

## TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

### Community Covenant Agreement

#### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Why does TWU have a Community Covenant Agreement?**

TWU maintains a Community Covenant Agreement that supports the essence and ends of Trinity Western University, making clear the organization's commitment to being a unique and particular Christian university, providing students, employees and affiliates with clear expectations of working, living and learning within a faith community, and promoting an engaged and integrated campus community environment that optimizes whole person development.

#### **Who initiated the change from the Responsibilities of Membership to a Community Covenant?**

TWU's original Responsibilities of Members statement was authored in 1975, later to be known as TWU's Community Standards and once again as TWU's Responsibilities of Membership Agreement. On July 1, 2008, Dr. Jonathan Raymond charged the TWU community and more directly, the Provost, with the task of facilitating a year long process by which a recommendation would be made by the Provost to the President on a new or revised Community Covenant Agreement. The charge came shortly after a series of internal consultations, including a research project/report on student awareness, observance and support of TWU's existing Responsibilities of Membership Agreement, and external meet and greets with the newly appointed President.

#### **What process was established to review TWU's Responsibilities of Membership and develop a new Community Covenant Agreement?**

Over the summer of 2008, research and a series of guiding documents were collected. In September, a Community Covenant Editing Committee (CCEC) was established consisting of two undergraduate faculty members, one graduate faculty members, two undergraduate students, one graduate student, two representatives from Student Life and a member of the Provost Office. The CCEC met weekly for almost four months, orienting themselves to the research and guiding documents and writing a comprehensive response to Dr. Raymond's charge. A draft copy of the Community Covenant was completed in February and presented to internal and external stakeholders for awareness and feedback. Many suggestions were considered and integrated into the final document prior to legal review and University Policy Council's final approval.

#### **What about legal issues? Did they play a role in these changes?**

No, legal issues were not the cause for these changes, though legal council was apprised and approving of the final Community Covenant Agreement.

#### **What are the main differences between the new Community Covenant and the old Responsibilities of Membership Agreements?**

The Community Covenant is a complete rewrite of the Responsibilities of Membership Agreement, highlighting the social, spiritual and intellectual nature of TWU. The Community Covenant further articulates TWU's identity, community values and intended outcomes in a new and more affirming way and provides student, staff, faculty and affiliate members with clear expectations, including a number of new freedoms and corresponding

responsibilities. The changes represent a synthesis of thought and belief that will serve to bring TWU's practices into greater legal and moral alignment with institutional and members' values while providing a positive affirmation of what it means to be a godly Christian university community.

### **A prohibition against alcohol and tobacco has been a part of Trinity Western from its inception. Why this change?**

For several reasons. Many Canadian evangelical and Christian higher educational contexts have moved away from prohibition stances on these issues, as the Bible allows for the enjoyment of alcohol in moderation and has no direct instruction regarding the use of tobacco. 70% of TWU's student body expressed the desire to have the prohibition of alcohol removed in a fall 2007 student survey and 91% of the internal and external stakeholders providing feedback to the new Community Covenant Agreement in the spring of 2009 were in favour of the changes being proposed. Under the new Community Covenant, members of the TWU community must continue to voluntarily abstain from drunkenness, under-age (19) consumption of alcohol, the use or possession of alcohol on campus or at any TWU sponsored event (broadly defined) and the use of tobacco on campus or at any TWU sponsored event. When and where permitted, the Community Covenant repeatedly calls for temperance and TWU continues to reserve the right to question, challenge or discipline any member in response to actions that impact one's personal or another's social welfare.

### **What's next? Are there more changes to come?**

TWU today exists in a different world from 1962 or even 1985 when TWU became a full degree granting university. In the light of our present and future environment, the leadership of TWU must constantly ask, "What does it mean for TWU, as a Christian academic community, to develop people of character and competence who distinguish themselves as exemplary leaders in the marketplaces of life"? As administrative policy, the Community Covenant will be reviewed after one year of implementation and every three years thereafter. More changes are not anticipated at this time.