

Meet Shanda Lohse, MD. . .

During her first year of college at Columbia University, an advisor asked Dr. Lohse if she had ever considered medical school. Although the member of the Standing Rock Lakota had excelled in science in high school, she had never met a Native physician; becoming a doctor had never crossed her mind. She began exploring medicine, and entered the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1993. Dr. Lohse says now that she would not have completed her M.D. without the help of the Center for American Indian and Minority Health (CAIMH), a Center of Excellence (COE) at the school. Along with financial and educational support, the CAIMH director and her fellow Native American students gave her essential emotional and spiritual support, enabling her to “walk in two worlds.” Today, Dr. Lohse serves as a physician at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage. She also serves as treasurer on the Association of American Indian Physicians executive board and continues to mentor Native Americans considering and in medical school.



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About the Program

- The Centers of Excellence (COE) are authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. Together with the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), COEs function to increase the representation of minority and disadvantaged students in the health professions.
- As one of three Native American Centers of Excellence in the country, the University of Minnesota Center for American Indian and Minority Health helps students be true to their Native American beliefs and spirituality, while following the path of Western science in medical school.
- More information on the program activities is available on the program website:

<http://www.med.umn.edu/duluth/about/CAIMH/home.html>

According to Dr. Lohse . . .

... on her path to a medical career:

I had never met a Native physician . . . It wasn’t part of my reality at all - Native Americans being physicians.

For someone like me, who spent a lot of time on the reservation and really didn’t know a lot about the outside world, it’s very difficult to get through something as grueling and intense as medical school. The center was totally there for me.

Sometimes Native people have to step off the pathway to medicine for a while. I had to find myself spiritually and figure out who I was and what I really wanted out of life.

... on serving her community today:

I love it. It’s exactly why I went into medicine; all my patients are Native Americans. It’s exactly why I went to medical school, to serve my people.

It’s definitely true that, as a Native physician, a lot of my patients listen more to what I say because I’m Native and they know I’ve grown up similar to them.



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