

## **2013-2016 Strategic Research Plan**

### **PREAMBLE**

Research is vital to NSCAD's mission, culture and success and the university is committed to creating and fostering opportunities that advance the visual arts and related disciplines and, as well, further NSCAD's reputation as a leader in research pertinent to the university's mandate. In our increasing complex and diverse cultures, research in the visual arts requires knowledge, experience, originality, reflection, risk, experimentation, innovation, invention, flexibility and adaptability, among others. Although there are many approaches to research at NSCAD, many successful research practices find common themes: the identification of significant questions, issues and/or interests for inquiry; the development of a body of knowledge and understandings of the contexts in which questions, issues, interests are positioned; the employment of a relevant method of inquiry toward an outcome; and the communication of the outcome of the inquiry to the communities which have an interest in the research, including the public.

Although the scope and nature of research at NSCAD is fundamentally rooted in the discipline areas of individual researchers and the priorities of academic Divisions, the university has assigned overarching responsibility for research to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic Affairs and Research). Those responsibilities include: ensuring that research initiatives are in compliance with university's policies and that the university is in compliance with regulations of funding partners; promoting and supporting the ongoing and emerging research areas internally and externally and identifying opportunities for new initiatives; liaising effectively with funding and other partners, including post-secondary institutions nationally and internationally.

With the support of the Office of Research Services and Industry Liaison and other university-wide administrative offices, NSCAD faculty, students, and staff are engaged in a range of individual and collaborative projects relevant to the research modules identified below. As well, the University continues its support of its research centres, institutes, and clusters, including those well established, emerging, or proposed. Research activities in the visual arts are often interdisciplinary, involving private and public partners and collaborators from other cultural organizations and educational institutions as well associations with business and industry. Research activities at NSCAD are supported by funding agencies specific to the arts, by funding bodies specific to the social sciences and the humanities, the natural sciences and engineering, as well as through other federal and provincial agencies, and the private sector.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Through the development and authorization of the Strategic Research Plan, the University recognizes that research is critical to future success. During the period of the Plan, NSCAD intends to:

1. increase the numbers of externally funded research projects and apply regularly for federal, provincial and private funds to fuel the research effort;
2. recognize the potential of individual and teams of researchers from across disciplines working together to address complex and diverse matters;

3. identify and enhance support for emerging research clusters within the institution;
4. communicate and promote NSCAD's research strengths, expertise and successes as a resource to government, community partners, funding organizations, and the general public;
5. increase capacity for participation by researchers in national and international research consortia;
6. with national partners, continue to develop a framework from which to evaluate success in meeting strategic research goals and priorities;
7. adhere to the requirements of any Collective Agreement with regard to intellectual property and any other requirements relevant to the research enterprise;
8. develop and maintain mechanisms for appointing Research and Post-Doctoral Fellows;
9. continue to foster the development of inter-institution and inter-sector collaborations consistent with the university's mandate;
10. continue to engage in hiring practices that give attention to the potential for contributions to research;
11. within the first two years of the Plan, NSCAD will undertake an institution wide review of research initiatives and outcomes, administrative support to research, and will assess NSCAD's research culture through review both internal and external. Success, in part will be measured by our advances with research granting programs, by our experience with research outcomes, by the maintenance of the university's current and stable research clusters and centres as well as the development of new loci of interest into stable and ongoing clusters of their own.

## **RESEARCH MODULES**

As a university of the arts, the focus of research activities at NSCAD are more clearly identified than for a university with a wider range of program offerings. The strategic research foci identified below will build on traditional strengths and will also see the development of emergent research concentrations.

### **I: CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH**

Faculty members across all academic Divisions are actively engaged in research and publishing with the understanding that such work makes serious contributions to their fields of study. In addition to publishing peer-reviewed monographs, articles in scholarly journals, and book chapters, faculty curate exhibitions, write essays for exhibition catalogues, give public lectures and participate in panels and symposia in their areas of specialization.

Broadly defined, faculty undertake research in the history and theory of modern and contemporary culture with some emphasis on Canadian culture. More particularly, faculty research includes, but is not limited to, Canadian Cinema with a focus on regionalism and trans-nationalism; the concept of allegory in the history, criticism and theory of art and literature; the relationship between craft and architecture and craft and industrial design; Canadian art and nationalism; contemporary art from the 1970s to the present with a focus on feminist and

conceptual art; the intersection between literature and the arts; queer theory; the integration of Indigenous methodologies for critical research on Indigenous art production in Canada; and the cultural dimensions of financial capitalism.

NSCAD's current Tier 2 Canada Research Chair: Contemporary Film and Media Studies is assigned to the Division as will be, if a 2013 nomination is approved, a Canada Research Chair: Indigenous Art Histories and Methodologies. NSCAD wishes to foster and advance the study of the history of, and the contemporary and multi-cultural context for the arts. A new Master of Arts program is in the planning stage which will provide graduate students with access to faculty expertise across the specialty areas identified.

Further, NSCAD will pursue the resources necessary to plan and establish a collaborative Centre for Cultural Archives and Collections.

As one of Canada's oldest independent cultural institutions, the historic collections contained within the institution's library, art gallery, visual resource collection and administrative records represent an invaluable cultural archive dating back over 125 years.

The NSCAD University Permanent Art Collection serves to identify NSCAD University as a historical, cultural, and intellectual asset to NSCAD students, faculty, staff, and administration, and the broader international arts community. NSCAD has been a conduit for exceptional arts and cultural activity; our holdings represent and promote seminal artists and rare and valuable works related to NSCAD University, including prints from the NSCAD Lithography Workshop, former faculty and student works, local and international cultural artifacts, and gifts and purchases from visiting artists.

With advances in information technologies, cultural institutions such as NSCAD now have the opportunity and responsibility to develop technical resources and services by which to bring cultural information to a wider audience of researchers, artists, curators and the public.

## II: CINEMATIC AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

New image and sound tools provided by digital technologies have and will continue to redefine the vocabulary and methodologies of the screen arts, the way screen arts are viewed and experienced, and ultimately, the society that has made cinema a primary vehicle of artistic expression for the last 100 years. Research activities in this module will engage critically and creatively with screen-based and computer-driven technology, and increasingly, with notions of interactivity. The focus of work in this area includes augmented reality, responsive and immersive environments, physical computing, locative media, mobile computing, critical gaming, animation, sound design, cinema and social media. Research questions explore the opportunities, limitations and cultural impact of digital technologies and contribute to shaping the tools that that societies will use in the future. Projects in this area will use and develop these new media technologies in co-evolution with their creative application.

In support of research and research training in film and new media, NSCAD has established Cineflux: A Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Emerging Cinema and Media Arts within its

Film and Media hub at the Academy Building campus. Cineflux supports a core group of interdisciplinary researchers and students, their partners and collaborators. The Centre is comprised of a series of research labs equipped with a specialized infrastructure which includes a motion capture studio, rapid prototyping facilities, electronics and locative media equipment. NSCAD has also prepared a 2013 nomination which, if approved by the CRC program, will establish a Canada Research Chair: Interactive Media with the research and infrastructure attached to Cineflux.

### III: DIGITAL MATERIALITY

Research activities in this module will use and develop new technologies along with traditional and adapted materials and applications in order to further the design and fabrication of contemporary art, artifacts, and products for a wide range of uses. Activities will include the application of computer assisted design and manufacturing technologies, the development of digital visualization and handling technologies, and the customization of design and fabrication methodologies. The digital translation of the imagination to material form is resulting in a re-imagining of production methods and scales and a merging of craft and industry methodologies where neither are necessarily privileged. Research in this area is expected to create new academic partnerships as well as industrial and commercial affiliations. A new research cluster between Jewellery and Metalsmithing, Textiles and Fashion, Ceramics, and 3 Dimensional Design is currently in development with some areas already in receipt of research funding support. NSCAD is pursuing a number of other initiatives to advance this research cluster including the 2013 nomination of a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Digital Materiality, and the development of a Centre for Materials and New Technologies at its Port Campus location, in association with NSCAD's Institute of Applied Creativity: An Applied Research and Collaboration Hub. The Institute offers individuals and organizations the opportunity to work with NSCAD faculty, staff and students to harness a growing appetite for innovative thinking by serving as both a home for the creativity that currently exists within the University, and a nexus for new regional, national and international partnerships.

### IV: DESIGN FOR HEALTH

In its continued commitment to the advancement and promotion of an environment which fosters research related to art and design, the institution is moving to enhance its applied research capacity and create new industry partnerships by capitalizing on unique strength and expertise in the area of product and service design for health.

#### Design for Health and Aging

In 2011, an estimated 5.0 million Canadians were 65 years of age or older, a number that is expected to double in the next 25 years to reach 10.4 million seniors by 2036. By 2051, about one in four Canadians is expected to be 65 or over (Statistics Canada, 2011). While many products and services are available to those living in elder-care facilities, there is a trend toward assisting those who are aging to remain at home for as long as possible. This shift supports independent living and self-confidence, and significantly reduces costs to the health care system. There are many challenges to be addressed in facilitating seniors' independence in staying at

home longer as overall health slowly declines – fitness, safety, personal care, self-medicating, getting dressed, making meals, living spaces and transportation.

NSCAD is currently establishing a Design Lab for Health and Aging, supported by awards received from NSERC, CIHR and the Province of Nova Scotia. Through the establishment of the Lab, NSCAD will collaborate with its strategic partners and affiliates connected to a variety of product and service streams to develop marketable solutions that will help to meet the challenges outlined above.

## **V: CREATION AND MATERIAL PRACTICES**

Research in this module will continue to support and develop excellence in practice-based disciplines with a goal to advance knowledge, encourage innovation, and foster collaboration that may include the integration of new technological, material and research methodologies. Production will involve in-depth explorations of appropriate modes of expression across academic and practical disciplines and between research institutions addressing critical cultural and contextual issues. The results of research in this module will be exhibited, published, produced or otherwise disseminated and will help to ensure that the overall standard of cultural production in Canada is significantly advanced.

## **VI: RESEARCH THROUGH DESIGN**

Research activities in this cluster are directed at physical, mental and intellectual well-being and ultimately, the augmentation of the quality of life in a complex and changing world. Since socio-political infrastructures are what societies build their futures on, Research Through Design plays an increasingly significant role in their consideration and response to the needs, challenges, and infrastructures of the 21st century - infrastructures which are adding indeterminate, chaotic and undemocratic characteristics to our everyday lives. With knowledge and an adaptable suite of research methodologies, Research Through Design will foster the fresh thinking and creativity required to solve or improve our cultural challenges including advances in diversity, the economy and the environment.

Research activities in this cluster are directed at using design methodologies and processes to create artifacts and experiences and then position these artifacts for critique and discussion. These approaches address socio-cultural, environmental, technical and economic issues through design experimentation. The focus is on creation across all media that act as cultural agents. These agents are integral to mindful interrogation that affects not only design, designing and the design process, but also, in its widest application, prompts designers and stakeholders to consider and choose possible futures: our greatest challenge.

## **PLANNING AND APPROVAL**

The planning and approval process related to research at NSCAD involves the individual researchers, the university's Research Committee, the Office of Research Services and Industry

Liaison, the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic Affairs and Research), the university's system of academic governance (Academic Council), the Office of the President, with ultimate approval from the Board of Governors.

Approvals:

Research Committee: March 18, 2013

Academic Council: April 8, 2013

Board of Governors: April 18, 2013

For further information, contact:

Dr. Kenn Gardner Honeychurch.  
Provost and Vice-President (Academic Affairs and Research)  
Office of Academic Affairs and Research  
3rd Floor  
5163 Duke Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3J6  
Telephone: 902-494-8125 or 902-494-8220  
Fax: 902-425-4664