



TRI-COLLEGE UNIVERSITY

Brief Timeline of the History of Tri-College University

Concordia College, Minnesota State University Moorhead, and North Dakota State University came together in the late 1960s to form Tri-College University (TCU). The partnership was created to allow students from one university to attend classes at the other two, with no additional tuition or fees. Through TCU, the partner institutions offer a variety of collaborative programs, courses, and services -- the course exchange, free use of library facilities on all partner campuses, free parking on all partner campuses (with valid parking pass from home campus), and several cooperative student organizations and events. Tri-College University has been incorporated since 1970.

On July 1, 2020, Minnesota State Community and Technical College (M State) and North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) were brought in to expand the partnership to provide more opportunities to students, faculty, staff and administrators. The partnership boasts more than 35,000 full and part-time students.

The 1960's

1962

The informal F-M Common Market in education is created.

1965 & 1969

Legislation authorizing formal cooperative relationships across state lines passes in Minnesota (Senators William Dosland and Douglas Sillers) and North Dakota (via George A. Sinner of the ND Board of Higher Education).

1968-1970

The TCU committee meets regularly – chaired by George A. Sinner, then member of the North Dakota Board of Higher Education who led the effort in North Dakota.

1969

The Hill Family Foundation (now the Northwest Area Foundation) provides a \$70,000 grant for initial support of the provost position.

The 1970's

1970

Articles of incorporation establishing TCU as a North Dakota non-profit educational corporation are filed.

1971

- The Bush Foundation grants \$94,000 to enhance the TCU library cooperation.
- The first edition of TRICE, the official newsprint publication of Tri-College University is produced.

1972

The National Endowment for the Humanities grants \$400,000 to establish the TCU Humanities Forum.

1972-1994

The TCU Center for Environmental Studies is founded and operates for 22 years. It brings in more than \$500,000 in grant funds.

1972

The TCU Women's Bureau is formed (becoming Tri-College Women United in 1986).

1974

- Agreements covering the course exchange and covered programs are negotiated.
- The TCU film library is established.

1976

- The TCU History Lectureship is established.
- TCU by-laws are drafted and amended

1977

North Central Association (NCA) accreditation is granted to the Tri-College Consortium in 1977; National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation is subsequently granted in 1989.

1978

The first TCU Catalog is published.

1978-85

The Prairie Writing Project is established.

The 1980's

1983

An economic impact study is completed showing that the institutions have a combined impact of \$330,252,513.

1985

A joint (CC and NDSU) nursing program is established.

1987

The first annual Rotary/TCU Welcome Picnic is held for international students.

1987

The first TCU Graduate School Information Day is held.

1988

- An economic impact study is completed showing that the institutions have a combined impact of \$610,935,083.
- The first Tri-College Career Fair is held.
- The first Tri-College Pow Wow is held.

The 1990's

1990

The Third World Studies Committee is established (becoming the World Studies Committee in 1994).

1991

William M. Jones authors "A Brief History of Tri-College University." The 46-page booklet documents many events of significance during Tri-Colleges' first 21 years.

1992

- The TCU Technology Committee is formed.
- NDSU and all NDUS institutions shift to semesters (which impacts TCU cross registration).

1993

The TCU Chapter of the Fulbright Association is established.

1995

- MSU (now MSUM) shifts to semesters, restoring the Tri-College common calendar.
- The Nursing program is re-accredited by the National League for Nursing (NLN) for a 10-year period.

1995

- TCU celebrates its 25th anniversary, with almost 30,000 students having taken more than 90,000 courses through the TCU course exchange since its inception. The commemorative poster created for the event is widely distributed on the campuses and in the community.
- Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks appears at the Concordia, MSUM, and NDSU campuses. The project is supported by a \$6,000 grant from the North Dakota Humanities Council.
- In a joint session with the TCU Commissioners, the TCU Board of Directors develops strategic goals for Tri-College University.

1996

- Education Administration title changed to Educational Leadership with degree granting authority at MSUM and NDSU.
- Formal NCA accreditation of TCU ceases (effective June 30th), with the TCU Education Administration program degrees to be conferred by MSUM and NDSU.

1996-97

“Plains: Take One, Two and Three” exhibits are held at MSUM, NDSU and Concordia College respectively.

1997

- The Education Leadership program completes and satisfies NCA, NCATE and state reviews on the MSUM and NDSU campuses.
- TCU assessments are standardized on the basis of a 50/50 basic/supplemental (based on enrollment) split.
- A TCU dedicated T-1 fiber optic line is established.

1998

- TCU hosts the Small College Computing Conference.
- A Fargo-Moorhead/Tri-College University brochure targeting the recruitment of Twin Cities students is produced, to be used by the three Admissions Offices as a compliment to their own recruiting materials.

1999

- The first TCU/Hedmark summer course on Norwegian culture, language, natural resources and society is held at Evenstad, Norway.
- “Best Practices in Higher Education Consortia: How Institutions Can Work Together” is co-edited by TCU Provost Jean Strandness. She also authors a chapter on Tri-College University cross registration and joint programs.

A New Century – The 2000's

2002

Lech Walesa, former Polish president, Nobel Laureate for peace and holder of thirty honorary degrees from various American universities, is the featured speaker at the Tri-College Human Rights Conference held at MSUM.

2003-2004

Total head count of students enrolled in the course exchange exceeds 40,000 students.

2004

The Governor George Sinner Public Policy Symposium is initiated (three-year program) in honor of founding TCU Board member George Sinner and his 35 years of service on the board.

2006

- Students from each campus compete for scholarships based on their speech on the topic of substance abuse for the Third Annual Governor George Sinner Public Policy Symposium.
- A flood forecasting tool is launched by the International Water Institute, NOAA and other partners to help mitigate flooding in the Red River Valley.

2007

- An economic impact study completed with a grant from the Greater Fargo-Moorhead Economic Development shows that the three institutions have a combined economic impact of \$1.22 billion (using data from 2005-2006).
- During their final year of operation, the Tri-College University Graduate Nursing Program receives the STAR Award from the Dakota Medical Foundation. After 2007 each campus is responsible for supporting their campus nursing program as they deem appropriate and will continue to use the course exchange program to deliver classes.
- Tri-College University holds a student art competition at each campus with winning pieces displayed in the TCU office. Winning students from each campus are presented with a cash award. Pieces are also used for promotional and marketing materials for Tri-College.
- Through the 36-year history of Tri-College, students have taken more than 108,500 courses.
- TCU people, programs and educational efforts appeared on the front page of the Forum of Fargo-Moorhead nine times and on the cover of regional papers six times. Stories about our people, programs and educational efforts appeared in 20 print stories during the year, including USA Today and the Chronicle of Higher Education.

- Awareness of TCU programs is enhanced with a one-year Program Outreach Series. Collaborative recruitment efforts are undertaken. Data shows that approximately 5% of the undergraduate students at each campus use the course exchange program.

2008

- Funding for the \$5 million LiDAR surface mapping project is announced by the TCU International Water Institute. The project is the largest financial project in the history of Tri-College University and covers more than 40,000 square miles in North Dakota and Minnesota.
- TCU Collaborative grants are awarded to encourage greater collaboration between campuses and to increase efficiency and enhance progress. The Forum of Fargo Moorhead give a “Prairie Rose” to Tri-College and related supporters for their collaborative recruitment efforts.
- The TCU International Water Institute receives \$5 million in grants and appropriations from 14 funding partners for a LiDAR mapping project. This is the largest project in Tri-College University history.
- Tri-College University and the NEW Leadership program received the YWCA “Business or Organization that Empowers Women” award.

2009

- TCU International Water Institute/LiDar topographical data plays a major role in the flood response efforts to the historic 2009 Red River flood. The LiDar mapping project is awarded an additional \$750,000 in federal funds.
- Total external monies and in-kind donations exceeded \$303,000/FTE for the year.
- All exchange agreements are codified into one document that was signed by campus presidents. All Educational Leadership materials are electronically archived.
- TCU Provost participated as one of a select group of 42 people from across the country in the Global Education Competitiveness Summit at the Press Club in Washington, DC.
- TCU, The Greater FM EDC and campus partners' team up to produce an award-winning brochure aimed at recruiting students. It highlights quality of place issues in the Fargo-Moorhead area.

The 2010's

2010

- Tri-College University celebrates its 40th Anniversary.
- TCU reports a very healthy level of external funding per FTE (including admin and support staff). From the period 2007-2010 TCU averages \$265,250/FTE in external funding (grants, donations, in kind donations and appropriations) for the three-year rolling average/year.
- More than 45,000 students have taken more than 111,000 courses in the first 40 years of Tri-College University.
- NEW Leadership Development was adopted as a new program of Tri-College University. The Tri-College NEW (National Education for Women's) Leadership Development Institute is a five-day residential program.

2011

- Tri-College University launches a first-in-the nation undergraduate minor program in vaccinology which is created in response to a study undertaken by the Greater Fargo-Moorhead EDC showing great potential for the vaccine industry in the Red River Valley and FM Metro area. The press conference and program announcement is reported in more than 60 publications or media outlets from coast to coast.
- Sanford Medical donates \$150,000 to establish the Sanford Tri-College Vaccinology Professorship Endowment. This is the first endowment in TCU history and it helps leverage \$50,000 in matching funds. In addition, 36 scholarships are awarded through Tri-College with the support of various business and individual donors.
- Educational Leadership students are again eligible for scholarships that have been created by the State of North Dakota. Total funds secured for the program to date is \$300,000.

2012

- A total of \$325,482.18 is raised to set up the first two endowments at Tri-College. The endowments help campus partners cope with challenging financial times.
- Tri-College ROTC programs earned national attention as: ranking in the top 10% in the nation, 3rd Best ROTC program in the 3rd ROTC BDE, and 2LT Cory Arnold (MSUM) ranked 18th in the Nation (out of 5,650 people).
- Provost Tim Flakoll serves as Grand Marshall of the Xcel Energy Downtown Holiday Lights parade – and was joined by campus mascots Kernel (Concordia), Scorch (MSUM) and Thundar (NDSU) before 20,000 attendees.

2013

- The Educational Leadership Program exceeds 300 students and both MSUM and NDSU have full and complete programs which allow each college to deliver stand-alone programs.
- Course exchange program participants are limited to one course per student per partner campus per term.
- A survey of students conducted on campuses reveals that: 100% of students surveyed who used the course exchange were either satisfied, very satisfied or extremely satisfied, 93.9% of the students surveyed had knowledge of Tri-College University and 12.2% of the students surveyed had taken a course through the Tri-College University course exchange program.
- Provost Tim Flakoll is awarded the 2013 “Student Advocate of the Year award” from the North Dakota Student Association, an organization representing nearly 50,000 college students in the state.
- The Harvard Alumni News wrote in June, 2013: “Senator Tim Flakoll is a 2011 alum of Creating Collaborative Solutions (CCS). Flakoll was recently honored with the 2013 Advocate of the Year by the North Dakota Student Association for his work on the state-wide educational reform bill, SB 2200. The origins on this bill partly resulted from a team project in CCS whereby the group was tasked with finding new method of funding higher education in North Dakota. Flakoll returned to his state and applied the knowledge gained to become both the producer and primary sponsor of the bill. The lessons learned in public value, shared ownership and navigating the rough path to progress helped Flakoll push through this landmark legislation.”

2014

- In order to help promote TCU options to students, a TCU Student Ambassador program is launched. These Ambassadors help advise student related activities and provide peer to peer contacts.
- Collaborative grants are used to sponsor the Tri-College Art Boom faculty art show. The exhibition is the first major show to bring together the work of the schools' 24 full time faculty.

2014-2015

- Provost Tim Flakoll is elected as Chair of the Council of State Governments Midwestern Legislative Conference. The organization is comprised of eleven-member states and four Canadian Provinces totaling more than 80 million people. The annual meeting is hosted in Bismarck, ND and features Astronaut Buzz Aldrin and North Dakota native and Concordia Alum Clint Hill.
- Flakoll receives space memorabilia from Apollo 11 including autographed items and a pin from Buzz Aldrin containing metal from the lunar moon module. These items are donated to the Department of Physics and Astronomy at MSUM.

- Flakoll is recognized in 2016-2017 Harvard Kennedy School Alumni Newsletter for his successful work with the Council of State Governments (Winter 2016-2017 publication).

2015

- The TCU Commissioners recommend to the TCU Board of Directors that Minnesota State Community and Technical College (M State) lead by President Peggy Kennedy and North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) lead by President John Richman become Tri-College University Partners. The Tri-College Board of Directors includes Concordia President William Craft (Chair), MSUM President Anne Blackhurst and NDSU President Dean L. Bresciani and citizen board members Paul Marquart, Pam Astrup, Deb Knutson, Mark Nisbet and Paul Richard. The TCU Commissioners include Michelle Malott, Eric Eliason, Beth Ingram and TCU Provost Tim Flakoll. The partnership includes more than 35,000 students across the five institutions.
- The collaborative effort to expand TCU earns a Prairie Rose award from *The Forum of Fargo Moorhead*. The Forum writes that the new partnership "would be a win for the students, campuses and community."
- TCU leads efforts to produce a youth activity and coloring books to promote educational and fun activities for kids. There are 50,000 copies distributed and three print runs through 2022.
- TCU provides collaborative grant funds to help launch the Great Ride Bike Share program.
- Tri-College University Libraries are selected in a competitive grant process to host a workshop on issues related to scholarly communication and the role of the academic library presented by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). Tri-College is among four institutions around the country chosen by ACRL as "roadshow sites." Regionally, there are participants from 11 institutions.
- TCU Endowments grow to more than \$400,000, an increase of 23% in the first 30 months of the program.
- Provost Tim Flakoll participates in an education leader's conference at the White House.

2016

- Provost Tim Flakoll is awarded the NDSU Blue Key Doctor of Service Award for his body of work in education and service over a forty-year span. Campus presidents and TCU board members attend the dinner held in his honor.
- An inaugural Bridge Bash is hosted in the downtown area on the Veteran's Memorial Bridge between Fargo and Moorhead. The event welcomes back students with live music, games, informational tables and great food trucks.

2017

The NEW Leadership Institute program is transferred from TCU to MSUM.

2017-2018

Provost Tim Flakoll is elected to Chair the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). This organization is comprised of twelve-member states with 4.2 million college students in attendance within their states. Like TCU, MEHC is an organization dedicated to improving the quality and efficiency of higher education.

2018

- Tri-College surpasses 50,000 student participants since the inception of the course exchange program.
- Tri-College Presidents and Sanford leadership announce a partnership for a shared medical simulation center. A 17,000 sf \$5,000,000 facility at Sanford Broadway in Fargo is scheduled to open in 2020.
- The TCU program *Walk into My Future* (formerly Seeds of Hope) is launched to expose K-5 graders to a higher education environment with hands on activities. The first inaugural event with 1200 kids is held at NDSU in August, 2018. About 40 booths are sponsored by the campus partners. As part of the program, kids are given campus tours to expose them to college life. With fundraising and a grant secured by the Fargo Public Schools Foundation, there is no cost to the campuses or the kids.
- A new developed data set/formula revealed that \$266 million has been saved to date by students and their families due to the course exchange program from inception through July 1, 2018 (in 2018 dollars).

2019

- The 2nd *Walk into My Future* is held at M State on July 22, 2019 with more than 50 booths.
- TCU uses social media to make a dramatic entrance into social media (primarily Facebook) marketing and instruction through a six-part series on “How to get that first great job.” The series incorporates nationally recognized HR Senior Leader Sharon Miller. More than 75,000 people see the video and over 1,200 post engagements share the message and show support. (Engagements note any action taken by someone for the post. Common examples are “likes, comments and shares.” Engagements also help because they help and extend organic (non-paid) reach.)
- The Commissioners and Presidents approve adding language to affirm the current practice of students taking online undergraduate courses through the TCU Exchange and Cooperative Agreement. The addition is to Section II B as follows. “Students may take undergraduate online courses except for specific courses that are campus designated as not eligible. Space availability restrictions apply to all courses.”

- *TCU Financial Policies and Procedures Guidelines* is presented by Accountant Donna Kristianson and approved. A TCU Commissioner Roles and Responsibilities document is developed and approved by TCU staff and Commissioners.

The 2020's

2020

- On July 1, 2020 Minnesota State Community and Technical College (M State) and North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) become full members of Tri-College University.
- Tri-College initiates a “Reading for Recovery” program and collect donations of more than 2,500 books in two months from eleven states. Select donations are from the Library of Congress via Congressman Kelly Armstrong and from North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum. Books are donated to the libraries of county jails.

2020-2023

Tri-College partners work to overcome the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2019 decision to allow course exchange students to take online courses is critical during the pandemic. Tri-College ramps up emphasis on influencer and social media strategies to promote the course exchange.

2023

- To date, more than \$300 million has been saved by students and their families due to the TCU Course Exchange program (2023 dollars).
- “Walk into my Future” resumes at MSUM after being paused due to the Covid pandemic.

Tri-College University Provosts

1968-1977	Albert Anderson
1977-1986	John McCunn
1984-1985	Andrew Keogh (1-year interim)
1986-1990	Marcia Kierscht
1991	William M. Jones (6-month interim)
1991-1994	William C. Nelson
1994	William M. Jones (5-month interim)
Dec. 1994 – June 2000	Jean Strandness
July 2000 – June 2005	Nathan Davis
Aug. 2005 – Feb. 2006	Susanne Williams (7-month interim)
Feb. 2006 – present	Tim Flakoll*

*Currently the longest serving Provost in the history of Tri-College University

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