Slaloming to Freedom: Using the Apparatus of Disciplinary to Achieve Interdisciplinary Goals

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Slaloming to Freedom: Using the Apparatus of Disciplinarity to Achieve Interdisciplinary Goals.

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Using the theoretical work of Julie Klein and Allen Repko as a frame, this presentation will discuss the audience, purpose, and context of the Thompson Rivers University Interdisciplinary Studies (TRU IS) program. While the program hosts students from diverse backgrounds with unique outputs, it seems uniquely positioned to cater to the interests of students who seek to work in what have commonly been categorized as “tourism” projects.

First, I will outline the initial vision and evolution of the TRU IS program from a straightforward “Arts Honours” conceptualization to the pan-university opportunity it is now. I will discuss the ways that the traditional university governance system has attempted to control and squelch interdisciplinary growth and make it handmaiden to disciplinary concerns. I will also discuss the strategies used to avoid this constant trap.

The project will then discuss the ways the program seeks to use the existing disciplinary engine of the traditional university as a means by which students are driven to delve into various topics and methods, while at the same time pairing them with established interdisciplinary scholars to synthesize and create holistic approaches to complex, real-world problems.

I will then present several cases of students who have had success with this model of learning and produced impressive and in some cases ground-breaking scholarship.