

Ontario College of Art & Design

Setting the Stage for World-Class Art & Design Research

The Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) has a long and distinguished history of developing innovative talent for Ontario's and Canada's economies and societies. In the first decade of the 21st century, OCAD has embarked on a highly ambitious and innovative transformation - one that is embedded in our history but reflective of the needs of Ontario's people and economy for the next half-century and more. OCAD's *Leading in the Age of Imagination*, allows an approach that links education, training, and research to respond to and influence the shifting social-economic and socio-demographic environment in which we live and operate.

Ontario Investments

The Digital Futures Initiative (DFI), an on-going investment by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in curriculum redevelopment, and the Digital Media Research + Innovation Institute, an investment in research infrastructure by the Ministry of Research and Innovative, are concrete statements of the Province's commitment to OCAD's educational and research mandates. In turn, OCAD continues to demonstrate leadership and focus in digital media and ICT, with comprehensive research in the breadth of digitization, powerful partnerships with industry and collaboration with other post-secondary institutions.

Ideas, Innovations, Impact

In this brief document, we define clearly how OCAD's research priorities and directions contribute to Ontario's Innovation Agenda priorities and will create an environment in which talented Ontario students and researchers can engage in the systematic development of **ideas** into **innovations** that have a positive **impact** on social and economic development.

Strategic Research Directions

In 2005-2006, OCAD developed its Strategic Research Plan (SRP). In 2009-10, OCAD is revisiting the SRP to consider Faculties' priorities within the context of Ontario's Innovation Agenda and Canada's Science and Technology Priorities.

SRP Priorities

OCAD's SRP identified six priorities that reflect our history and institutional commitment to excellence in interdisciplinary approaches to solving "wicked problems" facing Ontario, Canada and the world:

- Disciplinary Depth with Cross-disciplinary collaboration to solve hard problems
- Contribution to technological development -- with a focus on digital media, digital art and ICT technologies
- Sustainability -- bringing design knowledge to green and clean technologies
- Health and wellness -- bringing design thinking, and practice to all manner of health systems and technologies and visual art therapeutic tools
- Cultural diversity and global citizenship, including Aboriginal Visual Culture
- Contemporary Ethics -- socially transformative, sustainable and economically viable innovation.

SRP Tactics:

Building on these research priorities by investing in people and research infrastructure enables OCAD to advance research by:

- Creating a model of practice-based research that builds new models of innovation and produces concrete results
- Developing emerging practices and analysis of research/creation
- Working with industry partners to address key scientific, technical and application focused research that solves short-to-medium term problems as well as long-term opportunities
- Engaging in blue sky innovative research and creation
- Engaging in research that is applied to social, cultural and economic problems and opportunities
- Engaging faculty members across the spectrum of disciplines and practices
- Embedding research in undergraduate courses and programs
- Embedding research in graduate programs
- Working with provincial, federal, and local government agencies in policy focused research
- Working with the NGO/Not-for-profit sectors to research program and service issues that will enhance the quality of life of Ontario residents, and
- Being **innovation-oriented**.

SRP Impacts

This approach to research and creation at OCAD ensures that:

- OCAD faculty and students are engaged in leading-edge research & innovation
- OCAD is a leader in creating new models of research, commercialization and research translation

- OCAD is building research and entrepreneurial capacity of faculty and students
- OCAD is building its leadership in art and design education by engaging undergraduate students in industry-focused research and innovation
- OCAD brings design methods and research to other disciplines and to key Ontario industries
- OCAD supports and facilitates a Convergence Laboratory Model
- OCAD enables the incubation of Ontario firms by providing high quality, interactive research incubation capacity and the solution of industry-specific problems
- OCAD enables interactions between undergraduate students and graduate students with industry and community partnering organizations
- OCAD expands the pipeline and reduces the constrictions to technology and knowledge mobilization in specific sectors that tie into Ontario's priorities:
 - Digital Media/ICT
 - Mobile technologies, applications and services
 - Serious Games/Gaming
 - Financial services
 - Health services, technologies, prevention
 - Tourism
 - Architecture
 - Green and clean technologies/Green IT
 - Aboriginal Economic Development
- OCAD develops strategic links to other Ontario research clusters, especially in the digital media /ICT, sustainable environment and health technology sectors such as the Canadian Digital Media Corridor, the Waterloo Stratford Lab, Communitech, the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre; NCE Grand, the Climate Change Secretariat and Thousand Towers Initiative, the Greening Greater Toronto Task Force; and MaRS Innovation.

Moreover, our approach to research and research/creation will have key impacts, some of which are being realized:

- Attracting to and educating, training and retaining the best talent in Ontario
 - OCAD has developed niche graduate programs to educate leaders in design, digital media and business
 - OCAD, through the DFI, has attracted to Canada four world leaders in digital art and design research and practice and has attracted new faculty into other program areas who conduct research training with digital tools
 - OCAD, through the DFI and DMRII investments in research laboratories has and will retain in Ontario leading research in art and design practice, digital media studies, and mobile and wireless applications
 - OCAD created the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre in concert with other Ontario universities and colleges, multinationals, and Ontario SMEs to greatly accelerate research, innovation and commercialization in the mobile sector
 - OCAD through its Aboriginal Visual Culture Program has attracted two leading educators, growing Aboriginal students and a wide partnership base

- Focus on global market opportunities
 - OCAD through the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre is situating Ontario as a Canadian leader in mobile and wireless technologies and applications and forging strategic ties with international partners in China, India, Brazil, Europe and the United States
 - OCAD through its Design and Art programs creates partnerships with institutions and researchers at leading universities and companies

- Extracting Value from Excellence/Leveraging Skills and Knowledge

- OCAD is Ontario's only research university dedicated to Art and Design, educating and training Ontario's design innovators and new company creators.
 - OCAD brings design research and methods into a wide variety of Ontario industries, impacting manufacturing processes, and the capacity to develop new services and products.
 - Through the creation of accelerators/incubators, OCAD is creating an environment for faculty and students to engage directly with Ontario industry and community agencies, enabling the transfer of knowledge and technologies seamlessly from our laboratories to partner agencies and industries.
 - OCAD has created an accelerator/incubator in digital media/ICT as a partnership between the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre, Communitech and C3; a Design Accelerator and the Slab, a laboratory that provides design thinking to business innovation.
 - Through investments in talent (new faculty, graduate students) and advanced laboratories, OCAD is creating the environment in which innovations are created for and transferred to existing and seed companies.
- A Business Friendly Environment
 - OCAD's DFI and DMRII incubators and accelerators will create an environment where industries and university researchers work collaboratively and develop new methods for the effective and efficient transfer of knowledge and technology.,
 - OCAD has developed IP policies that facilitate faculty and student engagement with industry.,
 - OCAD has energetically reached out to international businesses as partners.

- OCAD undertakes policy research in digital media/ICT and design and provides recommendations that facilitate investment by industry in research and commercialization.

A Canadian and World Leader in Art and Design Research

Underlying our approach and methodology is our goal to ensure that the Ontario College of Art & Design is the Canadian and a world leader in the fields of Art and Design research and research/creation.

Art and Design are highly competitive and very diverse environments. OCAD faculty have recognized world-class expertise in many fields: painting, environmental design, biomimicry, inclusive design, graphic design and typography, contemporary art practice and history, photography, and digital media/art.

Recognizing that OCAD cannot cover the full spectrum of art and design research and practice nor be the world leader in each, OCAD has identified five transdisciplinary fields in which we can be the Canadian and an international leader. Many of our fields of excellence make use of digital technologies, yet OCAD's contributions are well beyond digital media and ICT.

Building on our current expertise, within five years OCAD will be internationally acknowledged as a research leader in:

1. Integrating design thinking and practices in business environment.
2. Advancing digital media research and content development, for example in digital drawing and painting and related graphics systems, virtual and augmented reality environments, digital data visualization, and mobile and wireless technologies,.
3. The design of sustainable environments.
4. Health research, with specific capacity in inclusive design.

5. Innovation in knowledge mobilization and new company development.

OCAD has significant research and design and art expertise in the first four areas. OCAD's faculty are acknowledged leaders in applying design thinking and practices to business environments, have developed advanced approaches to applying and designing digital technologies that facilitate the creation of art, communications and teaching in virtual and augmented environments, visualizing and interpreting large data sets to enable understanding by scientists, information analysts and the public, and the application of design principles, multimedia knowledge and business innovation to enhance Ontario's mobile and wireless industries.

OCAD is attracting one of Canada's leaders in inclusive, accessible design to its faculty, building on our already significant leadership in the field which has contributed to the development of AODA standards and education practices.

Sustainable and inclusive design research also contributes to the health of Ontario residents and complements our design researchers who collaborate with health and medical researchers at Baycrest, the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, Sunnybrook and other UHN-associated medical institutions.

By building on these capacities and emerging strengths, OCAD will become a leader in knowledge mobilization to government, community and industry sectors and to fostering new company formation. Through our DMRII-related accelerators and incubators and the Mobile Experience Innovation Centre, OCAD has become a hub for university-industry-university partnerships and the testing of new models of industry-industry collaborations. These models provide the vehicles for the development of curriculum responsive to the needs of industry and community receptors, talent training and development through direct engagement with industry partners, and the effective transfer of ideas and technologies from

university laboratories to industry through daily contact of industry and university researchers and students.

Accountability

OCAD is committed to ensuring that its goals, objectives, and strategies and tactics are transparent and measurable and that we are accountable for public investments in building our research capacities.

For these reasons, OCAD is committed to a public reporting on the outcomes and impacts of our research plan, a report that will be published annually on our website.

Moreover, it is important that our research plan is refreshed, reflecting the strengths and interests of our faculty members and students and our community, industry and government partners. For this reason, OCAD is committed to a biannual review of our research plan and a five year refresh to ensure that we are investing in fundamental research and targeted research that provides intellectual, cultural, social and economic benefit to Ontario and its society and economy. These reviews and periodic reassessment will be inclusive, involving faculty members, adjunct researchers, graduate and undergraduate students, and community and industry advisors. The outcomes of these consultations will be posted on our research website.

Finally, through periodic meetings with provincial ministries – Research and Innovation, Training, Colleges and Universities, and Culture – OCAD will ensure that our research plan informs and is informed by provincial priorities and that the impact of provincial investments is fully documented.

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