invoking the idea of the social charter between the university and the community respondent 064 argued that:

What we offer in Peterborough ought to be offered in Oshawa in terms of provided Oshawa-area students with the same opportunities to conduct community-based research that is meaningful to the community. The community has wonderful resources in the way of museums, archives, etc., yet Trent is not actively accessing these, nor contributing to the community's learning/growth in the ways that universities do in university towns. In other words, Trent is neglecting community commitment in Oshawa, and in doing so is negligent in providing students with community-based learning experiences.¹⁴

The charge that Trent is not fulfilling its social obligation to the Oshawa community by not having a sister organization or branch of the TCCBE in Oshawa is an interesting criticism of CBE content offered at Trent. Ideally, Trent should be providing students with equal opportunity to engage in CBE projects at all of its campuses, as well as provide comparable benefits to all of the communities that support Trent campuses and students. While respondent 064 seems to be thinking of CBE course content primarily in terms of TCCBE research projects, it is clear that the Oshawa campus needs to be taken into account when discussing the extent of CBE course content at Trent University.

The final question of the TUCI survey asked if respondents had anything else that they wanted to say in regards to CBE education at Trent or the survey itself. The importance of Trent establishing and committing to CBE research within the Oshawa community was mentioned again by respondent 064, who indicated that Trent at Oshawa students need to “feel more like

¹⁴ Survey respondent 064, question 8.

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part of a 'real' university community.”¹⁵ Respondent 996 mentioned that in her understanding of CBE, any student project that reaches outside of the classroom is a community project.¹⁶

Respondent 112 wrote that there were problems with the survey but did not elaborate as to what they were, while respondent 258 re-expressed her commitment to the pedagogy of CBE and the value of TCCBE projects for students.¹⁷

Several of the respondents to the TUCI survey indicated that they incorporated CBE components into their course material in ways other than TCCBE projects. While TCCBE projects provide students with clearly valuable CBE experience, the survey results indicated that in 75% of courses that offered an optional CBE component, less than 25% of students chose to complete it. Many of the courses identified by faculty on the survey incorporated CBE content through community placements, either by conducting primary research within the community, or by providing services to community partners. Having community members and organizations give presentation within a course, as well as having students lead a seminar in a local school were also identified by respondents as ways that CBE was incorporated into courses.

The variety of different ways that CBE is incorporated into course content by professors, aside from offering the opportunity to complete a TCCBE project, was a useful discovery of the TUCI project survey. Furthermore, identifying barriers that faculty feel prevent them from expanding the usage of CBE content in their courses was also an important discovery made by the survey. While the low response rate diminished the usefulness of the TUCI project survey results for the first four questions, the information received regarding how CBE is incorporated into courses outside of TCCBE projects is highly beneficial, as is the identification of barriers regarding CBE content. It is clear that the majority of faculty who responded to the survey did so

¹⁵ Survey respondent 064, question 9.

¹⁶ Survey respondents 996, question 9.

¹⁷ Survey respondents, 112, 258, question 9.

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because they are committed to the pedagogy of CBE and believe that it is greatly beneficial for their students. Those who took the time to answer the TUCI project survey were those faculty members who are strongly committed to CBE, and their identification by the TUCI project is an important side benefit for the TCCBE. While the TUCI project survey did discover a significant amount of important information related to the teaching and inclusion of CBE content in the courses taught at Trent, the response rate to the survey was much lower than expected. Possible reasons why the survey failed to generate much interest amongst faculty will be discussed in the following section, as will recommendations for future research projects undertaken by the TCCBE.

Discussion of the survey results:

The unexpectedly low response rate to the TUCI project survey has already been mentioned numerous times in this report. As the original goal of the TUCI project has not been met due to the low response rate, it is important to examine factors which may have stopped faculty from responding to the survey in order that future TCCBE student researchers can avoid making similar errors when designing and conducting their research.

One of the first issues which may have led to the lower than expected response rate was that the original project goal was too ambitious and expectations were unreasonable. It may have been unrealistic to expect that it was possible to survey the entire faculty at Trent in only one year and obtain sufficient and meaningful data. There were several important considerations that had to be kept in mind when choosing and designing the research method for the project that were based on the stipulations of the project goal. Since all Trent faculty needed to be included

in the research sample, conducting interviews or focus groups would not have been possible due to the time commitment required. Therefore a survey was the only viable method for contacting all Trent faculty members within the timeframe of the project. However, it is clear that a survey was a poor choice of research tool for the TUCI project as it failed to generate sufficient interest amongst faculty. Instead of focusing on all of the faculty and courses at Trent, the TUCI project could have been broken up into either several separate projects, or one multi-year project, that each targeted specific departments or disciplines. Targeting specific departments would render research methods such as focus groups or interviews viable, and would also allow more in depth research to take place. Limiting the focus of the TUCI project to one or several departments at a time would also allow the researcher to promote the project within the department by perhaps scheduling time to introduce the project at a departmental meeting, or by enlisting the support of the departmental Chair in promoting the project to faculty. Having personal contact with faculty would probably be greatly beneficial for the project, as faculty would be more inclined to help a student by participating in a research project when they have some form of personal connection. The impersonal nature of the online TUCI project survey probably hurt the response rate as faculty would feel no real obligation to complete it. One of the traditional barriers to CBE within the university has been that community engaged research and teaching is not recognized as academic work that counts towards promotion or tenure.¹⁸ Therefore, faculty are not personally invested in CBE and would not feel obliged to respond to a survey about CBE from a student they do not know. Making an effort to establish some form of personal contact with respondents may be beneficial for future students engaged in similar research projects on behalf of the TCCBE.

¹⁸ Karen Casey McKnight, et al. eds. Advancing Knowledge in Service-Learning: Research to Transform the Field. Greenwich: Information Age, 2005.

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As well as having some kind of personal contact with faculty, actively promoting the TUCI project may also have resulted in a higher response rate as it would have increased the awareness of faculty about the project. Asking Dr. Jocelyn B. Aubrey to provide an introductory email for the TUCI project survey was the only promotion made of the TUCI project and was clearly not adequate. Making faculty aware of the TUCI project through means other than an introductory email would no doubt increase the response rate. Sending an email early in the year to tell faculty that a research project investigating CBE content in Trent courses was taking place, and making them aware that they will be asked to complete a survey as part of the project later in the year, may also have helped increase the response rate. Similarly, sending out reminder emails during the response period and perhaps sending physical notices through departmental mail are both ideas which may be considered for future projects. There is however, a risk of alienating faculty through excessive promotion of the project and if overdone, could do more harm than good.

Expanding the scope of future related projects may also be beneficial, as part of the purpose of community based education is to involve the university with the community. The TUCI project was focused entirely within the community of university faculty. However, the university is comprised of numerous different groups, of whom faculty are only a part. Surveying non-faculty members about their views on the state of CBE content in Trent courses may have provided a better overall picture of CBE at Trent. Future projects could examine student opinion about CBE within the university, and also include the opinions of administrative and support staff as well. Peterborough community members and organizations could also be contacted as they form the other half of TCCBE projects that were not represented in the TUCI project. As recommended by one of the TUCI project survey respondents, Trent at Oshawa students and

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faculty should also be included as a separate group for future research. The Oshawa Trent campus represents a unique opportunity for CBE that needs to be acknowledged in a related research project.

The choice was made to administer the survey online due to the ease of distribution through email, and the simplicity of result collection. However, there were several problems with using the internet to administer the TUCI project survey which only became apparent after the collection and analysis of the data. The most significant problem created by administering the survey online relates to the way it was distributed. A link to the survey website address was included at the bottom of the introductory email written by Dr. Aubrey that faculty had to follow in order to participate in the project. Since faculty receive hundreds of emails weekly, it would be relatively easy for them to ignore or forget about the survey link sent to them, especially since no reminder emails were sent out during the three week response period. A second problem with administering the survey online was that the design of the survey was limited by the capabilities of the program provided by the online survey company—SurveyMonkey. The SurveyMonkey design software was geared more towards a multiple choice style of survey, while the questions that were developed for the TUCI project survey mostly required short written answers. A further problem with the SurveyMonkey system is related to the ethics approval process.

Currently neither the Political Studies department nor the Trent University Tri-Council ethics review board have a system in place for approving online research or provide informed consent forms for online surveys. SurveyMonkey itself also does not provide any kind of informed consent protocol for its surveys and it was therefore necessary to try and recreate the paper version of a Trent Tri-Council informed consent form online. The resulting informed consent section of the survey was confusing and took an inordinate amount of time for

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respondents to complete. The fact that 35% of faculty who began the survey quit after viewing the informed consent page clearly indicates that it acted as a major barrier and lowered the response rate. A further ethical problem with the SurveyMonkey system is related to anonymity. According to the Tri-Council ethical research guidelines which were being adhered to by the TUCI project; survey respondents needed to be given the option to complete the survey anonymously. However, SurveyMonkey recorded the IP address of everyone who opened the survey link, regardless of whether or not they consented to completing the survey on the included consent form. There was no way to disable this feature while creating the survey, however it was not realized until after the survey results had been collected that the IP addresses were recorded. A final ethical issue related to SurveyMonkey that was discovered after the completion of the survey was that since its computer servers are located in the United States, theoretically the Patriot Act would allow the U.S. government to seize the survey data. Though this event is extremely unlikely, it does mean that no true anonymity can be guaranteed for respondents of a survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. It is clear that any future research project that wants to use an online survey as the research tool needs to conduct extensive research relating to the ethical issues surrounding online research. As Trent has no internal means of hosting online surveys, it is necessary to purchase the service from a third party company or to develop it oneself. The creation of a protocol for granting ethics approval for online research and the creation of an internet specific informed consent form, would have greatly helped the TUCI project survey and hopefully will be created by the Trent Tri-Council ethics review board in the future.

Conclusion:

The results of the Trent University Course Inventory Project are mixed. While the low response rate to the online survey prohibited the original project goal from being fulfilled, the information gathered was useful in numerous other ways. Identifying which faculty at Trent are interested in CBE, as well as how they incorporate CBE into their courses, were both important discoveries made by the TUCI project. Discovering what barriers exist within the university that affect the teaching of CBE was beneficial, as was the discovery of what faculty view as the ideal place of CBE within their courses. A secondary benefit of the TUCI project relates to the long-term goal of the TCCBE to offer a CBE focused course at Trent. The results of the TUCI project survey indicate that several faculty are interested in the development of such a course and would presumably be willing to support any efforts by the TCCBE to create one. Furthermore, some of the difficulties faced by faculty teaching CBE content, or supervising TCCBE projects, that were identified on the survey would be ameliorated with the availability of a CBE course as it would take some of the pressure and workload off of faculty and ease the process of conducting CBE research for students.

The TUCI project was also valuable in that it identified many barriers that prevent large scale internet based research projects from being successful. The problems created by the choice to conduct the TUCI project survey over the internet are important to note, as they apply to any type of similar research project utilising web-based surveys. The difficulties related to ethics, both the creation of acceptable informed consent on the survey and the problems with guaranteeing anonymity, are relevant to any web-based surveying being conducted by students. Students whose research projects involve faculty as subjects would be advised to try and create some form of personal connection with faculty over the course of the project in order to increase interest and response rate. Limiting the scope of future projects to only one or several

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departments may be useful in this regard, as conducting a university wide survey in one year may not have been a feasible or realistic objective. It is also clear that sending reminders and engaging in some kind of project promotion would probably also increase the response rate. Thus, while the TUCI project did not manage to comprehensively survey current and ‘on the horizon’ academic courses at Trent that address the community contexts of research, teaching, and learning, the project did discover other important aspects of community based education within the university, as well as identify barriers specific to online research that need to be overcome in future projects.

Bibliography:

- Kezar, Adrianna J., Tony C. Chambers, and John C. Burkhardt, eds. *Higher Education for the Public Good: Emerging Voices From a National Movement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
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Appendix A:

Trent University Course Inventory project survey questions:

1. For each of the courses that you teach, is there a component of the curriculum that addresses the theoretical and/or practical community contexts of research, teaching and learning? If so, please list each course code and briefly describe the relevant component. (you may want to jot down corresponding course #'s for reference throughout the survey)
2. Is a grade assigned for the above described component(s)? If so, what percentage of the total course grade is it worth?
3. Is the relevant component an optional part of your course?
 - a. If the relevant component is optional, roughly what percentage of students choose to complete it?
4. Does the course component replace another part of your course? If so, what does it replace?
5. If you do teach a course with a component that addresses the community context of research, teaching, or learning: why do you include/offer it?
 - a. From a personal perspective?
 - b. From a departmental perspective?
6. What feedback from students have you received after the course or assignment was completed? (i.e. not from course evaluations, but later on)

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7. What are the barriers to offering this kind of course or assignment? (e.g. curriculum, pedagogical , promotional, political, financial and logistical considerations)
8. If you had unlimited resources, what would be your ideal course or assignment related to the theoretical and/or practical community contexts of research, teaching and learning?
9. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Appendix B:

Invitation sent by Dr. Jocelyn B. Aubrey to participate in the TUCI project:

Dear Trent faculty,

This is an invitation to participate in an important research project investigating the community contexts of research, teaching and learning in academic courses at Trent University. The principal investigator for this project is Ned Struthers, a politics student who is conducting this project for academic credit on behalf of the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE) and a Project Advisory Group consisting of faculty at Trent University and community members at-large from Peterborough and Haliburton Counties.

The rationale for this project stems from a strategic planning process undertaken by TCCBE that has identified better preparation for students participating in community-based projects as an important goal. A first step in the process to reach that goal is to compile an inventory of current and proposed academic courses at Trent that include theoretical and practical content related to the community contexts of research, teaching and learning.

At the end of this letter of introduction is the weblink to a brief backgrounder about the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education, a research participant consent form, and a short questionnaire related to the courses you teach.

The findings from this research project will provide a valuable summary of how Trent faculty are creating academic opportunities for students to engage in and learn about community-based work. Your support in completing the survey is appreciated. Please complete the survey by Friday, March 7th.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me at jaubrey@trentu.ca or Ned Struthers, principal investigator, at edwardstruthers@trentu.ca .

Survey link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=XdpBYwSmjSntKDoRR5ugw_3d_3d

Regards,

Josie

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