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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Algoma University receives over \$1M in funding for health informatics research chair

NOHFC and ESRI Canada support innovative health care technology research

Sault Ste. Marie, ON, Dec 5, 2008 – David Oraziotti, MPP announced today that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) is granting Algoma University (AU) \$684,200 to fund a health informatics research chair position alongside private sector partner ESRI Canada who is contributing \$333,333 to this initiative.

“Expanding the research capacity in Sault Ste. Marie is essential to helping our city attract and retain talented academics, entrepreneurs and students,” said Oraziotti. “This investment will assist Algoma University to position itself as a knowledge leader in Ontario’s health care system.”

“We are very pleased to support this new chair in health informatics and in particular, the application of geospatial technologies to health information systems,” said Alex Miller, President, ESRI Canada. “Geospatial technologies have already dramatically improved efficiencies in natural resource industries, governments at all levels, utilities and businesses. We believe this leading edge technology will bring even more benefit to the healthcare sector and help improve the health of all Canadians while reducing cost to government.”

The health informatics research chair will be expected to facilitate significant local, national and international research and collaboration in health informatics (HI). 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 as well as improved 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.

Academically, the health informatics research chair is important in helping Algoma University as they pursue the development of educational programs and research projects that will contribute to the health informatics cluster.

“We’re very grateful to both NOHFC and ESRI Canada for making Algoma University the recipients of this funding,” said Dr. Celia Ross, President of Algoma University. “Our strategic partnership with the Innovation Centre affords us the opportunity to establish this campus as a dynamic research hub in the important and

emerging field of health informatics. The chair in health informatics will build a dynamic research program based on the considerable expertise we already have here in our region.”

The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) has worked in a partnership with Algoma University on the development of this project. SSMIC’s strong relationship with ESRI Canada helped facilitate their contribution to the project and SSMIC has also collaborated with the National Institutes of Health Informatics (NIHI) to support and develop this initiative. Health informatics is identified as an important sector for development in SSMIC’s strategic plan. As a result, SSMIC recognizes the need to bring in academic researchers, such as the health informatics research chair, to help further the work of local researchers in health informatics.

“The funding announced today is a critical component to furthering the leadership position Sault Ste. Marie has developed in niche areas of the health informatics sector,” said Tom Vair, Executive Director, Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre. “We are grateful to NOHFC, ESRI Canada and all the project partners for their significant contributions and for sharing our vision of the potential of health informatics research to succeed in Sault Ste Marie. We are confident that this will be the first of a long series of announcements related to this exciting and promising initiative.”

The work of the health informatics research chair is expected to provide many important benefits to Northern Ontario and the Canadian health care system as a whole. The established health informatics strengths of the community will be leveraged by the research chair for the further development and implementation of best practices and advanced technology supported by research. As a result, there is also much potential for economic growth and further establishment of Sault Ste. Marie as a leader in health informatics research.

“The National Institutes of Health Informatics (NIHI) congratulates Algoma University and the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre which, in partnership with the Northern Ontario Heritage Foundation and ESRI Canada, have launched this important initiative. NIHI has worked with the partners over the last two years to define the Chair program. This is a clear demonstration of what collaboration can achieve to build Canadian capacity in health informatics”, said Dominic Covvey, President and Director, NIHI.

It is anticipated that recruitment for the health informatics research chair will begin soon and they will be hired in the first or second quarter of 2009.

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About ESRI Canada

ESRI Canada is a privately held, Canadian owned company specializing in the design and implementation of geographic information systems (GIS). ESRI Canada, with 16 offices across the country, has over 20 years experience delivering proven solutions based on leading GIS technology and professional service offerings. Through an extensive business partner network, the company is able to offer a complete range of applications and services. ESRI Canada is part of the ESRI global network with more than one million users in more than 300,000 organizations worldwide.

For more information please visit <http://www.esricanada.com> or call 1-800-447-9778.

About the National Institutes of Health Informatics

NIHI (www.nihi.ca) is a Canada-wide, virtual institute of institutes bringing together academic experts in Health Informatics. NIHI serves as a catalyzer, co-ordinator and facilitator that assists in defining, fostering and bonding together local Health Informatics (HI) initiatives in academia and industry dedicated to Health Informatics research and education.

About Algoma University

Algoma University is home to approximately 1,200 students. Offering a wide variety of liberal arts and sciences degree options including programs in Computer Science, Business Administration, Fine Arts, Community Economic & Social Development, and Biology; Algoma U is committed to offering a personal education experience unlike any university in Ontario. Algoma University also offers accelerated second degree programs in Business Administration and Computer Science on its Brampton campus through a partnership with the Education Invention Centre of Canada. To learn more about Algoma University at Brampton, visit www.eicc.ca. To learn more about Algoma University, visit www.algomau.ca

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About Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre

The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre was founded in 1999 as a catalyst for economic development activities in the IT and knowledge based sectors in the Algoma District. It works closely with community partners to enhance and improve IT sector opportunities.

The Innovation Centre is focused on three core areas: the operation of a business incubator to encourage the establishment and growth of technology start-ups; the provision of support services to the SME (Small to Medium Enterprise) IT community and the development of strategic markets such as the highly successful GIS project. The Innovation Centre has developed and implemented an award-winning GIS product, which serves a number of municipal customers and is responsible for the growth of private sector GIS firms in the Algoma District.

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