Strategic Research Plan 2012-2017

Art, design, and media research are intrinsically of significant value to the world, as well as in applied contexts and in partnership with other disciplines. Artists, designers, and media researchers have long undertaken practice-based research; their work increasingly receives recognition for fostering creativity, imagination, discovery, and ultimately, innovation. Art, design, and media research matter, because it adds a dimension of fulfillment and personal enrichment, but also because it changes the way we look at the world.

Art, design, and media research form the foundation for the University of Imagination and play a seminal role in today's economy. Creative industries make increasingly significant contributions to innovation, well-being, productivity, and employment[1].   OCAD U's research provides a fruitful basis for partnerships with private and public sector partners, including government, industry, and commerce.

Engaging in transformative research and innovation is therefore an integral part of OCAD University's vision while high quality, diverse research practices, undertaken with extensive outreach and partnerships, constitute a corner stone of the University of Imagination's mission statement. OCAD University is poised to lead in developing the practice, methodology, and understanding of practice-based research. In addition, the university continues to support more traditional forms of scholarship and research in the social sciences and humanities as well as in science and engineering.

Since its previous Strategic Research Plan 2006-2012, OCAD U's research activities have significantly expanded. In 2010—for the first time—OCAD U earned a place among Canada's top 50 research universities. Indeed, according to the 2010 Research Infosource Report, Canada's University Innovation Leaders: Canada's Top 50 Research Universities, OCAD U ranks among the top two dozen institutions in terms of research intensity expressed as research dollars per full-time faculty member. Furthermore, OCAD U expects to engage in a growing range of international research opportunities over the next five years.

In order to build on this progress, OCAD U faculty members employ art and design methodologies and technologies as a lens to focus their interrelated areas of research. The diverse range of research projects being undertaken, with a broad range of external partnerships and granting bodies, invigorates OCAD U's labs, studios, and classrooms. In addition, intensified incubation and

[1] See, David Hesmondhalgh (2002), The Cultural Industries, SAGE; John Howkins (2001), The Creative Economy: How People Make Money From Ideas, Penguin; or Richard Florida (2005), Cities and the Creative Class, Routledge.

commercialization activities offer support for students as well as faculty and with outcomes that benefit a wide range of communities.

While the Strategic Research Plan identifies eight distinct priority areas, we expect that research initiatives will often focus on innovation across multiple sectors of creative practice.

1. Healthy and Inclusive Environments
OCAD University faculty members participate in and lead trans-disciplinary explorations in diverse areas of healthy and inclusive environments. Identified areas of research include:

- •Healthcare Design – the design of clinical, acute, restorative, and palliative healthcare environments, products, and systems;
- •Healthy Environment design – the design of built environments and products aimed at addressing physical and mental community and individual health through health promotion and disease prevention;
- •Inclusive Design – the design of physical and virtual environments that function inclusive of the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference;
- •Ambient Experience - the design of the comprehensive healthcare experience to address the physical and emotional needs of individuals within an advanced technological and healthy environmental setting; and
- •Healthcare and Visual Art – Improving patient experience and outcomes through art making, collaborative art projects and interaction, including new media and assistive technologies that integrate art with scientific inquiries.

2. Sustainable Futures
OCAD U faculty conduct research and provide leadership in the reconciliation of environmental, social, and economic demands within our natural and built environments. Identified areas of research include:
- •Urban Ecology – Interdisciplinary research and design focused on the relationship of natural systems and the built environment with emphasis on the links between the City as an ecosystem and as an "engineered extension" of the natural systems in which it is located;
- •Bio-Inspired design – Interdisciplinary research and education for innovative products, systems, and environments based on biologically-inspired design solutions; and
- •Sustainable materials and product research – the design, manufacture and decomposition of materials and products consistent with a commitment to environmental and social stewardship.

3. Material Innovation, Aesthetics and Communication
OCADU faculty interrogate and reformulate the materiality of art making

in response to the world mediated by digital aesthetics and technological innovations. The knowledge produced in this area contributes to the fields of visual communication and visual studies. The research projects in this area engage digital painting and expanded animation, hybrid practice, and the publications research centre. Identified areas of research include:

- Image-making, material inquiry, and haptic methodologies;
- Materials and methods in contemporary art practice;
- Multi-sensorial experience, synesthesia, and visual music;
- Corporeality, contemporary figuration, and the body in art and design;
- Advanced colour studies;
- Aesthetics, cognition and inquiries in perception; and
- Graphic design, information systems and data visualization

4. Creative Economies

Art and design research provide a constructive lens through which economic activities may be analyzed. Identified areas of research include:

- Strategic Foresight and Design Thinking – Design and social research focusing on the various stages of the innovation process utilizing creative ideation, design thinking, and interdisciplinary collaboration, as well as business analysis and strategic planning;
- Media and Entertainment Design – Interdisciplinary social and technical research into creative works using hybrid forms of visual and creative production; and
- Art and Entrepreneurship – Interdisciplinary research about cultural projects and events designed by artists with focus on business planning and market analysis.

5. Digital Futures

OCAD University accomplishes art and design research and innovation across the digital media field. Research partnerships will often engage art and design with colleagues from disciplines, such as computer science, engineering, and life sciences. Graduate and undergraduate students, in a research assistant capacity, will come together with faculty supervisors to conduct innovative and pioneering research in the new media field.

Areas of research include:

- Data visualization;
- Mobile media and augmented reality;
- Game studies: location-based gaming; Alternate Reality Games; and games as art, research and play;
- Wearable technology, tactile interfaces, and tangible computing;
- Emotion studies; and
- DIY practices, "hacking" and the maker movement.

6. Art and Design Education

This research cluster explores the values and methodologies in contemporary art and design pedagogy and their relationship to culture, technology,

and cross-cultural perspectives in art and design teaching. This research area engages critical and philosophical ideas that inform art and design methodologies including the notions of Aboriginal epistemology, transcultural studio pedagogy, critical art pedagogy, educational/curatorial interventions and case studies in art and design education advocacy.

Areas of research include:
- Phenomenology of art making;
- Teaching in virtual worlds and distance education;
- Aesthetics and ethics in art & design practice;
- Interactive methods in studio teaching and learning; and
- Participatory and user-centric design and methodologies.

7. Aboriginal Visual Culture

A major goal of OCADU's Aboriginal Visual Culture Program is to foster debate and research in Aboriginal visual culture, media, and design that will greatly expand the literature in this vital aspect of Aboriginal identity, and social and economic development. Identified areas of research and critical commentary include:
- Aboriginal visual culture, contemporary art, critical and curatorial practice;
- Traditional and contemporary design innovation in Aboriginal communities;
- Sustainable practices and the application of these to Aboriginal design, architecture, art and ethics in contemporary Canada;
- Aboriginal cultural history in the Americas and beyond;
- Gender identity in Aboriginal cultural expression; and
- Visual art and design education: impacts on Aboriginal youth.

8. Critical Studies

Although faculty members engage in individual humanities and social sciences research and participate in collaborative projects involving multiple research themes identified in this plan, the following five thematic areas describe the primary critical interests in humanities and social sciences as a whole:
- Networks, Localities, and Global Studies – political economy of global cultural expression; evolution and impact of contemporary community arts;
- Cultural Movements and Social Change – politics and anthropology of cultural expression, ethics of cultural expression, and changing global social patterns;
- Bodies and Embodiments – genders and sexualities; sensations and affect; human factors; performance and performativity;
- History, Theory and Criticism of Art, Media, and Design – focus on contemporary practices, their evolution, histories, and theoretical frameworks; and
- Technologies and Digital Culture – socio-economic and socio-political implications of digital culture; evolution and history of new technologies

and digital practices; relationship of digital and analog practices.

OCAD University's eight key areas of research serve the two purposes of (1) prioritizing research initiatives, for decision-making processes around institutional commitments and resource allocations, and (2) demonstrating to funding agencies how research proposal submissions fit into institutional priorities.

OCAD U supports its researchers through a vibrant office of research services, an experienced Research Ethics Board, and the strategic allocation of research lab spaces, infrastructure, and operational funding.

OCAD U complies fully with Tri-council policies, including its policy on responsible conduct of research.