



STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN SUMMARY 2003

Preamble:

Research is defined as a contribution to knowledge and practice which results from and is communicated following a period of critical inquiry. Research is vital to the mission of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD UNIVERSITY) and the institution is committed to fostering opportunities for research related to the visual arts and culture.

Major Thrusts for Research and Research Training

NSCAD plays a unique role within the local, regional, and national university communities in that it is Canada's only free standing university of the arts offering graduate and undergraduate degrees in the practice of art, craft, and design and in historical and theoretical studies in related academic areas. Through a variety of research activities undertaken by faculty and graduate students, the university makes a significant contribution to Canadian culture and the culture industries.

For the last number of years, NSCAD has been undergoing a significant academic and research renewal. In 1996, NSCAD established a Research Committee to develop an institutional research plan and to refine policies and procedures that support innovation and excellence in research activities related to the study and practice of the disciplines of art, craft, and design. NSCAD has a long and distinguished history of education in the arts, craft and design which is grounded in a rigorous study of history and theory.

Research Modules

As a university of the arts, the focus of research activities are already more clearly identified than they would be for a more university with a wider range of program offerings. The strategic research foci identified below will build on traditional strengths and will also develop innovative research concentrations.

I: Historical and Critical Studies

Research in this module is integral to all of the College's other research activities in that historical and contemporary research related to art and culture supports and adds depth to the practice-based disciplines but also stands alone as a research module essential to the mission of the university. NSCAD wishes to foster and advance the study of the history of, and the contemporary context for, the arts including the cinematic arts and will seek to appoint faculty members with a range of expertise. The Strategic Plan outlines the development of new graduate programs in this area.

II: Culture and Digital Technologies

i.) Product Design and Development

Research activities in this module will focus on the use and development of new technologies along with the use and development of traditional and adapted materials with application of both to the design and fabrication of contemporary products. Activities will include the application of computer assisted drafting and computer assisted manufacturing technologies, the development of digital documentation, visualization, and handling technologies, and the customization of design and fabrication methodologies. Relationships to research in a number of other sectors including the bio-medical and bio-mechanical will be a focus in this module. The Strategic Plan outlines the schedule for the development of new and expanded graduate programs in this area.

ii.) Cultural Information

Cultural information is a product and research in this module will focus on developing innovative solutions to making cultural information and resources digitally available to a global audience. These projects will, in part, investigate the application of emerging Web Services technologies from the commercial sector in combination with “best-of-class” open source guidelines, protocols, and standards in the cultural sector. Research and development activities will be designed to move to the application and commercialization stages with the production of high quality commercially viable products and services for the consumer of cultural information. NSCAD is currently seeking approval for a new graduate program in this area.

iii.) Film and New Media

New image and sound tools provided by digital technologies have and will continue to revolutionize 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 artistic expression for the last 100 years. Research activities in this module will utilize and develop these new media technologies in co-evolution with their creative application. NSCAD is currently developing a large new graduate program in Film.

III: Material Practices and Criticality

Research activities in this module focus on the advancement of forms of artistic expression for artist-researchers. Research in this module will support and develop excellence in practice-based disciplines to advance knowledge, encourage innovation, foster collaboration where appropriate, and significantly enhance the quality of production and end product. 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.

Research Chairs

NSCAD intends to seek support from the Canada Research Chair program and other public and private sources for Research Chair positions within the university's identified research modules. These funded Chair positions will drive recruitment of research faculty and attract graduate students to a variety of program areas.

In the future, in support of research and training in the identified areas, NSCAD will:

- 1.) foster the development of collaborative research across the university
- 2.) foster the development of inter-institution and inter-sector collaborations which may lead to the establishment of new research concentrations or focal points consistent with the university's mission statement and mandate
- 3.) employ a Director to oversee the research activities of the university
- 4.) consistently update the Strategic Research Plan to ensure the management of a coherent research strategy
- 5.) act to support research as a major emphasis across the university
- 6.) continue to support the development of dedicated research space
- 7.) act to ensure the employment of dedicated researchers and technical personnel
- 8.) act to ensure the availability of appropriate equipment
- 9.) act to ensure improved recruitment and retention strategies to both attract and retain top research talent
- 10.) continue to develop applications for research funding from private and public sectors
- 11.) continue to assure that the results of research are appropriately disseminated and that applications, where appropriate and possible, are implemented to facilitate understanding, licensing, job creation, economic development, and quality of life
- 12.) continue to develop support for research through furthering provisions for technicians and student assistant/trainees
- 13.) provide leadership in the development of new and flexible research methodologies to address the need for a well defined research heritage related to art, craft, and design
- 14.) continue to engage in university-wide hiring strategies which give attention to the potential for contributions to research
- 15.) significantly expand the School of Graduate Studies

Measuring Success

NSCAD is committed to the measuring the success of its research activities by:

- 1) continuing to develop effective systems for ensuring project completion according to defined milestones and deliverables while ensuring that assessments are appropriate to the project
- 2.) maintaining a monitoring system by which the dissemination of research results may be reviewed

- 3.) developing mechanisms by which the success of the application of research results may be measured
- 4.) developing mechanisms by which “value added” may be considered
- 5.) participating in systems of peer review which consider both research methodologies and research outcomes
- 6.) developing and maintaining quantitative systems which will provide an account of research variables including: numbers of researchers, numbers of technicians, numbers of graduate students, amount of research funding, etc.
- 7.) developing a regularized system of self-assessment
- 8.) participating in any assessment review required by a funding agency or partner
- 9.) developing long term research assessment strategies that support the shorter term project based research assessment protocols

Planning and Approval

The planning and approval process related to research at NSCAD involves the individual researchers, the university’s Research Committee, the College’s system of academic governance, where appropriate and necessary, the Office of the Vice-President (Academic and Research), the Office of the President, and the Board of Governors.