

2021 Partnership Update Niagara Workforce Planning Board (NWPB) and Brock University

On September 22, 2020, NWPB and Brock University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize their long-time collaboration and commitment to producing beneficial outcomes for the local community. Together they are working toward a shared commitment to help build and nurture a prosperous Niagara through initiatives that support the health, vitality and well-being of the region. The agreement represents a mutual advantage of working together through research and knowledge mobilization and experiential learning to better understand and address the workforce development changes and future of work in Niagara. This collaborative partnership is reflective of Brock's commitments to community engagement, knowledge mobilization, experiential learning, and their shared priority to support the economic development of Niagara.

Projects and Initiatives in 2021

Below is an overview of initiatives that occurred in 2021 between NWPB and Brock University:

Research

Research collaboration between NWPB and Brock University offers a unique opportunity to address the changing dynamics of Niagara's economy, the future of work and the exploration of other key indicators to measure Niagara's present and future growth. In 2021 NWPB and Brock University collaborated in researching:

- [The economic impact of students going digital](#). This NWPB study measured the direct and indirect economic impact of post-secondary students participating in remote online learning through the lens of the Niagara rental market, public transit ridership, declines in localized student spending, and a decrease in available labour supply. This research identified that the COVID-19 pandemic led to between a 21.2% and 25.8% reduction in student economic output compared to pre-pandemic estimates and while it was conducted to inform the Niagara Region, the study also provided Brock University with valuable insight.
- The impact and efficacy of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative. By conducting a thorough evaluation, NWPB, in partnership with Brock University's Department of Sociology, were able to provide the Niagara Region with information on best practices, recommendations that allow for continued investment towards breaking the cycle of poverty, and literature to inform and guide the development of other poverty reduction initiatives.

Service

NWPB and Brock University supported each other in several ways in 2021 to address their shared priority of building and nurturing a prosperous Niagara community comprised of a diverse and talented workforce. Initiatives included:

- NWPB's support for UNESCO Chair, Community Sustainability: From Local to Global, Professor, Biological Sciences Liette Vasseur's grant application through

the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Race, Gender and Diversity Initiative (RDG).

- NWPB's support for New Frontiers in Research Fund application regarding childcare policy facilitated by Brock's Office of Research Services (ORS).
- Brock shared access with the NWPB to Brock University Library resources to support and enhance collaborations.
- Dr. Jeff Boggs, Graduate Program Director and Associate Professor, Geography and Tourism Studies, reviewed NWPB's economic impact report (originally delivered in 2018) in conjunction with Charles Conteh, Director of the Niagara Community Observatory (NCO) and Political Science Professor, and Dr. Carol Phillips, NCO Research Coordinator.

Student Experiential Learning

Student experiential learning provides unique opportunities for students at the university to gain real world experience as part of their studies. The partnership between Brock University and NWPB continues to provide meaningful and hands-on experiences for students. In 2021, partnership in student experiential learning included:

- A Research Assistant co-op placement at NWPB. In this role, the student's major activities involved collecting data from Statistics Canada as well as data provided by Brock University, analyzing the data, compiling it in Excel, and creating briefing notes. This experience not only provided the student with the opportunity to do real-world research, but it also provided important insight into the world of professional work and how workplaces operate amidst the global pandemic.

Upcoming Projects and Initiatives in 2022

Brock University and NWPB will continue to work closely together towards mutually beneficial outcomes in 2022. Initiatives and programs have been identified as opportunities to continue to advance the partnership between Brock and NWPB.

Specifically, 2022 will see the launch of the Economic Impact Report, a collaboration between NWPB and Brock University. The 2022 report will outline the history of previous iterations of this report, the link, and the differences between the Students Going Digital Report (referenced above) and the Economic Impact Report.