

**MEMORANDUM TO:** College Presidents  
Colleges Ontario  
Council of Ontario Universities

**FROM:** Philip Steenkamp  
Deputy Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities

**DATE:** January 18, 2008

**RE:** Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Expansion in 2008-09

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I wish to make you aware of an invitation that the Ministry of Education has just issued to school boards to apply for approval to offer Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) programs in 2008-09. As many of you may be aware, the Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSMs) provide unique opportunities to promote links between high schools, colleges, universities, apprenticeship training and community/sector partners, for the benefit of Ontario's young people and a strong economy.

The SHSM program aligns with the government's strategic goals to improve student success in secondary education and increase access to and participation in postsecondary education, training and employment opportunities. The overarching goal for the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy is to increase the secondary school graduation rate to 85% by 2010-11.

First launched in 2006-07, the SHSM is a specialized career-focussed program option for students within the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). As such, the career focus and SHSM requirement for pathways to apprenticeship training, college, university and the workplace also support the strategic goals of the Reaching Higher initiative of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to increase student participation and success in postsecondary education and training. In 2007-08, student access to these specialized programs increased significantly as more than 6000 students participated in 153 pilot SHSMs in 67 boards across Ontario.

I would encourage you to read the attached information copy of the SHSM application package, which outlines the Ministry of Education's SHSM expansion strategy for 2008-09, key dates in the application process, and Ministry of Education requirements connected to the SHSM. You will note that these requirements include, among others, an expectation that

school boards collaborate with their local business and postsecondary education and training partners in the offering of approved SHSMs. I thank those of you currently engaged in supporting the 67 boards that launched SHSMs last year, and for your involvement and advice regarding the pathways for students and the new sector guides. I would encourage all of you to consider ways in which your respective institutions and organizations can work together with your local school board partners in this endeavour during 2008-09.

Key dates in the 2008-09 process:

Similar to last year, colleges and universities working with boards on the SHSMs are invited to participate in the following sessions/activities:

- January 29/30 SHSM Symposium: opportunity for additional Qs and As
- May 20, 21, 22 Orientation/implementation symposium
- Weeks of July 7 & 14 Writing teams to develop sector-specific guides for the new Majors, to edit sector-specific guides for existing Majors, to review and edit CLAs

In 2008-09, our goal will be to ensure that all 70 eligible school boards, the provincial schools and the eligible School Authority have opportunities to offer SHSM programs, and, to increase the number of SHSM initiatives with an approved dual credit component, through the separate dual credit application process managed by the School College Work Initiative (SCWI). The postsecondary education and training sectors have an important opportunity and partnership role to play in assisting the government and school boards in reaching this goal, to the mutual benefit of all partners in education. I want to assure you that, as we move forward, the Ministries of Education and Training, Colleges and Universities will continue to work together with the postsecondary sector to increase quality learning opportunities for Ontario's secondary school students.

If you have any questions, please contact Grant Clarke, Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch, 416.325.2518, [grant.clarke@ontario.ca](mailto:grant.clarke@ontario.ca) or Ginette Plourde, Director, French-Language Education Policy and Programs Branch, 416.327.9072, [ginette.plourde@ontario.ca](mailto:ginette.plourde@ontario.ca). Please note that the closing date for SHSM applications by school boards is February 8, 2008.

Philip Steenkamp

Encl. (2)

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Dominic Giroux, Assistant Deputy Minister, FLEEOD

Marie-Lison Fougère, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Programs Division,  
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Shamira Madhany, Director, Postsecondary Accountability Branch, Ministry of Training,  
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Janet Mason, Assistant Deputy Minister, Postsecondary Education Division, Ministry of  
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Kevin French, Assistant Deputy Minister, ETD

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Student Success Leaders