



For Immediate Distribution
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2008 ORION Awards
Celebrating Ontario's contribution to research, teaching and learning

TORONTO – International research collaborations and innovations that are transforming medical training and film production, and taking teaching and learning to the next level in virtual environments, are being recognized with Ontario's annual ORION Awards.

Presented at the "Powering Innovation: A National Summit" conference at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre today, the ORION Awards recognize achievements in Ontario research, education and scientific discovery.

"This year's winners represent the cutting edge of technology and innovation, much of it pioneered right here in Ontario," says Phil Baker, President and CEO of the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), which presents the awards. "It's vital to celebrate these home-grown success stories and raise awareness of the phenomenal work that our scientists, researchers and educators are engaged in, and the impact it is having here at home and around the world," he said.

The winners have also received acknowledgements from Ontario Premier, Dalton McGuinty.

2008 ORION Award winners:

Ryerson University and CineGrid are the winner of the ORION Discovery Award. The Toronto school is a founding member of CineGrid, a global research consortium that uses advanced networks and collaboration production technologies that are revolutionizing motion picture production and distribution. The school's digital cinema team at the Rogers Communications Centre - led by Director Dr. Paul Hearty - is helping to establish Ontario and Canada as leaders and hub of expertise in these new technologies.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) is winner of the ORION Learning Award. The school, which shares main campuses in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, is training the next generation of physicians and nurses in a distributed and interactive teaching and learning environment. NOSM points to a long list of innovative programs, including a cross-border collaboration with California's Stanford School of Medicine and the iAnatomy project, which uses advanced networks to allow faculty and students to view and manipulate hyper-realistic tissue objects using advanced 3D stereoscopic equipment.

Dr. Todd Sands of the University of Windsor is winner of the ORION Leadership Award. The Executive Director and CIO of Windsor's Centre for Smart Community Innovation is a recognized pioneer in the development of community-based broadband networks, which have played a critical role in bringing the benefits of advanced technologies and "connectivity" to regional communities. The former chair of the Regional Networks of Ontario is also one of the founders of the ORION network. His efforts have driven the Windsor-Essex region's smart community successes and shaped the growing recognition that advanced technology and connectivity are critical to economic development and attracting investment in research and innovation across Ontario.

Awards of Merit

Hundreds of Ontario students have been inspired to consider a career in sciences as a result of the Virtual Researcher on Call (VROC) program, winner of the ORION Discovery Award of Merit. An initiative of Partners in Research, VROC connects high school students with scientists and experts in

university and research institutions through videoconferencing over advanced networks. Based at the University of Western Ontario, the program's goal is to educate students and build interest in science at a critical point in academic development and decision-making. The program has so far linked 36 school boards with more than a dozen universities and labs.

The Virtual World Design Centre at Loyalist College is winner of the ORION Learning Award of Merit. The Belleville, Ontario school, the first Canadian college to build a campus in the virtual world of Second Life, now shares its expertise in designing virtual environments for clients around the world. The college is leveraging the knowledge and best practices it identified in creating its virtual campus to launch a design centre, which now contributes to the development of online and virtual environments for several other educational institutions, government organizations and businesses around the world.

Winner of the ORION Learning Award of Merit, *Alice (Experiments) in Wonderland - A Convergent Telematic Performance* is a cross-border collaboration that is pioneering a new form of theatre, using a blend of live and virtual elements in real time over advanced networks. Students from the University of Waterloo, the University of Central Florida and Bradley University in Illinois collaborated to perform the play for both local and remote audiences in a live performance that bridged hundreds of kilometers over ORION, CANARIE and Internet2. Over 100 faculty, students and staff were involved in the ground-breaking experiment.

Few people can claim to have contributed to the development of the Internet. Dr. Hussein Mouftah, winner of the ORION Leadership Award of Merit, is one of those people. The Canada Research Chair in Optical Networks and professor in the School of Information Technology and Engineering at the University of Ottawa is a world-renowned researcher and instructor who has contributed greatly to the knowledge of advanced networks and telecommunications. In a career spanning more than 30 years, he has been a prolific source of information and teaching for the researchers under his tutelage and network engineers worldwide.

York University's CIO Robert (Bob) Gagne is winner of the ORION Leadership Award of Merit. Mr. Gagne has been instrumental in building the information technology platform that has helped the university establish its status as a world-class research institution. A co-founder and chair of GTAnet, Gagne played a critical role in the creation of the ORION network and ORION Point of Presence (PoP) at York, providing the leadership that helped ensure several critical research and postsecondary institutions in the GTA were able to leverage ORION to advance their research and education capabilities.

About ORION

The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION) is Ontario's ultra high-speed research and education network which connects all of Ontario's universities, most colleges, several medical and other public research facilities and a growing number of school boards to one another and to the global grid of research and education networks. Stretching 5,800 kilometres over 21 communities throughout Ontario, ORION connects over 1.3 million Ontario researchers, scientists, students, teachers and staff to critical infrastructure for research, education and innovation. Learn more at www.orion.on.ca.

Full descriptions of the winners are available at www.orion.on.ca/2008awards.

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