

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget  
By  
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## **List of Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** That government invest in green, digital and accessible university infrastructure.

**Recommendation 2:** That the government provide funding to support Design4 Inclusive Innovation.

**Recommendation 3:** That the government invest in access, upskilling and reskilling.

**Recommendation 4:** That the government invest in international student recruitment and retention.

**Recommendation 5:** That the government support research and innovation.

## Introduction

OCAD University is Canada's leading art, design and media institution. OCAD University's students, faculty and alumni will play a critical role in the path to Canada's recovery from Covid-19. There are many examples: Digital skills and knowledge will be even more important in a world where online communication is an increased part of how we work, live and spend our dollars. Our focus on design for health will ensure effective, human and efficient healthcare as we move through the crisis.

Canadian universities, including OCAD University, are working to combat Covid-19: conducting vaccine research, building and distributing PPE, mitigating social and economic fallout. OCAD University and fellow institutions moved 1.4 million students into online learning environments in just a week and a half.

OCAD U has also:

- visualized population and Covid-19 data to support the deployment of critical-help services;
- provided design-thinking strategies and crisis scenario-planning for government and industry;
- provided local hospitals bulk PPE built in the university's Rapid Prototyping Centre;
- raised \$120,000+ for OCAD U's Emergency Bursary Fund for students experiencing pandemic-driven job loss;
- created and circulated assessment and emergency room communication "printables" in 40+ languages; and
- shared online art experiences through student outreach and OCAD U's professional gallery.

OCAD University commits to partnering with the government to reinvigorate Canada's economic, social and physical well-being, and bolster resilience and adaptability for an unpredictable future. We echo and support Universities Canada's stance on universities being central to Canada's economic recovery from Covid-19.

For the 2020/21 federal budget and pandemic recovery, OCAD University requests the Government of Canada invest in:

1. Green, digital and accessible university infrastructure. To distribute funds quickly, OCAD U recommends leveraging successful previous post-secondary infrastructure programs.
2. \$10 million over four years from the Federal Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev) supporting Design4 Inclusive Innovation.
3. Access, upskilling and reskilling.
4. International student recruitment and retention.
5. Research and innovation to solve challenges important to Canadians and ensure Canada's social and economic recovery.

## Designing the future: key requests

OCAD University is treating Covid-19 as an innovation opportunity, to make our programs even more comprehensive, flexible and relevant. Already deeply focussed on how digital technologies, creativity, design thinking and collaborative skills development interact, OCAD U can play an essential role in rebuilding the Canadian economy.

The pandemic has raised many questions about how to sustainably, fairly and safely return Canada to economic stability. Never in its 144-year history have OCAD U's audacious and innovative approaches to real problems been more necessary.

Every aspect of daily life has changed; Canada must thoughtfully but quickly work with future-focused organizations like OCAD University to reimagine living, working and interacting—to improve public health and well-being, especially in vulnerable communities further destabilized by Covid-19.

During this upheaval, with its rare opportunities for redesigning Canadian life, OCAD University aims to:

- improve already top-tier educational programs across delivery methods;
- train next-generation thinkers, designers and artists to transform Canadian and global societies;
- integrate superior online platforms, expertise and support services into all teaching practices; and
- prepare students and faculty to thrive in a rapidly changing, digitizing post-secondary landscape.

#### Digital-physical infrastructure

To help energize Canada's economy and remain relevant, OCAD University needs infrastructure support. Funding is required for both physical and digital infrastructure projects; but these are not separable needs. Digital infrastructure will be interwoven into every new and revitalized part of OCAD University's campus; digital infrastructure will become the foundation of OCAD U's campus of the future.

A tech-heavy, design-driven, innovation university like this one requires cutting-edge hardware and software to excel, a digital base on which to build its future, its community's future and Canada's future. Digital infrastructure will define how OCAD U creates and organizes space, how educational and research products and services are created and disseminated, and how the university manufactures intellectual property to build wealth across Canada.

Updated university infrastructure will enable collaborative, experiential teaching and learning; ensure faculty have reliable, user-friendly technology tools; make the campus uniquely inclusive and accessible; expand OCAD U's superior digital media and arts research; and reinvent continuing education.

Experts in art, design, design-thinking, innovation and strategic planning, OCAD U students, alumni and faculty are already invaluable to local, provincial and national economies. The OCAD U community generates brilliant, original and diverse perspectives, to approach crises like pandemics as prospects for meaningful change. With facilities and resources underpinned by, and intertwined with, sophisticated digital-physical infrastructure, this high-achieving community will go even further.

OCAD University aims to do nothing less than design life after Covid-19. Robust digital infrastructure will enable future-driven, design-thinking and tech-supported creativity. Updated physical spaces must be part of this project, so the university can safely welcome new and returning students both during and post-pandemic.

Infrastructure funding will help OCAD U deepen existing corporate and government relationships and partnerships; foster new, research-driven partnerships that generate economic activity and job creation; enhance research capacity and retain Canadian IP in Canada; and attract the world's best students through upgraded research and commercialization facilities.

Because the university is committed to supporting Indigenous values, knowledge and practices, all university infrastructure plans include sustainable design principles and practices; this will further boost Canada's green economy, create jobs and reduce institutional costs.

**OCAD University recommends the Government of Canada invest in green, digital and accessible university infrastructure. To distribute funds quickly, OCAD U recommends leveraging successful previous post-secondary infrastructure programs.**

#### [Inclusive economy](#)

Universities Canada research shows Covid-19 is disproportionately affecting Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC), plus women and persons with disabilities; educational and employment-based equity gaps will widen if this is not rectified.

Firms in Canada have been historically unable to embrace new technology or innovate products and services; they innovate more slowly than international competitors, and do not focus on global markets, user experience and adopting Canadian-made products and services.

It is now widely understood that increased diversity in entrepreneurial and innovation activities creates positive organizational change, more diverse employee composition and cultural respect. McKinsey report, "Delivering Through Diversity," affirms the global link between diversity—a greater proportion of women and more heterogeneous ethnic and cultural composition in large companies' leadership—and company financial outperformance.

Deploying design expertise, OCAD University's Design4 Inclusive Innovation (D4II) helps firms, from start-ups to scale-ups, create better products and services, and gain global market traction. OCAD U focuses on entrepreneurial diversity, inclusive innovation and enabling opportunities for those historically marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender or ability. D4II helps Canadian firms grow and compete globally, through incremental innovation, addressing skills gaps, embracing diversity and de-risking technology.

D4II supports entrepreneurial diversity through a comprehensive, staged platform designed to enhance entrepreneurial ecosystem diversity. Firms and industry partners can access workforce and talent development via:

- Design4Internship comprises internships with students from diverse backgrounds enrolled in a design discipline at a post-secondary institution. Supervised by expert faculty, interns will apply design principles to company challenges.
- Design4Startup supports anyone with a venture idea through design-driven incubation programming. BIPOC, women, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S, the neurodiverse and others receive enhanced opportunities for entrepreneurship participation.
- Design4Scale: Established firms, including start-ups resident in area incubators, gain design expertise through direct consultation on service, product and firm dynamics.

**OCAD University recommends the Government of Canada invest \$10 million over four years from FedDev to D4II.**

### Reskilling and upskilling

At OCAD University, art and design converge with science, technology, engineering, math, business, entrepreneurship, and strategic innovation and foresight to prepare students for a complex job market. Broad and deep university faculty knowledge and experience are available to learners from undergraduate and graduate students, to continuing studies learners. OCAD U aims to meet all learners' educational needs, at all career stages.

Remote delivery, experiential learning and career development through OCAD U's Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers (CEAD), Imagination Catalyst, industry-partnered internships and placements, and expanded continuing studies offerings will support recent graduates; these initiatives will also attract new students of all ages on their paths to career-readiness.

OCAD University supports Universities Canada's reskilling and upskilling recommendations, including providing:

- non-taxable training vouchers for immediate short-cycle PSE training;
- enhanced Canada Training Benefit flexibility and funding to meet Canadians' upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning needs;
- funding for institutions to develop accessible short courses in key areas; and,
- Canada Student Loan Program change extensions until December 2021.

### **OCAD University recommends the Government of Canada invest in access, upskilling and reskilling.**

### International students

Universities depend on the financial stability international students bring—including adding \$21.5 billion+ to Canada's economy in 2018 and \$6 billion in yearly tuition. International students also add perspectives, resources and employment to their universities and local, provincial and federal communities.

OCAD University is proud of and relies on international students and their intellectual, artistic, design and financial contributions. One of Canada's most diverse universities, OCAD U educates students from 50+ different countries each year; international students comprise approximately 22% of OCAD University's undergraduate and graduate students.

Covid-19 is threatening this mutually beneficial relationship, however.

Many international OCAD U students will begin or resume their studies remotely; but many more may defer or choose another PSE institution if they cannot physically establish themselves here. Most international students want a "Canadian experience" as part of their excellent Canadian education.

OCAD University anticipates a more than \$5 million shortfall if international enrollment dips precipitously. Building sophisticated digital infrastructure coupled with expanded physical spaces for post-pandemic life will help OCAD U attract and retain the best international students.

OCAD University supports Universities Canada's international student recommendations, including:

- offsetting losses with dedicated federal transfers to universities if international enrollment declines;
- increasing visa-processing capacity to address application volume;
- cost-sharing safe arrival and quarantine measures with universities; and
- branding, recruitment and visa-processing investments for recovery and diversification.

**OCAD University recommends the Government of Canada support international student recruitment and retention.**

**Research and innovation**

Canadian universities' efforts, both independent and in partnership, towards mitigating pandemic damage will kickstart the economy. OCAD University has researchers developing myriad crisis responses, from “printables”, to designing and building coronavirus recovery buildings, to organizing online social/skills training for disabled communities.

Realizing such collaborative, innovative, world-changing research depends on post-secondary institutions effectively reaching people wherever they are.

Connecting OCAD University's students, alumni and faculty to business and community organizations via advanced, scalable digital infrastructure will accelerate economic recovery. Strategic investments in knowledge creation, sharing and practical application, will serve Canada's learners wherever they are, with the resources they have—whether they're finishing high school or university, or reskilling and upskilling for post-pandemic careers.

**OCAD University recommends the Government of Canada invest in research and innovation to solve challenges important to Canadians and ensure Canada's social and economic recovery.**

**Contact**

Thank you for considering how OCAD University can help feed Canada's economic recovery. Already famous for early digital adoption and technology-driven art and design programs, OCAD U will, with substantial infrastructure funding, lead digital sophistication and economic well-being on the global stage during—and beyond—post-pandemic recovery.

Should you have any questions, please contact:

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