



Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

## **Institutional Vision, Proposed Mandate Statement and Priority Objectives**

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A submission to begin the process of developing strategic mandate agreements (SMAs):

To:

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

From:

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&

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## Part 1: Algonquin College - Proposed Mandate Statement

In developing our new five-year Strategic Plan (2012–2017), we at Algonquin College spent the past nine months reimagining—with our stakeholders—what it means to be a postsecondary institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have identified two essential ingredients for producing the kind of graduates Ontario needs to compete in today's global knowledge economy. The first is authentic experiential learning. The second is digital connectivity. To a large degree, these are inseparable.

The rapid proliferation collaborations between higher education and industry—such as iTunes U, MIT and Harvard's EdX, Coursera, Udacity, and the Khan Academy—demonstrate we are in a new and exciting time in education. Institutions are testing new concepts and sharing efforts in a bid to increase access, improve quality and lower cost. In our view, the combination of applied education and technology-enabled learning has the potential to transform Ontario postsecondary education.

### Strategic mandate

Our strategic mandate mirrors our vision of being *a global leader in digitally connected applied education and training*. It is rooted in our belief that our mission as a college is to democratize education, *transforming hopes and dreams into lifelong career success*.

**Algonquin College empowers the communities it serves by providing highly flexible, engaging and accessible applied education and training built on informed programming choices and smart investments in technology, pedagogy and professional development—delivering the best combination of face-to-face, online and mobile modalities.**

This approach to learning is outcome-focused. It yields graduates who can apply what they know even in situations they've never encountered before. It gives them the practical and theoretical abilities to make sense of complex environments and communicate their understanding to others. Connecting students to peers, professional contacts and the broader community, it is the foundation of lifelong learning.

### Making a strong Ontario PSE system even stronger

Algonquin recognizes the urgency for all postsecondary institutions in Ontario to contribute to the development of a sustainable and fully integrated education system. In keeping with the Minister's call to action, and building on Algonquin's strengths and experience, this strategic mandate agreement identifies three priority objectives. Two of these support transformation of the system; the third defines Algonquin's differentiation regionally. With support from the Government of Ontario, Algonquin will;

1. **Create an Ontario Institute for Digital Education (OIDE).** A consortium of individuals, institutions, and organizations committed to quality online education, the OIDE will leverage Algonquin's experience to build a member-sustained, not-for-profit organization. It will focus on analysis, advocacy, community building, professional development, and on advancing cost-saving collaborations in technology-enabled learning to help transform higher education.
2. **Develop the initial business model and serve as the implementation partner for the Ontario Online Institute (OOI).** Capitalizing on the College's existing experience in delivering quality online education, Algonquin will partner with the Ministry, OntarioLearn and leading-edge technology companies to develop and deploy an initial working business model for the Ontario Online Institute. Once operational, the scalable, student-centric model will be made available to all Ontario postsecondary institutions, delivering on the Government of Ontario's commitment to build the Ontario Online Institute.
3. **Launch "Algonquin Connects".** Creating a centralized mechanism for facilitating entrepreneurial thinking, community partnerships, and other socio-economic activities, this program will simplify partners' access to Algonquin, increase student mobility, and ensure all full-time students have the opportunity to obtain work experience prior to graduation.

**Impact**

Delivering on these three objectives will:

- Lower the total cost of education for students.
- Increase access, improve the quality of education and reduce costs of operation through the introduction of new models for curriculum development, online program delivery, credit transfer, prior learning assessment and recognition, data mining and more.
- Promote creativity and innovation in teaching and learning.
- Build a system that supports a paradigm shift.
- Provide Ontario institutions with a robust framework for the effective delivery of online education.
- Establish a central repository for industry best practices.
- Deliver immediate benefits—including cost efficiencies—through shared curricula, research, open education resources, and services.
- Test the environment for delivering shared services.
- Provide the government with a model for institutional business analytics and data sharing.
- Embed entrepreneurial thinking throughout Algonquin.
- Provide business and community partners with a single point of contact for engaging College support

## Part 2: Algonquin College – Vision

Our organizational philosophy at Algonquin is defined by our mission, vision and core values. Stakeholders affirmed those values during our recent strategic planning process, believing they accurately reflect the principles and beliefs shared by the community. At the same time, stakeholders encouraged the College to revise its mission and vision statements to more accurately reflect its aspirations for the future. The following articulation of our purpose is intended to serve as a point of inspiration, clearly differentiating Algonquin from other institutions.

**Our mission**

To transform hopes and dreams into skills and knowledge, leading to lifelong career success.

**Our vision**

To be a global leader in digitally connected applied education and training.

**Our values**

- *Caring:* We have a sincere and compassionate interest in the wellbeing of the individual.
- *Learning:* We believe in the pursuit of knowledge, personal growth and development.
- *Integrity:* We believe in trust, honesty and fairness in all relationships and transactions.
- *Respect:* We value the dignity and uniqueness of the individual, and equity and diversity in our community.

## Part 3: Algonquin College - Priority Objectives

### Priority #1 – Create an Ontario Institute for Digital Education (OIDE)

Algonquin has proved that the broad adoption of technology-enabled learning practices has the capacity to increase access, improve quality and lower cost. We contend that system-wide investments in this area have the ability to promote inter-institutional collaboration and the more efficient use of resources. These will lead to greater flexibility and choice, improved pathways for student mobility, and increased cost efficiencies for students, postsecondary institutions and the government.

The launch of **The Ontario Institute for Digital Education** will leverage Algonquin’s experience, creating a body dedicated to the study, implementation and sharing of digital education best practices and services.

## **Our experience**

Algonquin is uniquely positioned to support the system's adoption of new approaches to technology-enabled learning. Our commitment to—and passion for—digital education has been supported over the past 15 years by investments in applied research, pedagogy, professional development, software development, technology infrastructure, corporate governance and institutional culture. This commitment has transformed both our online and on-campus experience.

While online enrolment is the fastest-growing line of business at Algonquin, it is our investment in hybrid (or blended) learning that has had the most significant impact to date. Today, full-time students at Algonquin College receive on average 20% of their program hours online. We plan to increase this to 30% by 2017. For the 2012 fall semester, 6,300 full-time students are enrolled in mobile learning programs that involve the mandatory use of a laptop or other mobile devices. By 2015, all full-time Algonquin students will be enrolled in mobile learning programs.

In addition to providing a quality online experience, the College's hybrid investments have given Algonquin the ability to grow without significant investments in physical infrastructure. Through our online activity, we have been able to maintain a physical infrastructure ratio of 70 gross square feet per student—the lowest in the Ontario college system, and 39% lower than the 2010 average of 113 gross square feet for Ontario colleges. Technology and the optimized use of facilities save Algonquin significant capital and operating costs while also providing the capacity for future enrolment growth. If we had to deliver our current online hours in a traditional format, we would require an additional 200,000 gross square feet of facilities—at an estimated capital cost beyond \$80 million, plus a minimum \$2 million in annual operating costs.

System-wide adoption of lessons learned at Algonquin would increase capacity without requiring the same rate of investment in expensive infrastructure. The OIDE will build on this foundation of knowledge and expertise, providing a framework for sharing research, thought leadership, best practices and services for the benefit of Ontario's taxpayers, postsecondary institutions and students.

## **The concept**

Bringing together all 45 postsecondary institutions in the province, the not-for-profit OIDE will be dedicated to helping institutions and individual educators improve the quality, scale, and breadth of online education in Ontario. Leveraging Algonquin's experience and applied insights, the OIDE will collaborate with learning organizations, government agencies and private-sector supporters to continually strengthen the foundation for digital education across the province—while working to ensure online education becomes part of everyday life, accessible to and affordable by anyone, anywhere, at any time.

With a funding model similar to the Ontario Colleges Library Association, the OIDE will leverage \$9 million in start-up funding from the Ministry to transform to a member-sustained model within three years. This will help ensure the OIDE meets the needs of its members, providing services of measurable value and fulfilling the government's vision of higher education transformation—in which innovation, productivity and access are at the forefront of all technology-based learning implementations.

## **Specific initiatives**

- **Provide training, certification and support for innovative uses of educational technologies.** Building on Algonquin's existing Innovation Centre, the Institute will occupy a central location at the College in order to showcase the latest advances in the use of technology in the learning environment, and to house its education and training-focused broadcasting facilities. The Centre will provide private-sector partners with a real-world, applied environment for pressure-testing technologies while also supporting efforts to educate, train and certify Ontario's online educators. Each year, the OIDE will coordinate professional development and training activities to ensure educators have the skills to thrive in the fast-changing, digitally connected postsecondary environment. Each workshop and session will be developed *by* practitioners *for* practitioners, enabling thousands across the province to collaborate cost effectively with peers and experts via real-time and asynchronous meetings.

- **Implement a new model for the provision of digital textbooks and electronic resources.** In partnership with higher education publishers and participating postsecondary institutions, the OIDE will develop and implement a model for the use of digital textbooks and resources as an alternative to traditional printed textbooks. With a goal of lowering student costs by 50%, the Institute will work with Pearson, Nelson, Wiley, McGraw Hill and other publishers to develop a provincial eText and eResource model.
- **Partner with innovative and industry-leading educational software to lower student costs.** Algonquin is the only postsecondary institution in Canada partnered directly with Adobe to provide all mobile learning students with Adobe’s Creative Suite software. This partnership provides Algonquin students with industry-leading video, photo and multimedia software, including ePortfolio creation tools, at lower-than-retail costs—with discounts exceeding 75%. The OIDE will leverage Algonquin’s relationships to establish province-wide licensing models for products from Adobe, Corel, Microsoft and other interested providers.
- **Develop and implement Provincial Learning Units (PLU).** The OIDE will pilot an initiative to break down common core and high enrolment courses into discreet competency-based learning units. The PLUs could then be packaged together to form entire courses or be taken independently for credit recovery, reach-ahead opportunities or general interest.
- **Make available Algonquin’s Centralized Course Outline Management and Program Mapping System.** Through the Institute, Algonquin will make its Course Outline Management and Mapping System (COMMS) available to all Ontario Colleges. Developed over a 10-year period, COMMS combines web-based course outline development, program mapping and direct-to-student delivery with cloud-based storage. Institutions using a common platform such as COMMS would be able to share curricula easily, map courses for credit transfer, and streamline Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition processes. They will also be able to ensure that curricula, vocational learning outcomes, general education outcomes, essential employability skills, and course learning requirements are mapped against program-level outcomes and requirements. During the 2012–2013 academic year, Algonquin will make COMMS available to Confederation College as a pilot, and is prepared to extend this system to MTCU and all Ontario colleges as a centralized solution. Province-wide implementation of COMMS would be a key step toward the development of common core courses, credit transfer and curriculum sharing—resulting in better-quality courses, higher productivity, lower costs, less duplication and a more coordinated college curriculum.
- **Launch an Ontario Open Education Resource Commons (OOER Commons).** Embracing open standards, the OIDE will establish a web-based Ontario Open Education Resource Commons, allowing educators at every college and university to use and contribute high-quality educational resources, ranging from lesson plans and learning units to learning objects and online learning modules. Modelled after the SOL\*R project<sup>1</sup> in British Columbia, the OOER Commons will use a Creative Commons™ licence model to ensure all participants can access and modify available resources. The provision of digital learning activities based on simple templates will allow for easy modification and customization, enhancing the educational experience while reducing the costs associated with developing interactive activities. Algonquin will pre-populate the OOER Commons with more than 200 learning objects.
- **Fund the development of captioning and text-to-voice web tools.** The OIDE will help the province realize its goal of creating a fully accessible postsecondary environment through the development of Text-to-Audio and Audio-to-Text captioning systems, which will be made available to all postsecondary institutions. The OIDE will assist organizations and their employees in delivering AODA-compliant education.
- **Conduct and share applied research-driven best practices.** The OIDE will collaborate with organizations such as Educause, the League for Innovation, HEQCO, OntarioLearn, Contact North and other postsecondary institutions to identify the latest innovations in digital education. Its presence at Algonquin will enable it to test theories in a truly applied manner, documenting and sharing classroom-tested best practices with stakeholders across the province and around the world.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://solr.bccampus.ca/wp/>

**Impact**

The OIDE will serve as central repository for the study and sharing of best practices and services relating to digital education. Algonquin’s contribution of materials and services as the OIDE’s charter member will amount to an investment of more than \$3 million in the creation of a more open and collaborative postsecondary system. The OIDE will:

- Make available to all full- and part-time college and university faculty common training and certification in the development and delivery of online learning.
- Enable system-wide adoption of an eTexts and eResources model that will lower costs, increase productivity and make learning more accessible and affordable for all Ontarians. Estimated student savings have the potential to total \$150 million annually.
- Provide significant cost savings through the use of PLUs as credit-recovery options. Students will save an average of \$250 per repeated course; a large college could save up to \$750,000 through improved retention; and savings to the province would exceed \$10 million through lower operating grants.
- Enhance quality assurance and facilitate credit transfer through system-wide implementation of a Centralized Course Outline Management and Program Mapping System.
- Provide the system with over \$5 million in curriculum-development cost savings through the use of resources in the Ontario Open Educational Resources Commons—including more than 100 online course modules and 200 learning objects.
- Save member postsecondary institutions more than \$250,000 through adoption of AODA technologies distributed by the OIDE.
- Provide practical guidance on optimizing technology-enabled learning by distributing best practice reports and online education research.

**Priority #2 – Develop the model and serve as the implementation partner for the Ontario Online Institute (OOI)**

For Ontario to achieve its ambitious target of a 70% postsecondary attainment rate, postsecondary education must attract greater numbers of non-traditional students including the underemployed, second-career students, Aboriginal students, first-generation learners, new Canadians, people with disabilities, and students in small, rural and remote areas. Through the development of a business model and scalable technology platform, Algonquin proposes leveraging its experience to support the government in launching an Ontario Online Institute (OOI) that has the active participation of Ontario’s postsecondary institutions.

**Our experience**

As the undisputed leader in the provision of online courses and programs in Ontario, Algonquin has the expertise to deliver on the province’s commitment to launch the Ontario Online Institute. This year, Algonquin’s online course offerings (through eAlgonquin and OntarioLearn) will exceed 30,000 course registrations. Additionally, hybrid or blended-learning course registrations will approach 80,000. Today, the College’s fastest-growing line of business is its online programming. No other Ontario institution has Algonquin’s experience delivering year-round, continuous intake online programs and services. Continued investment in this area has the capacity to grow enrolments at the institutional level, while also examining and testing new approaches that have the potential to dramatically lower costs at the system level.

**The concept**

With an investment of \$6 million over two years, we propose a partnership between the Ministry and Algonquin that would model the Western Governors University consortium approach<sup>2</sup>. Supported by the provincial government, OntarioLearn and the private sector, this partnership would see Algonquin work collaboratively to develop the operating model and serve as the implementation partner for the OOI.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.wgu.edu/about/WGU/overview>

With Ministry support and consent for piloting the delivery of individual PLUs, three-year online degrees, and four-year honours degrees, the model would capitalize on the efforts of the OIDE to realize immediate returns from the development of shared curricula, learning objects and online course materials.

Committed to building a student-centered platform for online education, the College will leverage its extensive expertise collaborating with leading-edge technology suppliers to develop an end-to-end online environment that can be scaled across all colleges and universities within two years. The iterative development approach will serve as a model not only for improvements in online education but in traditional on-campus education as well.

### Specific initiatives

- **Develop the model.** Staying true to our belief in the value of applied learning, we will work collaboratively with partners to create a working model that can be scaled across the province for the benefit of students, the Government of Ontario and each of Ontario's postsecondary institutions. This collaborative and iterative approach to the development of the OOI will provide opportunities for open and transparent discussion on important foundational issues—including the impact of higher participation rates on the provincial budget; ways for stakeholders to realize cost savings through online delivery; and the use of different staffing models that meet all stakeholders' interests. Also included in this effort would be the development of standards that support curriculum development and the digital learning activities.
- **Expand course and program choice.** To meet immediate demand, Algonquin will convert up to 25% of its current full-time program inventory to online and pilot the implementation of College massive open online courses (MOOCs). It will also develop new curricula with possible residency components specifically for online formats, immediately increasing choice and enrolment capacity for no fewer than 1,600 students. These courses and programs will be made available both through Algonquin and for system-wide adoption through OntarioLearn.
- **Implement findings from the Ontario Institute for Digital Education.** Research and best practices identified by the OIDE will guide the implementation of Algonquin's working model. Through the implementation of standard learning objectives, course and program modules, and the use of OERs, digital textbooks and PLUs, the effort will establish a working model for the creation, sharing and use of online curricula and services. As an example, the implementation of PLUs as independent study mini-courses will reduce the cost to students who need to repeat work to obtain a credit, and increase institutional retention rates.
- **Refine the technology platform and model the use of learning and institutional data analytics.** In collaboration with leading-edge technology companies, and based on a shared services model, Algonquin will use its experience to refine its existing technology platform and processes—deploying an online environment that incorporates the latest advances in learning management systems, CRM, mobile, cloud computing, and social learning. Built to scale, the platform will serve as the model for OOI, providing future participants with the ability to reduce software and infrastructure costs by pooling demand and negotiating system-wide licenses and services. In partnership with IBM Cognos and OCAS, the College will embed the ability to measure effectiveness and efficiency into the model.
- **Pilot alternative approaches to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).** Traditional PLAR procedures are time-consuming and costly, requiring students to submit a portfolio, write an exam or take a skills-based test for further assessment by subject matter experts. Through its OOI model, Algonquin will test different PLAR approaches<sup>3</sup>, looking to overcome existing limitations and return to a student-centric focus.

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<sup>3</sup> Prior Learning Assessment with Latent Semantic Analysis [http://dspace.ou.nl/bitstream/1820/932/1/kalz\\_et\\_al\\_Isaintel07.pdf](http://dspace.ou.nl/bitstream/1820/932/1/kalz_et_al_Isaintel07.pdf)

**Impact**

Algonquin has shown investments in online education increase access, improve quality and lower costs. The development of a working model for the OOI will provide the government with the ability to test new approaches in collaborative and controlled manner. In addition, this effort will:

- Provide a model for a scalable and financially sustainable Ontario Online Institute.
- Increase access by a minimum of 1,600 enrolments for fully online programs—and thousands via MOOCs.
- Increase choice and flexibility through the expansion of online courses and programs, including three-year online degrees, PLUs and MOOCs.
- Lower future capital costs by increasing institutional capacity with existing infrastructure.
- Reduce curriculum-development costs by more than \$500,000 by taking advantage of economies of scale and collaboration between institutions.
- Establish standards for the development of online curricula.
- Integrate lifecycle data analysis, leading to data-driven decision making.
- Further enhance Ontario's reputation for high-quality education.

**Priority #3 – Launch Algonquin Connects, a centralized effort to facilitate entrepreneurial thinking and community partnerships**

We believe students learn best by applying knowledge through experience. Work-integrated learning is about being able to utilize newly learned concepts in non-textbook contexts; to conceptually make sense of complex, real-world situations; to express concepts meaningfully to others; and to innovate and be entrepreneurial. Such learning provides students the opportunity to improve their life skills: self-direction, collaboration and teamwork, information gathering, and clear communication.

The benefit of experiential education extends to the community, giving businesses access to capable talent eager to help them grow. To further foster this mutually advantageous relationship, the College will launch Algonquin Connects, a centralized effort to facilitate entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial thinking, as well as advance richer community partnerships.

**Our experience**

Since its inception, Algonquin has integrated experiential learning into all aspects of its programs, developing well-established partnerships with industry for field and clinical placements, apprenticeships, co-op, applied research opportunities and other work-related experiences. In times of economic restraint, when resources are stretched, it is increasingly challenging to engage industry stakeholders in accepting placement students. Consequently, creative and innovative solutions to engage community and industry are required to sustain and augment experiential learning opportunities.

Our commitment to supporting Ontario's entrepreneurs and fostering entrepreneurial thinking led us to join Polytechnics Canada. Over the past four years, we have dramatically expanded our applied research efforts, including the establishment of four applied research centres. In 2012, more than 550 students and faculty engaged in research projects, a ten-fold increase over five years. These impressive results demonstrate that colleges must play an even more significant role fostering innovation among Ontario's small, medium, and large enterprises. Algonquin aspires to serve as an economic catalyst for Eastern Ontario and a destination institution for local organizations seeking to expand their businesses. We fully recognize fiscal and workplace realities require a broad, collaborative approach to applied research and community building and Algonquin looks to translate this partnership focus into a new framework for community engagement.

**The concept**

Through Algonquin Connects, we will create a new educational framework that places entrepreneurial thinking and community engagement at the centre of everything we do. Algonquin Connects will coordinate and promote the College's experiential learning activities, providing a central location—both physically and online—for linking community and business partners with the College. The use of leading-edge social networking approaches will



link students, industry, community, alumni, and employees, providing literally thousands of opportunities for meaningful connections.

**Specific initiatives**

- **Embed entrepreneurial thinking and work experience opportunities in all College programs.** Algonquin Connects will work to embed entrepreneurial learning outcomes in every College program and align co-ops, work placements, volunteer arrangements, apprenticeships and applied research to provide “opportunities for every full-time student to have a work experience outside of the classroom.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Expand applied research and innovation efforts at Algonquin.** Building on our success, Algonquin will seek to expand applied research activities such that 25% of its programs are active participants and every student in those programs has the opportunity to graduate with applied research skills. Local economic development agencies will be encouraged to set up business offices for applied research and incubators for entrepreneurship at the College to make it easier for industry to receive the support it needs to turn ideas into businesses.
- **Lobby for mandated credit transfer.** Algonquin believes strongly that the system must shift away from the current institutional and program-centric credit transfer approach toward one that is student-centered. The Government of Ontario should take into account research compiled by HEQCO and the Ontario Council for Articulation and Transfer and mandate legislation to create a transfer system that places the needs of all students (domestic, landed immigrants and international) above those of individual institutions. This would address the significant inefficiencies and lost productivity inherent in the current voluntary model. Government action in Alberta, British Columbia, Ireland and Scotland has dramatically improved student mobility: similar efforts in Ontario would reap similar returns.
- **Expand postsecondary educational partnerships.** As an ongoing commitment to improving pathways, Algonquin will expand the number of transfer students by 50% over the next three years. We are committed to working with like-minded institutions such as Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, La Cité collégiale and Trent University to develop a greater mix of bilateral, multilateral, concurrent use and joint collaborative partnerships. We believe passionately that it is in our collective interest to work diligently to add choice and flexibility at both the program and broader institutional levels.
- **Advocate for the Algonquin College Centre for Health and Wellness.** In support of growing healthcare challenges, Algonquin will continue to advocate for the establishment of an Algonquin College Family Health Team and the development of the Algonquin Centre for Health and Wellness. Our belief in the value of the primary health care model and the importance of coordinating our programming to match provincial needs is leading us to champion our ‘health hub’ approach to health education. This community-based approach, where students apply their learning via on-site clinics, integrate new technologies, and work with industry on applied research projects, meets the needs of the stakeholders we serve.

<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Successfully pursuing this priority will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide businesses and the community with easier access to the talent and entrepreneurial skills of student and employees of the College.</li><li>• Embed entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial thinking in all students and employees</li><li>• Ensure all students have the opportunity to engage in a work-integrated learning, applied research or co-curricular volunteer experience prior to graduation.</li><li>• Promote the economic and social impact of Algonquin’s community activities.</li><li>• Expand student mobility options.</li><li>• Support efforts to manage healthcare costs and grow the health and wellness workforce.</li></ul>
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<sup>4</sup> [Algonquin College Strategic Plan 2012-2017](#), Goal #4, pg. 13