Algoma University's ESRI Canada Health Informatics Research Chair
Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Why is this important?**

The work of the health informatics (HI) research chair will provide a number of important benefits to Northern Ontario and the Canadian health care system as a whole. This will be accomplished by leveraging the community's established health informatics strengths through the further development and implementation of best practices and advanced technology supported by research.

It is also important as it demonstrates a positive model for collaboration between private sector, government, non-profit and academic organizations to further research and development in an important field of study. ESRI Canada, NOHFC, Algoma University, the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre and the National Institutes of Health Informatics have worked closely to bring this project forward.

The addition of the health informatics research chair will also support the following:

- Stimulating economic development through the creation and improvement of health informatics solutions to address the issues faced by the healthcare sector and the Northern Ontario health care community in particular.
- Pursuing the development of educational programs and research projects that will contribute to the health informatics cluster. Algoma University and Sault College are very interested in this initiative.
- Furthering academic research in this area can build on the strength of the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre's recognized leadership for their use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in the health field.
- Reaching out to community health sector stakeholders who choose to collaborate with the chair on research. Sault Ste. Marie has been recognized for its progressive and pioneering use of technology in the health sector.

2. **What is health informatics?**

Health Informatics is the discipline that investigates how information, information management, and information and communications technologies (ITC) can be used to deliver value in the area of health (WIHIR, 2003).

3. **What will the health informatics research chair do?**

The health informatics research chair will be expected to facilitate significant local, national and international collaboration in HI and to foster HI-related research in Northern Ontario. He or she will build a HI research program based on the community's strengths, pursue an active research program and teach one to two courses per year.

The HI research chair will undertake fundamental and applied research that enables health system innovation and better and more efficient patient-centered care. The research program will focus on the area of Primary Care Informatics and will engage local expertise in the applications of geospatial technologies, health system management and serious games for health, e.g., for training, health promotion and rehabilitation.

4. **How long is the funding for?**

The funding is for the duration of five years.

5. **Are there other chairs like this?**

Yes there are currently a number of HI research chairs at universities in Canada such as:

- o Dr. Nicola Shaw, Research Chair, Health Informatics. iCARE (Integrated Centre for Care Advancement through Research) - University of Alberta & Capital Health
- o Dr. Francis Lau, CIHR Applied Chair in Health Services and Policy Research in eHealth - University of Victoria
- o Dr. Carolyn McGregor, Canada Research Chair in Health Informatics – University of Ontario Institute of Technology

6. **How did the ESRI Canada sponsorship come about?**

ESRI Canada, a privately held, Canadian owned company specializing in the design and implementation of geographic information systems, is supporting the establishment of this research chair with a contribution of $333,333. ESRI Canada's significant sponsorship of the HI research chair came about through its commitment to furthering research in the health informatics field and its strong relationship with the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC).

SSMIC and ESRI Canada have been working together for over eight years and beyond a customer/vendor relationship they have collaborated on numerous projects and a "GIS in Health" conference in Sault Ste. Marie. SSMIC has been recognized as a leader in the use of GIS technology in the health field and received a Special Achievement Award from ESRI for its work in health and human services at the international users' conference.

7. **How are you working with the National Institutes of Health Informatics (NIHI)?**

Dominic Covvey from the National Institutes of Health Informatics (NIHI) has been involved in supporting this initiative from project inception and will also support the future HI research chair. NIHI will also be involved in participating in the recruitment and selection process for the HI research chair. NIHI will continue to support the HI research chair by:

· Providing advice on connecting with key organizations and individuals

· Collaborating on research proposal submissions

· Providing access to collaborators and potential partners

· Giving guidance and problem solving for curriculum design and development

8. **What role does the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) have?**

The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) has worked in a partnership with Algoma University on the development of this project. Health informatics is identified as an important sector for development in SSMIC's strategic plan. As a result, SSMIC recognizes the need to attract academic researchers, such as the health informatics research chair, to help further the work of local researchers in health informatics.

9. **Will the research chair work with health organizations in the community?**

Yes. It is anticipated the research chair will work with local health organizations.

10. **When will the chair be hired?**

It is anticipated that recruitment will begin soon and the chair will be hired in the first of second quarter of 2009.

11. **Who supported the establishment of the chair?**

Funding partners included:

- The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
- ESRI Canada
- Algoma University

Letters of Support for Algoma University to pursue this initiative were also received from:

- Destiny Sault Ste. Marie
- Sault Ste. Marie and District Group Health Association
- Northern Ontario School of Medicine
- Sault College
- Sault College (Health Program)
- Waterloo Institute for Health Informatics Research
- Sault Area Hospital