

Northern Ontario School of Medicine Achievement Report **2016**

NOSM stands for Northern Ontario School of Medicine, but the acronym has a popular alternative meaning in the North: No Ordinary School of Medicine.

Since its inception, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine has proudly defied traditional health professional education. Born of a grassroots movement by Northern Ontarians in need of health professionals, NOSM is a medical school like no other. No other Canadian medical school is a joint initiative between two universities—in this case, Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and Laurentian University in Sudbury. No other Canadian medical school provides training across a geographic expanse of 800,000 square kilometres—all of which is considered NOSM's campus. No other Canadian medical school was created with an explicit mandate to improve the health of the people and communities it serves.

There is great excitement across the North that NOSM's model of distributed, community-engaged health professional education and research is working. But the School needs continued support in order to sustain its success. This report provides just a glimpse into some of the many successes—and challenges—the School has faced over the last year.

For more information on the communities that make up the wider campus of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, please visit nosm.ca/map.



ICEMEN 2016

From June 20-25, 2016, NOSM and Flinders University School of Medicine jointly welcomed delegates from more than 12 countries to Sault Ste. Marie. The fifth in this biennial series of conferences, ICEMEN 2016 (International conference on Community Engaged Medical Education in the North) welcomed nearly 350 researchers, educators, administrators, students, and health professionals discussed social accountability and community engagement in medical education.

ICEMEN 2016 was accompanied by three partner events: Conference on the Move, a preconference bus tour to Manitoulin Island; the Northern Health Research Conference, an annual conference for health researchers; and, the Indigenous Research Gathering, a collaborative exercise that invited researchers and Indigenous community members to chart a path forward for collaborative Indigenous research. Community-engagement in health professional education is proving hugely successful in improving access to health care in rural and remote areas around the world.



NOSM's current overarching goal is to secure the resources necessary to continue a model of education and research that is increasing access to health care and improving the health of the people in Northern Ontario.

Dr. Roger Strasser

Sustaining Our Success

Working with its many partners, NOSM been successful in significantly improving the healthcare landscape in Northern Ontario. Despite this success, NOSM is now at a crossroads. Since the School's inception in 2002, many governmental operating grants have flat-lined, while costs continue to rise. Significant reliance on governmental funding (which is not adjusted for annual inflation, collective bargaining increases, fixed costs, etc.) has placed NOSM in an annual structural deficit. In order to improve the School's financial position, staff and faculty at NOSM have been working diligently over the last year to diversify the School's funding sources, and communicate our case for both private and public support.

I ♥ NOSM

In February 2016, the School hosted I ♥ NOSM Open Houses at the medical school buildings at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and Laurentian University in Sudbury. More than 400 community members were encouraged to have a heart-to-heart with their medical school and walk the halls of NOSM and engage in hands-on activities such as trying out laparoscopic procedures, medical simulation, clinical skills, and see where ground-breaking research takes place.



Changing Terminology

NOSM and its Indigenous Reference Group (formerly known as Aboriginal Reference Group) together announced the School's adoption of the terminology "Indigenous Peoples" in place of "Aboriginal Peoples." This change in terminology, recommended by NOSM's Indigenous Reference Group was motivated by the Canadian Government's recognition of the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People, included within the Calls to Action made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

Educational Excellence

More than just a medical school, NOSM is involved in the education of MD students, residents, physician assistants, dietitians, audiologists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists. Learners are woven into the fabric of more than 90 Northern Ontario communities, where they learn in context about the determinants of health relevant in the region.

Incoming students in MD class of 2020:

2,153 applications

were received for 64 spots.

13%

self-identifies as **Indigenous**.

self-identifies as Francophone.

89%

are from **Northern Ontario**

11%

are from other **rural** and **remote** areas in Canada



465 MDs
have graduated from NOSM.

new residency positions
were added this year—4 additional family medicine and 1 in psychiatry.

94%

of **NOSM MD graduates** who have also completed their residency with NOSM are now **practising in Northern Ontario**.



74% of NOSM-educated Registered Dietitians are practising in Northern Ontario.

More than 2,100

health professionals and **administrators** have participated in NOSM's continuing medical education and faculty development training.

Outstanding Research

Research at the School addresses the questions of importance to improving the health of the peoples and communities of Northern Ontario.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation invested \$1 million to establish a new Research Chair at NOSM that is focused on developing remote sensing technology to identify waterborne microbes that pose a health risk to people and animals who drink or bathe in the water.

Bruce Power provided \$5 million to support the NOSM/Bruce Power Research Centre for Health, Environment, and Radiation who will continue to conduct health research in Northern Ontario, specifically in relation to radiation and the environment. This funding will also provide for a free, clean energy electric car charging station that is open and available to the public, as well as an electric car for conducting research.

The Northern Ontario Academic Medical Association (NOAMA) has awarded more than \$8 million in research funding to NOSM faculty members since 2009.

Empowered Faculty

NOSM faculty members located across the region play a critical role in the School's success by educating our learners, conducting outstanding research, delivering high-quality clinical care, and playing leadership roles in our organization.

More than 275 participants attended NOSM's fifth annual faculty development conference, Northern Constellations in April 2016 in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

This year, NOSM's more than 1,400 NOSM faculty members across the North teach approximately:

255 MD students

residents

12

28 physician assistants

277
visiting

learners in audiology, speechlanguage pathology, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy learners

Community Collaboration

On September 23, 2015, more than 700 people in more than 20 communities across Northern Ontario participated in the Be Active with NOSM event through a wide range of activities including running, canoeing, yoga, and more. In 2016, Be Active with NOSM lives on—the School continues to invite all Northern Ontarians to engage in 30 minutes of physical activity a day, and use the hash tag #beactivewithnosm on photos of healthy activities to demonstrate their commitment to a healthier Northern Ontario!



NOSM was awarded a **Gold Award of Excellence** by the Canadian Public Relations Society for the communications plan associated with the **Be Active with NOSM** initiative.

In 2016, NOSM partnered with HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency (HFO MRA) in order to increase access to health professionals in Northern Ontario, particularly in high needs areas, including Indigenous, Francophone, remote, rural, and underserved communities. The partnership also looks to increase the supply of physician educators in the North, and track trends in order to inform future health human resource decisions.

Making it Work

Recruiting and retaining health-care professionals for rural and remote communities is an ongoing challenge in many parts of the world. NOSM has partnered with four European countries (Sweden, Scotland, Iceland, and Norway) to advance recruitment and retention of health and other public sector workers in the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. The project, titled Recruit and Retain 2: Making it Work, has received €2 million from the European Union. Within Canada, the project activities will focus on recruitment and retention initiatives of physicians in Northern Ontario and Nunavut.

Conclusion

Since NOSM opened its doors in 2005, the School has proven that this unique, made-in-the-North solution to improving the health of the people and communities of Northern Ontario is working. NOSM and its collaborators continue to work diligently to ensure the School has the necessary support to continue to deliver on its mission of Innovative education and research for a healthier North.

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