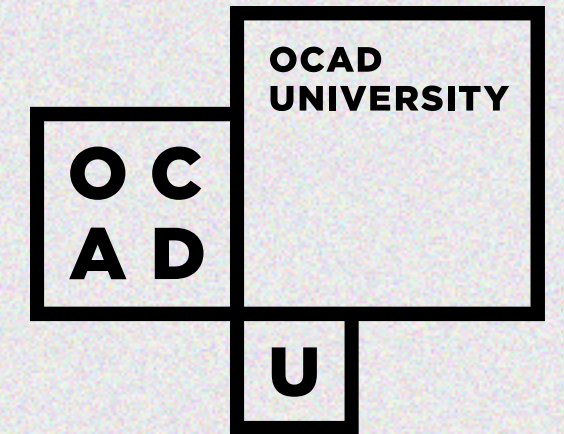
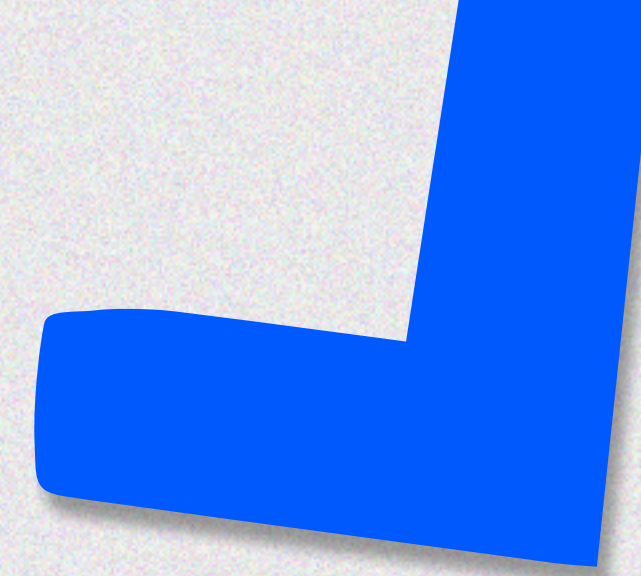
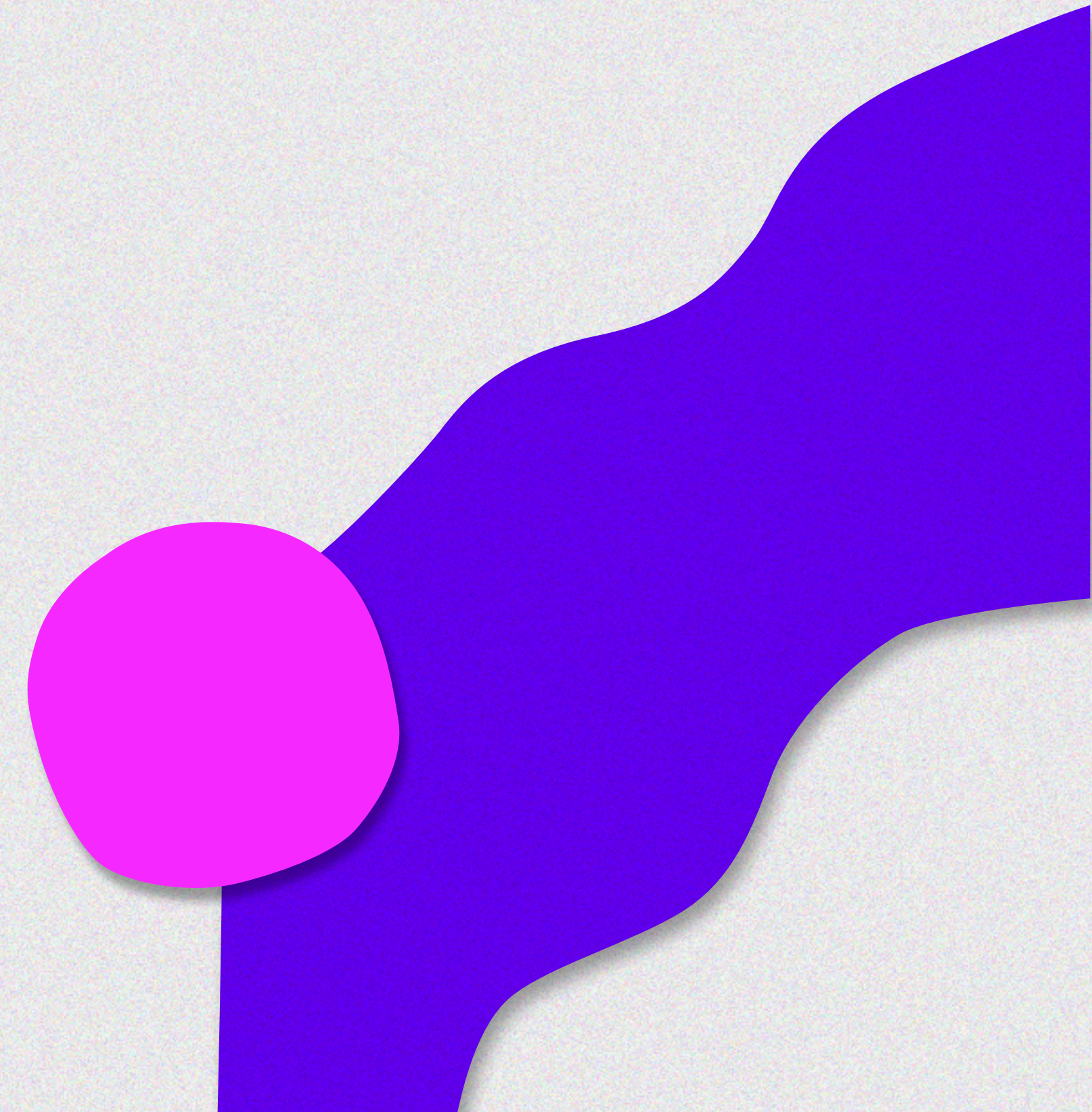
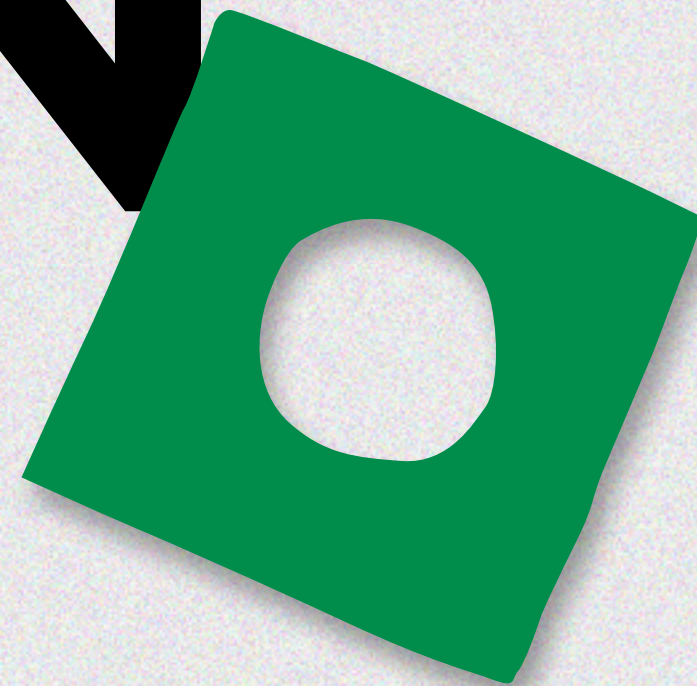


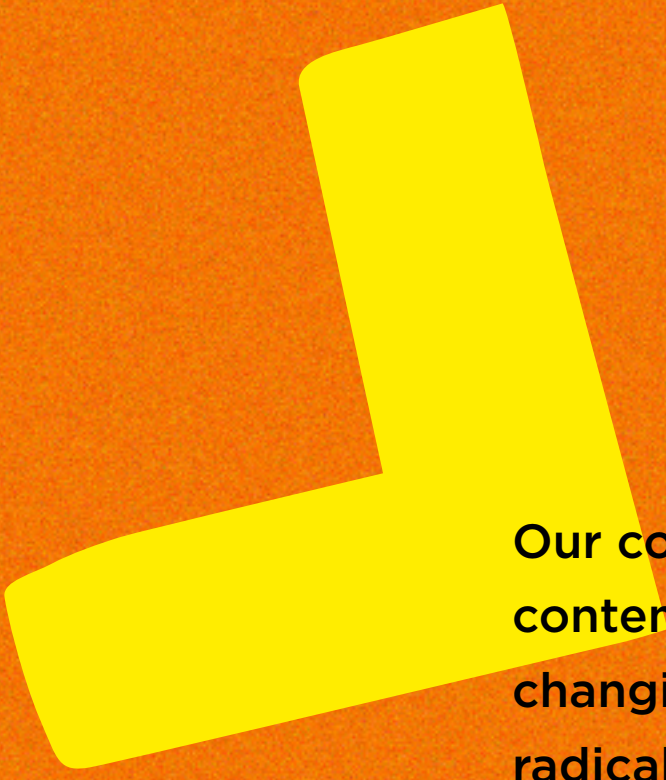
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# STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN








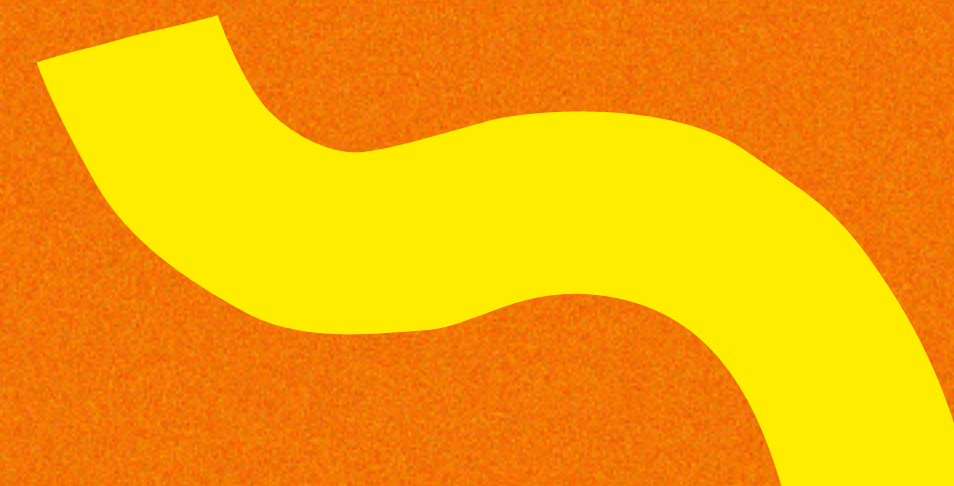
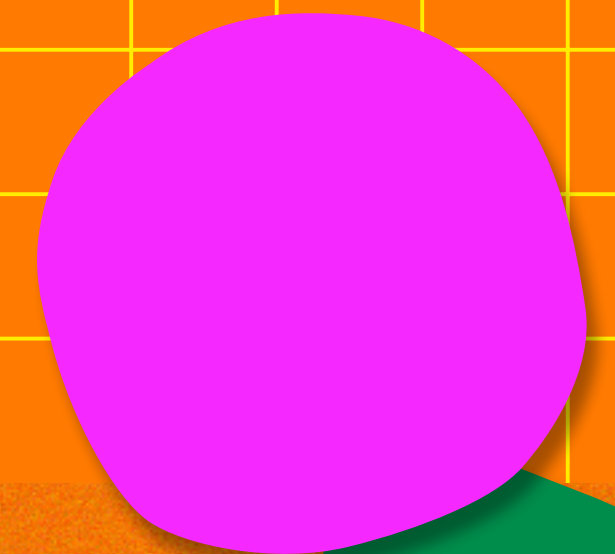
Our considerations as a research community include deep contemplations of futures that address the implications of a changing climate, ongoing inequities in our social sphere, and radical changes in technology that affect our daily lives. As creative practitioners distributing our work widely, our starting point must fully engage our complicated histories of colonization and how we reconcile that with our present world.

OCAD University acknowledges the ancestral territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabeg and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of this land. In keeping with the values of expanding our understanding of the responsibilities of research, we also acknowledge that Indigenous communities also include the Métis and a significant urban Indigenous population in Tkaronto.

Further we acknowledge that the nourishment and support we experience on this land we live upon has been and is inflected by various histories of movement and migration, ranging from enslavement and indentured labour to refugee and other realities of a globalized economy.



**ACKNOWLEDGING CUSTODIAL HISTORIES AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES WE HAVE UPON THESE LANDS ON  
WHICH WE LIVE, WORK, AND CREATE**





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# INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1876, OCAD University is Canada's largest, most comprehensive—and Ontario's only—art, design, and digital media university. OCAD University is a significant talent and intellectual property pipeline for Canada's globally recognized arts and culture, design, and creative industry sectors. Stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship, generating jobs and accelerating productivity through design-thinking, strategic foresight, and exceptional art, design, digital media, and research-creation skills, OCAD University also brings specialized capacity to the workforce across all sectors such as healthcare, financial, energy, transportation and manufacturing, and contributes to Canadian economic development.

OCAD U's new five-year Strategic Research Plan 2025–29 outlines our community's aspirations and cultures of research in the fields of design, art, media, and related scholarship. It establishes a direction for how to achieve key priority goals over the next five years, namely increasing research capacity, exploring innovative interdisciplinary research programs, and developing and publicizing an inclusive understanding of what constitutes research and scholarship at OCAD University. Further, this is constructed as a living document as the half decade encompassed

by this plan will see significant changes and growth which cannot be captured adequately in a static presentation. Therefore, while this SRP will remain as it is presented here, the embedded links will ensure currency and accessibility to the fluid nature of research at the university. The plan identifies opportunities for strategic development and growth of research and research training, highlighting those areas of research in which the university currently deploys Canada Research Chairs and research infrastructure support, identifies planned inter-institutional and inter-sectoral collaborations, and identifies how we will assess our success in meeting the objectives established by the plan.

Building on a century and a half of internationally recognized art and design education, professional practice in art, design and new media, innovative research, and engaged scholarship, this Strategic Research Plan (SRP) reflects OCAD University's Academic and Strategic Plan (ASP) and its seven

interconnected priorities and corresponding objectives. As articulated in the ASP, this SRP continues OCAD University's commitments to the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the broader work of decolonization as we engage with Indigenous contexts and global histories and politics that affect us all.





# RESEARCH AT OCAD U

OCAD University leads in defining research in art, design and media practice, scholarship, and teaching and learning, as reflected in the myriad disciplines that comprise our academic community. Over the past two decades, we have built on the history of academic and studio practice to establish significant leadership in art, design and media research and research-creation. This work produced at OCAD University is informed by and impacts disciplines and creative and professional practice in art, design, the social sciences, humanities, and science and technology.

Since the 1970s, OCAD University has been a recognized leader in art and technology. Over the past two decades this capacity has grown through research in digital media, information and communication technologies, design and creative technology. OCAD University's world-leading capacities in inclusive design, growth in visual analytics and other fields bring together a human-centric integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, smart textiles, wearable technologies, virtual and expanded realities, and other forms of emerging technology.

OCAD University faculty have autonomy to pursue multiple research interests within the framework of academic freedom, while respecting the parameters of research ethics and principles of community interactions. Engagement with Indigenous communities in particular recognizes and respects their sovereignty, and reflects the protocols, processes and necessity of including all those who are engaged in research in the processes themselves. We also adhere to the [Scarborough Charter](#) on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Higher Education: Principles, Actions, and Accountabilities, and we value the contributions of diverse researchers including those who are racialized, international, inhabiting any gender position including gender-fluid and non-binary, identifying as a member of Deaf or disabled and neurodiverse communities, and/or those who are first generation workers/faculty/students. In respecting diversity and difference, we ensure the research communities in which we practice continue to evolve research practices in ways that are critically aware of colonial and repressive practices, past and present.

OCAD University is committed to providing research training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Students from all levels participate in research activities, thereby gaining knowledge of research methodologies, including ideas and techniques for critical inquiry and problem-solving and a deep appreciation of research ethics. Students participating in research activities learn, acquire and put into practice skills and competencies from many disciplines. These experiences ensure our graduates are engaged citizens of the world and can realize meaningful careers by putting into practice the skills and competencies of art, design and media research and research-creation.





### OUR RESEARCH COMMUNITY:

- contributes new thinking and practices
- engages emerging technologies such as digital innovation and artificial intelligence
- offers hands-on, community-based points of focus
- leads internationally recognized research initiatives
- focuses on material arts, inclusive design, health design, environmental design, digital media and technology, Indigenous visual and design culture, teaching and learning
- foregrounds collaboration, community-based engagement, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- exemplifies inclusively designed research that makes new knowledge accessible to diverse contributors and communities.



# ALIGNMENT OF STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC PLANS

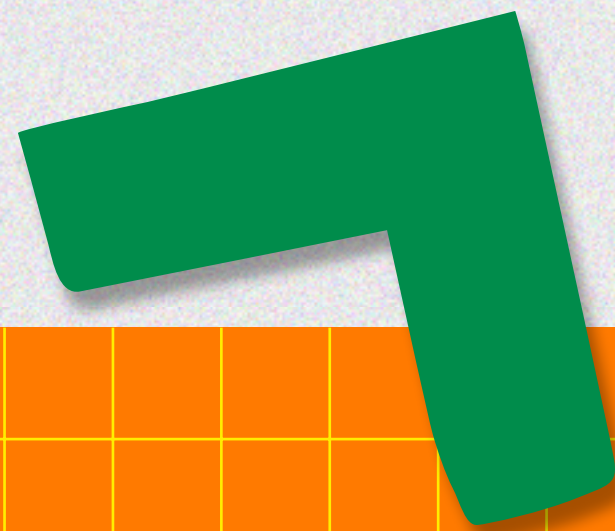
OCAD University will continue leadership in art, design and media innovation and research through seven inter-connected themes, drawn from our academic and strategic plan of 2022–28. These themes are aspirational and directional, leading our research forward in a defined manner that demonstrates our commitment to the world we live in today and the world we wish to live in tomorrow. In keeping with the academic plan, our research at OCAD U values different voices and forms of agency to **drive a positive impact** on social, cultural, technological, creative, and transformative advancements. Underlying much of our activity is a **pursuit of environmental sustainability** both at the university and in our community, as well as providing opportunities for **innovative research** supported by Canada Research Chairs, other faculty, students and community members. This research is also grounded in ethical practices and **centering the student journey** within a context that foregrounds **decolonizing and Indigenizing practices** in art and design. The sum total of this integration of the academic hub is to create a research environment that functions as a **vibrant hub** that is shored up by economic viability and **stewards financial health**.





# STRATEGIC RESEARCH DIRECTION

As Canada's largest postsecondary institution focused on art and design, we pride ourselves on our community's creative-practice research and innovation. OCAD University is committed to supporting researchers as they continue to interrogate the boundaries between disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge production and the specialized approaches of artists, designers, creative technologists, and scholars. Adept at working with community members, corporate partners, foundations, and other research partners, OCAD University recognizes that the development of strategic collaborations across sectors will enhance our capacity for research and our reputation within academic and other communities. There are many roads that lead to the productivity of research including some of the following key themes, that will help shape our way forward.





### LEAD CANADA IN RESEARCH-CREATION:

As an art and design university, a vast amount of our work falls under the general heading of research-creation, also known as practice-based research, which values the creative output that results from researchers investigating a range of topics.

Research-creation includes, but is not limited to:

- material art practices including drawing, painting, printmaking, and publishing
- all manners of digital practice including video, animation, games, interactive art and film
- curatorial practice
- design prototyping
- creative writing (poetry, story, novel, non-fiction, spoken word, experimental, digital)
- artificial intelligence, data visualization, augmented/virtual/extended reality and immersive experience design
- Indigenous creative practices, including traditional, contemporary, and other forms influenced by culture and history
- diasporic creative practices that reflect the cultural and international composition of our faculty, students, and staff.







### CATALYZE AND INCREASE INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH:

Along with research-creation, OCAD University conducts research and/or partners with researchers from a variety of disciplines across Canada to tackle some of the world's most pressing problems including the climate crisis and its attendant areas of focus such as energy transition, the circular economy, and emergency preparedness, housing affordability, transportation, digital transformation, and more. Our key areas of research focus include:

- Sustainable Art and Design
- Climate Action through Art and Design
- Peace and Conflict Studies
- Indigenous Creative Practice and Pedagogy
- Digital Humanities and the Diaspora
- Design for Health
- Inclusive Design
- Critical theory/curatorial practice
- Data visualization
- Robotics
- Artificial intelligence and virtual world-making
- Games for change
- Human Computer Interaction and Immersive Media.



**SUPPORT, DEVELOP, AND CELEBRATE OUR RESEARCHERS:**

As a university committed to pedagogies on multiple levels, OCAD University in general—and the Office of Research & Innovation in particular—is responsible for training and facilitating accessibility to a variety of research platforms through:

- webinars and information sessions to inform researchers about funded and output opportunities for their work
- webinars and information sessions to inform researchers about funded and output opportunities for their work
- providing access to seed grants for faculty embarking on new projects
- grant writing and service contract support, research data management and security
- expanding traditional scopes of research to include investigations of pedagogy

- post-award support such as navigating financial services, the hiring of research assistants, and understanding the implications of intellectual property rights
- intra-support network connection at OCAD U such as the Centre for Emerging Artists and Designers, Information Technology, the OCAD U Library, and multiple other units that directly and indirectly support our research needs
- launches, exhibition support, and other deep acknowledgement of the fine contributions from members of our community.



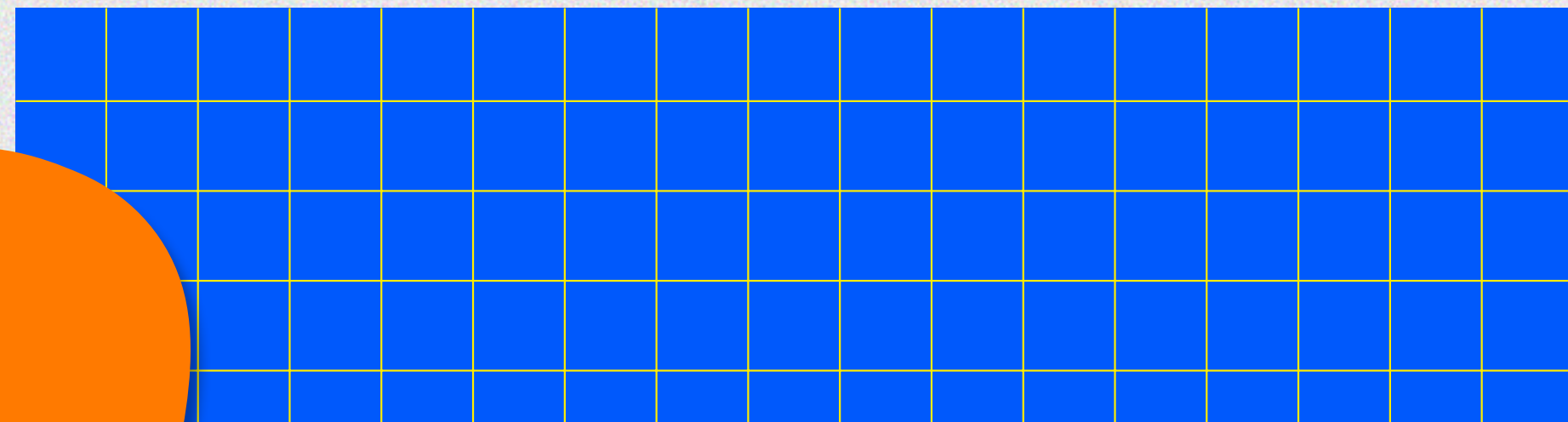
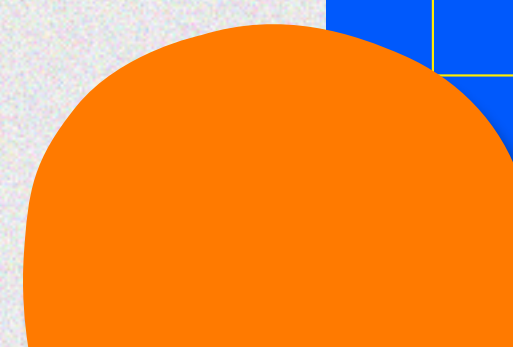
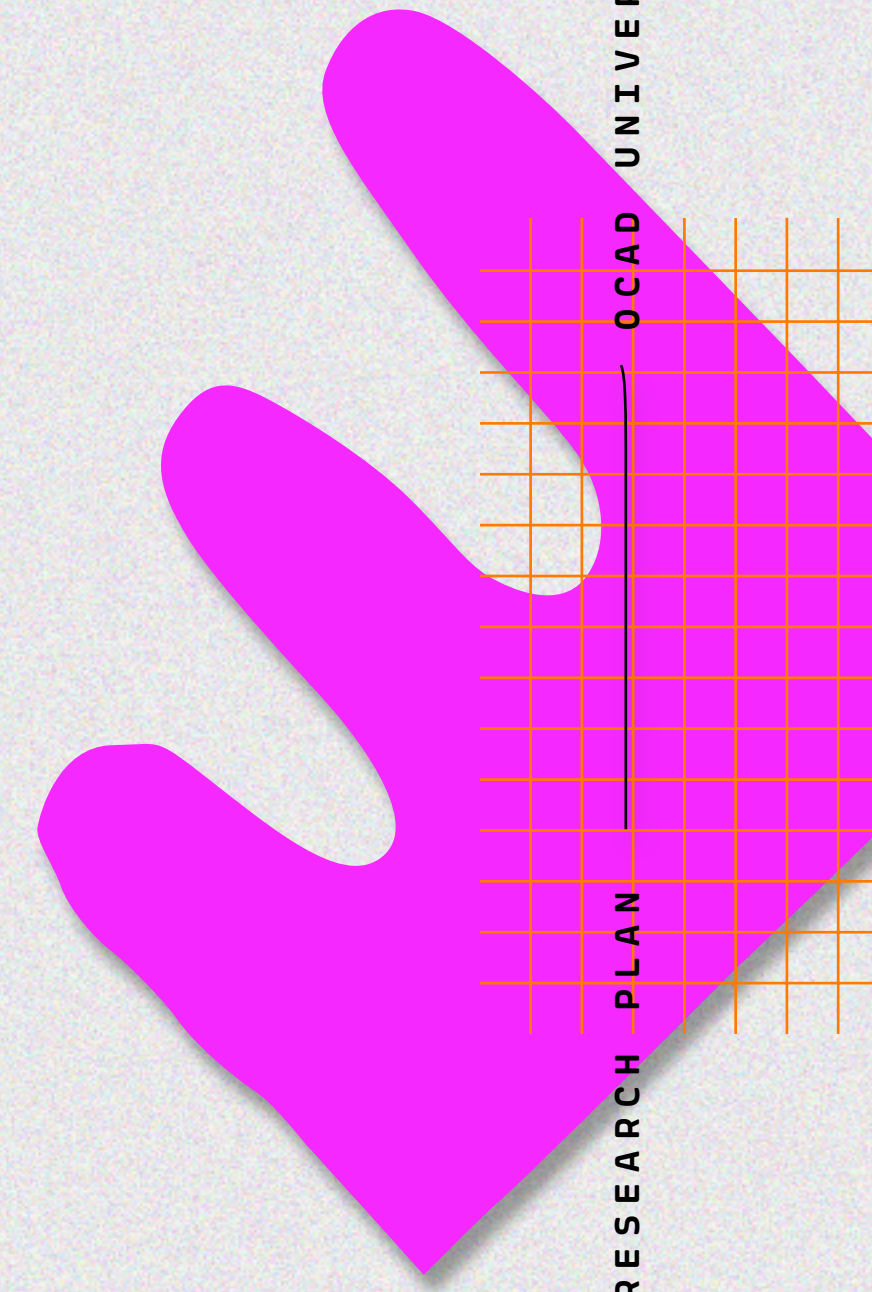




### UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:

Undergraduate and graduate students provide a critical component for research services at OCAD U in the following ways:

- their work in courses, independent research, major research projects, theses, and capstone projects are frequently cutting edge in their disciplines and have significant implications on how the University is read by the external world
- with nearly 150 master's degrees awarded each year, graduate students have a profound effect on how research is conceived and perceived as part of the university mission
- a large and growing portion of undergraduate and graduate students support faculty through research assistantships, which provides them training while drawing on their research expertise
- graduate student work also comprises a majority of the submissions to our Research Ethics Board, which is a critical component in ensuring equitable researchis conducted at the university
- students are a foundational element of research at OCAD U, and we recognize the work they do while studying and aper becoming alumni, and we seek ways and avenues to support their continued future research success.





### EXPAND PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS:

Partnerships suture connections and drive opportunities to the art and design sector, providing us with unified strength in environments which are open dominated by larger universities. These collaborations help to bring in funds but also connect our researchers to various communities. In general, partnerships demonstrate how ably OCAD U moves between disciplines and universities and allows us to offer opportunities from the art and design field. Partnerships with the private sector include businesses, industry, and other operations that are not within the public sphere, assisting researchers in multiple forms:

- **supported research chairs**
- **lab to market opportunities**
- **raising the profile of the university and providing essential services for local, regional, and international business sectors.**

Partnerships with the public sector are also critical as they afford us the opportunity to connect to other post-secondary sites including but not limited to the other art and design universities (UAD4):

- **NSCAD in Halifax**
- **AUArts in Calgary**
- **ECUAD in Vancouver**
- **Comprehensive universities across Canada**
- **International universities**
- **Community organizations (including not-for-profit)**
- **Foundations and centres**

These partnerships help fuel experiential learning and professional practice and help the development and enhancement of research culture at OCAD University by exposing us to novel ideas, challenges and opportunities to learn and apply new knowledge and practices. We continue to foster collaborative relationships to engage and invest in research.





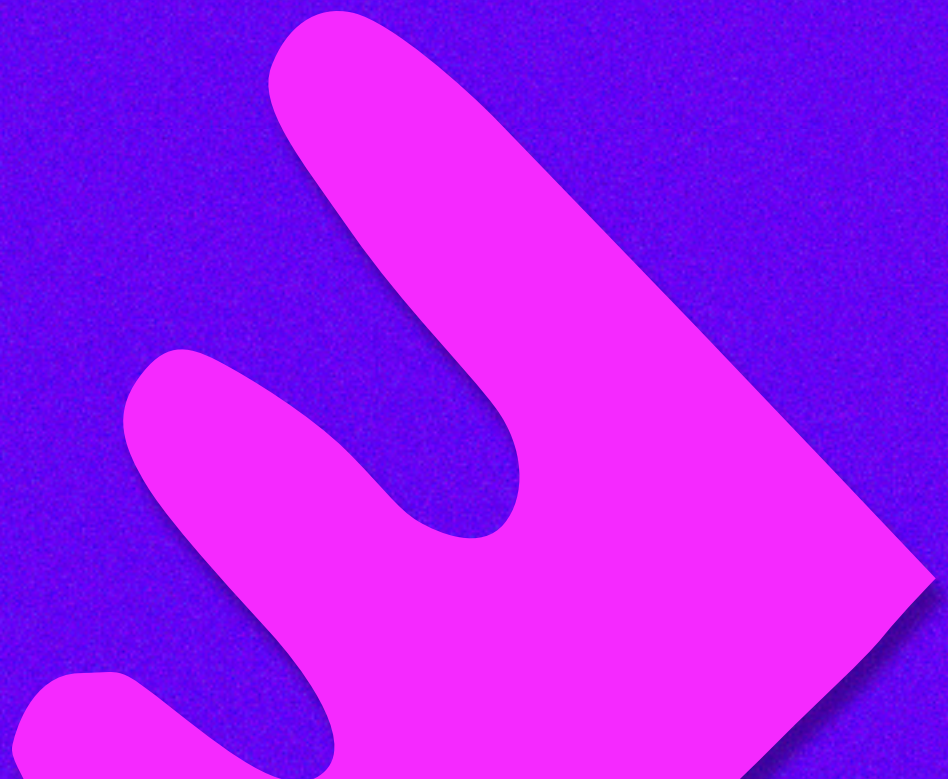


# CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS

OCAD University currently has an allocation of four Canada Research Chairs (CRCs), a federally funded and supported program that is intended to provide universities with research potential from established and emerging scholars. CRCs are allocated based on successful tri-council funding and with recent success at OCAD U in this arena, we anticipate increasing this allocation within the scope of this five-year plan. OCAD University has followed CRC Secretariat guidelines in enacting hiring practices to ensure that we address issues of equity and diversity now and in the future. The university deploys its allocated Chairs to attract and retain researchers who are recognized internationally as leaders in their field in accordance with our strategic and creative focus on Indigenous practice, decolonization and equity, health design, technology including artificial intelligence, inclusive art and design, strategic foresight, curatorial practice, research creation, and design thinking.

Drawn from our areas of research strength and identified priorities for strategic development, funding from the Chairs has been used to attract and retain researchers in the areas of:

- 01 → **Design for Health**  
(Tier 2) 2023-28
- 02 → **Canadian Black Diasporic Cultural Production**  
(Tier 2) 2021-26
- 03 → **Diasporic Digital Humanities**  
(Tier 2) 2025-29
- 04 → **Indigenous Creative Practice**  
(Tier 1) 2025-29





# CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION (CFI) INFRASTRUCTURE

CFI funding programs provide envelopes of matching funding for universities to create and enhance research infrastructure. OCAD U researchers may apply for CFI support as part of an internal competitive process. Funds may be used to renovate and equip research spaces. All of our ongoing and proposed CFI projects align with our principles of supporting art and design research practices by renovating and equipping existing and future campus spaces.

Recent CFI projects have addressed research in inclusive design, Indigenous creative practice, diasporic studies, augmented and virtual reality, stop motion capture. Future allocations will continue to abide by priorities set by the university.





# MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

OCAD University has embarked on a process to define research activities germane to art and design. We recognize the need to encourage activity that is distinct and effective in our wider community, which while not easily measured through traditional research performance indicators as articulated through our multiple modes of research operations. Our [Strategic Mandate Agreement](#) outlines our commitment to measurement of research success including research capacity through secured tri-agency funding and research revenue attracted from private sector sources. Remaining responsive to the SMA and continuing to articulate multivalent avenues of comprehending research produced by our sector provides the university with a way to measure the activities, outputs and impact of research and research-related creation outside traditional measures (e.g., patents, publications, citations), thereby addressing the limitations of these measures. The university is now building on this work to further consolidate the output and impact measures and to incorporate these within our reporting frameworks. This work is important because social and economic productivity demands a focus on design thinking, and the contributions of research in design and art must be accounted for to maximize their impact.

Our process for measuring success involves a diligent and comprehensive recording of all that constitutes research outputs at OCAD University, and what emerges because of the diverse activity that constitutes research across our faculties. This measurement will continue to be refined as we define our research approaches, methods, activities and outcomes, the participation of undergraduate and graduate students and staff and faculty from across the disciplines engaged in research, our capacity and support infrastructure, and the resulting impact on self-sustaining operations through robust revenue generation. Foundational to our operation as a publicly funded research institution, we have a commitment and accountability to the communities we support and serve to tell the stories that emerge from our research activities. The research enterprise is not complete unless and until we are able to engage our publics in the outputs and outcomes of the work we do, accomplished through regular communication internally and externally to document and record our ongoing successes. This acknowledges the effort required to engage in knowledge transfer and mobilization activities and in the measurement of success. In keeping with our commitment to decolonization we recognize that there are additional

efforts required to ensure community engagement, and that Indigenous and other racialized colleagues assume additional effort to ensure representation on committees, in policies and procedures, and in the documents and artefacts that are produced as a result of research at OCAD University. This is in keeping with our approaches to reconciliation, accountability, and ethical frameworks, which includes our commitment to challenging and securing spaces and resources for faculty in habiting a diverse set of positions. Through the resources of our research office, we will continue to track our annual progress including the continual refinement of what we mean by research and its many impacts. Our approach is sensitive to the context in which we live and work and is flexible and sensitive to the uniqueness of OCAD University research, allowing for changes in direction and context.



# THE SRP & PROCESS

The process to develop this plan was led by the Office of Research & Innovation and involved extensive face to face and online consultations with faculty, staff, students, and other valued community members and groups speaking to research culture at OCAD University. We began with a survey reaching out to all members of our community, urging them to relate their experiences of and aspirations toward research at the university. This was intentionally left as a broad-based survey, the data from which was then developed into an iterative model where two consultants with deep insight into the university as current and former graduate students met with constituent groups to acquire more fulsome data to work into this SRP. The intensive gathering of data proved illuminating regarding the needs, hopes, and dreams we collectively held for research at the centre of our art and design institution. The findings presented in the following pages speak to fostering and nurturing growth and success of current and future generations of artists, designers and scholars as they engage in the act of creative research across multiple disciplines.

## SRP TEAM

**Lead: Dr. Ashok Mathur**, Vice-President Research and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, and Chair of the Senate Research Committee

**Workshop co-animators: Shreya Chopra**, Executive Assistant to the VP Research and alumni of the Strategic Foresight and Innovation M.Ed. graduate program; **Orus Mateo Castano Suarez**: Research Assistant for the SRP and current MDes student in the Digital Futures graduate program

## SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

*President and Vice-chancellor*

**Ana Serrano**

*Vice-President, Research (Chair)*

**Ashok Mathur**

*Deans or their Designates, representing each of the Faculties*

**Diane Mikhael** (FoD)

**Sarita Srivastava** (FAS)

**Gabrielle Hezekiah** (FoA)

*Up to six Faculty Members, four of whom must be Canada Research Chairs*

**Andrea Fatona**

**Kate Sellen**

**Alexis Morris**

**Michelle Miller**

**Emma Westecott**

*Chief Information Officer, IT Services or Designate*

**Alastair Macleod**

*University Librarian or Designate*

**Chris Landry**

*Special Advisor, Indigenous Knowledge, Practices and Production*

**Peter Morin**

*Director, Research Services (non-voting)*

**Heather Robson**

*Graduate Student*

**Orus Mateo Castano Suarez**

## EXECUTIVE TEAM:

**Tanya Bowes**, Board Secretary and Director, Strategic Planning

**Deanne Fisher**, Vice-President, Students and International

**Dr. Caroline Langill**, Vice-President, Academic, and Provost

**Dr. Ashok Mathur**, Vice-President Research

**Ana Serrano**, President and Vice-Chancellor

**Alan Simms**, Vice-President, Finance and Administration

## RESEARCH OFFICE:

**Heather Robson**, Director, Research Services

**Arlan Vriens**, Research Grants & Contracts Officer

**Bryan Weissenboeck**, Research Ethics Advisor

**Leila Talei**, Research Partnerships Specialist

**Lisa Kennedy**, Officer, Research Projects

**Mike Steventon**, Manager, Research Technology

**Parth Shah**, Executive Assistant to the VP Research / Dean, SGS

## CONSTITUENCIES CONSULTED:

- 2023 Nov 3: All Faculty
- 2023 Nov 9: IT, CEAD, Library
- 2023 Nov 13: Lead Researchers, e.g. CRC, Labs
- 2023 Nov 16: All Faculty
- 2023 Dec 5: CRIP Lab Consultation
- 2024 Jan 15: Sustainability Committee
- 2024 Jan 17: Indigenous OCAD
- 2024 Jan 22: Grad Students