

# Regional Community Builder

Brock University Community Engagement Strategic Plan





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# Introduction

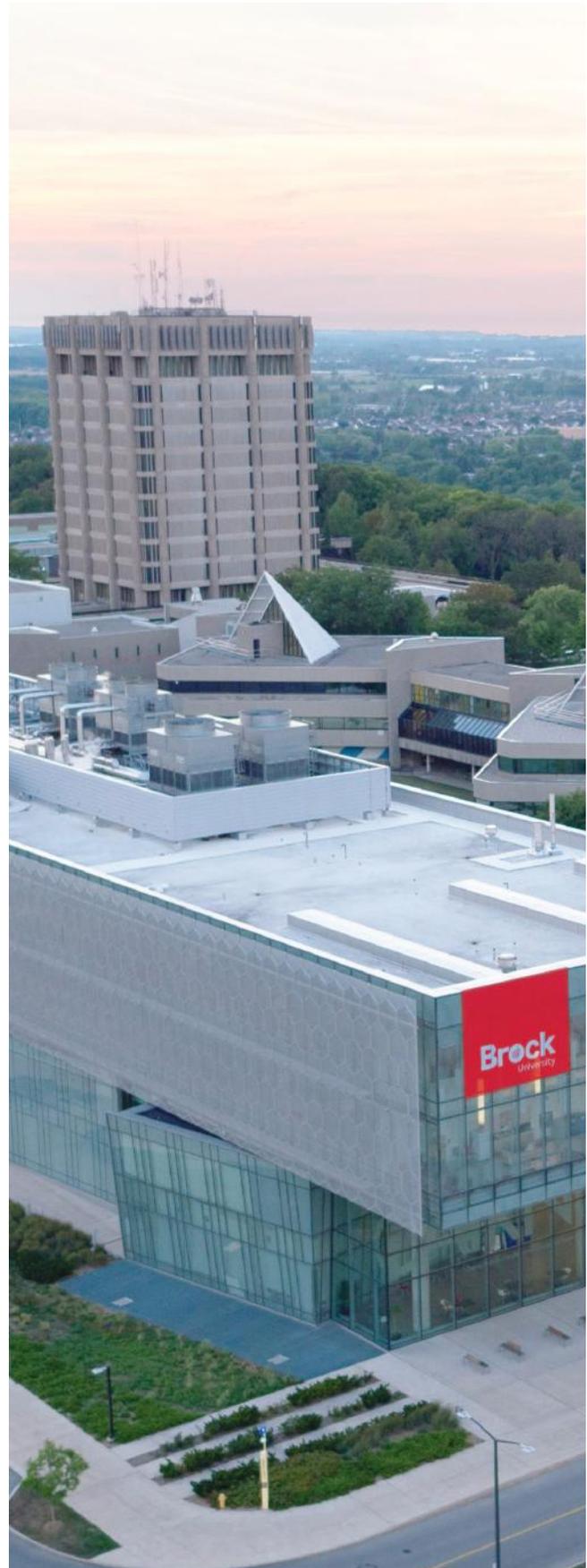
Brock University has reached an important transition point in its history. In 2018, Brock approved Niagara Roots – Global Reach, its new Institutional Strategic Plan. This strategic plan provides Brock with the solid foundation necessary to evolve, over the next seven years, into a transformative and future-minded University. The plan sets out four strategic priorities that will guide the University's direction:

- Offering a transformational and accessible academic and university experience;
- Building research capacity across the University;
- Enhancing the life and vitality of our local region and beyond; and
- Fostering a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization

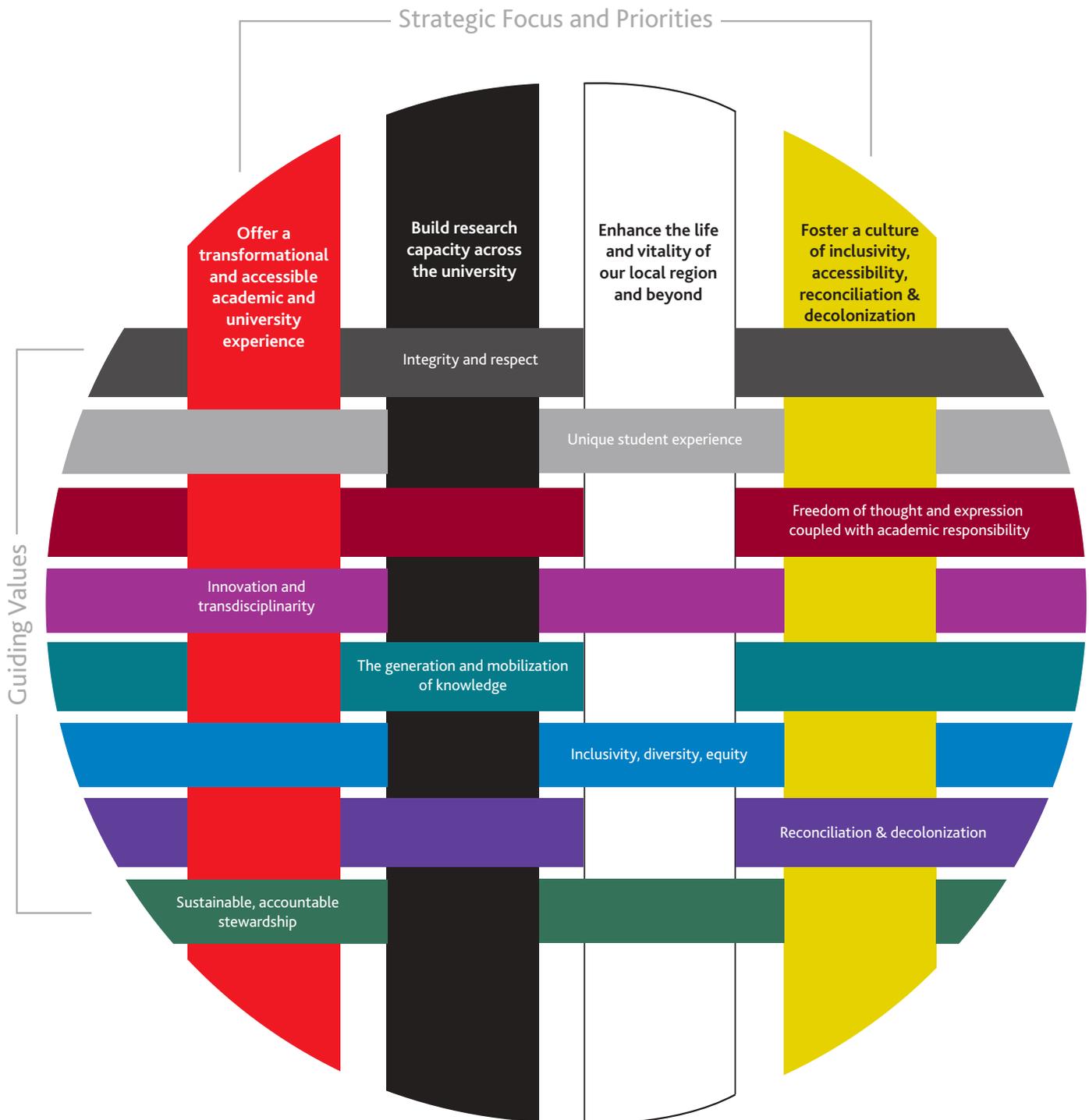
To support its new strategic direction, Brock has contemplated its role in the community and its commitments while looking at how the University can use its assets to promote action that contributes to the community. As a proactive partner invested in the success and well-being of the community, Brock must be mindful of its role in Niagara and beyond.

This document reviews Brock's current community engagement model and lays out a vision for an enhanced model with a pathway to make it a reality. It also recognizes that Brock is intrinsically linked to its external communities. This connection to community is fundamental to the University's strategic mission. Community engagement will support each of Brock's strategic objectives.

It is recognized that all of the University's strategic activities are enhanced through meaningful community engagement.



# GUIDING VALUES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>The colours in the graphic include Brock’s brand standards and those from the Indigenous Medicine Wheel, the Pride Flag and the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Agreement Flag.

# Background

Brock University's commitment to community was sown long before its doors opened in 1964. Brock traces its history back to the grassroots movement led by the Allanburg Women's Institute, which petitioned the government to establish a university in Niagara. The University represented an opportunity for local students to stay in Niagara to be educated, and the region would also benefit economically from Brock becoming a significant employer.

As Brock created an outstanding institution of higher education, the focus in the beginning was on teaching excellence. As the new millennium dawned, Brock invested in growing its undergraduate and graduate enrolment to bring new talents, skills and energies to Niagara. At this time, the University also identified new opportunities to expand its research capacity. It transitioned from a primarily undergraduate institution to a comprehensive university with strong undergraduate and graduate programs. This enhanced focus on research also laid the foundation for knowledge sharing and community engagement. Individual scholars and units saw the benefit of building two-way connections between research and the needs and opportunities within the community, and in turn, independently worked to connect their innovations and expertise with community partners and knowledge users.

However, as Brock became focused on becoming a comprehensive university, a disconnect began to emerge with the local community that founded it. For instance, research at the University was not necessarily tied or responsive to the needs of the local community. Brock had begun to lose focus on being an institution that served the needs of Niagara.

While this disconnect was developing, public perceptions towards post-secondary institutions were also changing in the region. In 2006, Niagara was feeling the economic downturn ahead of the significant recession that occurred in 2008. It hit the Niagara region particularly hard, due in part to a traditional manufacturing economy — a sector decimated by the global downturn. The recession created an opportunity for universities to take the lead as potential vehicles to address social and economic challenges. This new opportunity resulted in a shift in how universities envisioned



community engagement. At the same time, funders and governments also were responding with an increased focus on specific and measurable outcomes that could support the connection between universities and the community. This focus on synergy between academia and society has helped universities to recognize that closer and collaborative relationships with real social and economic needs are increasingly crucial to their public value and the value of the research produced.

Part of the shift in perspectives was also influenced by universities gaining a better understanding of the educational benefits of community engagement for students. In fact, studies have shown a correlation between the level of student engagement and future academic achievement. Specifically, students who engage with the community may feel more prepared for post-university life at the time of graduation, and this engagement also provides benefits to the community.

In recognizing this new shift in public perspectives around universities and the realization of a disconnect between Niagara and Brock, our institution has responded by looking more closely at how it can utilize its knowledge, students and resources to deepen its support and collaboration with the local community. For instance, research efforts can be better focused on strengthening impact by working together with the community to understand local problems and, in turn, identify and develop potential real-world solutions. By re-envisioning its role in Niagara with a multi-faceted lens, Brock is turning its focus back to the community in truly collaborative partnerships across the region and the University.

# Understanding the need for a new model

In 2013, the University initiated conversations with leaders in Niagara to better understand how Brock could work more closely with the community to facilitate mutually beneficial partnerships and generate tangible impacts. A President’s Task Force on Community Engagement was established, with members representing a cross-section of individuals from business, regional government and non-profit organizations. This group was tasked with developing a co-ordinated community engagement framework that would strengthen and inform Brock’s efforts moving forward.

Through a number of consultations and interviews, the Task Force examined how the University was connecting with the community through student engagement, academic programming, research, knowledge mobilization and innovation partnerships, as well as broader programs and services. It also compared Brock’s efforts with national and international best practices to help identify what the University was doing well and highlight areas for improvement.

Following the initial research and outreach in early 2015, the Task Force developed a formal report with key findings and detailed recommendations from the community’s viewpoint to strengthen and expand the University’s community engagement. It confirmed Brock’s belief that the community’s voice is an invaluable asset in the development and implementation of the University’s commitment to community engagement and outlined the next steps, laying the foundation for a more formal framework.

Reflecting on the community’s insight, the framework was further refined between 2015 and 2017 to enhance the University’s approach, resulting in a working definition of community engagement, a vision and mission statement, as well as strategic recommendations that focused on the future of community engagement at Brock. This set of guiding principles informed the next steps in the community engagement strategy.

## Brock Community Engagement Guiding Principles

### DEFINITION

University-community engagement at Brock refers to the multi-directional collaboration between institutions of higher education and broader communities for the mutual exchange of knowledge, resources and experiences. These efforts are carried out in a spirit of partnership, inclusivity and reciprocity to contribute to the community’s sustainable economic, social, environmental and cultural prosperity while also reciprocally learning from the community to inform and guide our operations and strategic plans.

### VISION

Collaborative, engaged, and thriving: Partnering with Niagara for growth, prosperity and well-being

### MISSION

To bring the University and community together for the mutual advantage that serves the social, cultural and economic well-being of Niagara.

### Goals

- Enhance the culture of community engagement at Brock University (internally focused)
- Be a catalyst for a more engaged Niagara (externally focused)
- Coordinate and support opportunities for community engagement (structural link between the internal and external)

With these tools in place, Brock began to enter into a new phase of community engagement that was influenced by another trend in the university sector, including Simon Fraser University and Ryerson University — all of which are defined as “university builders.” These institutions examined how to be more strategic with their physical assets by partnering with local municipalities to be “city builders.” Examples of these collaborations included building in strategic areas by revitalizing or sharing facilities based on three main principles to adapt the University to the surrounding community.

# Building Principles

The first principle is urban intensification, which focuses on making buildings taller rather than wider, resulting in better use of limited land space. The second principle encourages putting people first and creating pedestrian-friendly urban environments. This means primarily focusing on the safety of students. The last principle, commitment to design and excellence, focuses on the presentation of buildings and finding unique ways to make them appealing to the people who will directly use or experience them in their surroundings.

## URBAN INTENSIFICATION

Inspired by “city builder” universities, Brock took into consideration the principles of this approach and adapted them to its local context. While Niagara is not an urban centre, the University has made efforts to embed itself physically into the community more deeply. In 2007, as Niagara was feeling the effects of what would become a recession, Brock decided to partner with the City of St. Catharines to relocate its Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts (MIWSFPA) off campus, to a downtown location, while also partnering with the City’s fine and performing arts centre. This deliberate partnership strengthened the economic viability of the downtown core. Many businesses have benefitted by having students, staff and faculty located in the geographic area in which they operate, contributing to a revitalization of St. Catharines’ urban core. More recent efforts include regional partnerships on the Canada Games facilities, which will bring new recreational community infrastructure to Thorold, St. Catharines and other Niagara communities.

## CREATING PEOPLE-FRIENDLY PLACES

The second principle of putting people first and making pedestrian-friendly environments is exemplified by Brock’s efforts to make the University more open and accessible to the community. An example of this is the multi-use path that runs parallel to Merritville Highway that provides Brock’s students, faculty and staff, as well as the broader community, a more safe and accessible way to reach the main campus. The

path was constructed in 2017 as part of the Region’s Brock District Plan, which was prepared in co-operation with the University, the City of Thorold and the City of St. Catharines. Another recent example includes the establishment of the Brock LINC, which is the new face and front entrance to Brock. This new space, dedicated to research, innovation, commercialization and entrepreneurship, is designed to be open and conducive to fostering collaboration between students, faculty, businesses, and the broader Brock and Niagara communities. All of the activities in this space are visible and accessible to pedestrians as they enter the new front door of the University.

## DESIGN AND EXCELLENCE

The last principle, a commitment to design and excellence, is reflected in Brock’s most recent additions to the campus. The Roy and Lois Cairns Health and Bioscience Research Complex, the expansion of the Goodman School of Business, and the Rankin Family Pavilion have all had a transformative impact on Brock’s campus, representing modern designs that project the forward-looking ambitions of Brock’s future as a centre of excellence. The principles of how we can contribute to Niagara as a “university builder” will remain integral to Brock’s plans for community engagement as it moves forward to its future state.

## CURRENT STATE

In addition to these building principles, Brock’s community engagement has focused on three areas of activity: research and knowledge mobilization, student engagement and continuing education.

Today, Brock’s faculty, staff and students work together with community partners to tackle problems facing our communities — from social determinants of health, to environmental sustainability, to supporting economic prosperity. Brock is putting a focus on being an active partner in supporting and informing the key requirements necessary to strengthen our local community.

Through its partnerships, Brock identifies and supports the co-creation of knowledge and mutually beneficial outcomes in areas related to specific community needs. These partnerships have also worked to make research accessible, understandable and useful for the community.

Brock’s community engagement focuses on three areas: research partnerships, student engagement and continuing education.

## RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

Research and knowledge mobilization activities are an integral part of Brock’s community engagement strategy. These activities are typically based on pre-existing relationships between individual researchers, units, or departments and community groups. In general, these collaborative partnerships happen for a specific purpose with expectations and deliverables. Brock’s existing research partnerships can be enhanced with mutual benefits to Brock and the community.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Brock students’ community engagement includes both curricular opportunities, such as co-op placements, experiential education opportunities, and research assistantships, as well as co-curricular volunteer opportunities. These student-based community engagement activities not only support the community, but also have benefits for the students themselves, both during and after their time at Brock.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing education provides opportunities for people in Niagara and beyond to return to school, learn new skills or upgrade existing skills as they progress in their careers. In 2016, 31.9 per cent of Ontarians had a university degree. In contrast, the number in Niagara was only 20.4 per cent. As Niagara’s labour market continues to evolve, Brock’s expanded course offerings can support Niagara’s labour market and the local economy.

While there has been an expansion of Brock’s continuing education offerings, it is currently ad hoc rather than fully integrated across the University. Not all Faculties offer continuing education opportunities and options available to prospective students are limited. This ad hoc approach has revealed a potential area for improvement. The University will need to expand continuing education

to all Faculties of study and provide a wider range of programs and more flexible options, such as part-time programs, to ensure ease of access.

While Brock has had considerable success in recent years with its community engagement, there are opportunities for improvement through better co-ordination and greater participation. The University lags far behind other institutions in the formalization and support for community partnerships. The costs of missing opportunities through community partnerships are considerable and varied. For example, community partnerships have an impact on reputation, funding, research opportunities, grants, salaries, in-kind contributions and philosophical support. Although Brock may be behind in this area, the University is well-positioned to become a world-leading, community-engaged university thanks to our existing strong roots in Niagara and a renewed focus on engaging with our community and region. In partnership with Niagara, Brock can enhance opportunities for local residents and create a unique model of successful, modern community engagement.

Over the last three years, the Office of Government and Community Relations has been actively pursuing this goal. With the recent development of Brock’s new Strategic Plan, the Office of Government and Community Relations undertook additional community and internal consultations. This report includes a summary of these consultations, as well as strategic goals and outcomes to move towards a new model of community engagement.



# Community consultation results

In preparing the Community Engagement Strategic Plan, consultations were conducted with internal and external stakeholders to gather perspectives on Brock's strengths, weaknesses and opportunity areas for community engagement. Thank you to the following for participating in the consultations:

City of St. Catharines
District School Board of Niagara
Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
YWCA Niagara
Habitat for Humanity
Innovate Niagara
Lakeside Steel Corporation
Town of Lincoln
Wise Guys
Niagara Falls Public Library
Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce
Niagara Health
Niagara Industrial Association
Niagara Region
Niagara Region Public Health
Niagara Regional Police
PFLAG and OUTNiagara
Community Care
Hotel Dieu Shaver
Brock's Senior Administrative Council
Other internal university stakeholders



Several themes emerged from the consultations which informed the development of the plan. The following pages include commentary from the consultation participants to provide context for each of the themes and recommendations.

**1 Overall, our community recognizes the contributions of Brock students, staff and faculty to the region, and expressed a desire to do more to ensure that students and youth choose to stay in Niagara after graduation.**

Consultation participants confirmed a strong knowledge of the outstanding level of community engagement and service delivered by Brock. From volunteering, to camps, to job placements, participants greatly appreciated the existing approaches to community engagement and saw Brock as a visible contributor to the community. However, participants felt that more could be done to work towards retaining students and youth after graduation. It will be necessary for Brock to consider how its communications can do more than raise awareness about Brock’s role in the community, and shift towards promoting Niagara as a place to stay after graduation: to live, work, and build a career.

**PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED:**

- "An organization like ours would not be able to exist without the brainpower of Brock. Students who do placements with us provide a unique perspective to the work we do. Brock is one of the best assets here in Niagara."
- "Brock can help us use evidence-based decision making in our work."
- "We need to see students and graduates as resources and do what we can to keep them in the community. This includes providing resources that will help them grow."

**2 There was a great deal of interest and appreciation for formal partnerships and the “memorandum of understanding” (MOU) approach to partnerships.**

The recent creation of formalized partnerships between Brock and community organizations has been met with great enthusiasm and support. Those organizations already holding an MOU were pleased with the formal, measurable nature of the agreements, while those without were extremely eager to enter into such an agreement with Brock.

The varying levels of knowledge of the MOU process speaks to a need for consistent, targeted communications with the community, and two-way dialogue, openness, and accessibility to ensure that potential partners feel able to approach Brock and are also aware of the opportunities for partnership. It also

will be essential to communicate shared successes and demonstrate the measurable impact of partnerships through key performance indicators established and tracked within the MOUs.

**PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED:**

- "Where Brock’s gone in the last number of years is so different from what it was 10 years ago. We have an MOU and created a virtual campus that evolved into a bricks and mortar campus. We’ve integrated students in a living lab with researchers in the community and incorporated a lot of it into one of our largest developments. I’ve seen a huge improvement."
- "The formal partnership really helps you to set goals and targets and get to outcomes!"

**3 Consultation participants consistently highlighted the need for, and benefits of focused priorities and efforts. Participants suggested more significant impacts would come from building our collective capacity to address the social, cultural and economic issues or “wicked problems” facing our community. (Wicked problems are defined as social or cultural problems that are difficult or impossible to solve.)**

While participants appreciated being able to come together and network, they saw greater opportunity at a working group level focused on specific issues. There was great interest in leveraging relevant community partners, alongside Brock’s research enterprise to study pressing problems facing the community and to co-create actionable solutions. Not only will this create greater openness between the community and the University, but it will also strengthen the meaningful partnerships that Brock shares with the community.

**PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED:**

- "Is there an opportunity to look more closely at something and maybe an anchor mission can come out of that? It could be social determinants of health, which touch mental health and wellness, Indigenous communities. It could be one related to economic development and then bringing people together to have those discussions, so they’re not in silos. Some kind of focused area."
- "I agree that bringing groups like this together needs to continue – but it needs to focus on where our energies are best spent – overall we can’t always keep



our young people here, but graduates aren't looking for 30-35 year careers anymore – do we need to change our perspective on what careers look like?"

**4 While most participants knew of Brock's successful partnerships, there was concern that opportunities were being missed to share success stories more broadly. Participants also indicated there is a lack of awareness of how Brock's institutional reputation has improved in recent years.**

There was concern that the broader public was unaware of the great work being done by Brock in the community and the results of these partnerships. A similar concern was expressed about a lack of awareness that Brock's reputation continues to improve, as indicated by growth in first-choice applicants or Brock's Maclean's ranking for student experience. Participants were eager to hear more about the work Brock is doing in the community through partnerships. They also felt that a celebrating successes would help increase community interest and engagement. This can help build goodwill with our neighbours and partners, and also help manage challenges when they arise between the University and surrounding community. When partners are successful, Brock should seek to co-ordinate with them to communicate these successes and expand our communications impact across a variety of channels and networks.

**PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED:**

- "Brock's reputation has come a long way. When I went to Brock years ago, it was not my first choice. Today, it would absolutely be my first choice."
- "We are too humble in Niagara. We don't celebrate loud enough – so much awesome has come out of Niagara."
- "Definitely more tooting of the horn. There's an opportunity to showcase and advertise the great successes. I read one of Brock's faculty created a leading assessment tool, and it made me proud to see that national promotion."

**5 Community partners shared their appreciation for the opportunity to come together for multilateral discussions beyond the bilateral relationships each partner has with Brock.**

Consultation participants were appreciative of, and excited by, the opportunity to come together as a community through their partnerships with Brock. Beyond the networking benefits of meeting other community leaders and organizations, there was interest in receiving updates on the nature and progress of different partnerships, and enthusiasm for doing more together. Noting Brock's unique role as a convener of the community, an opportunity exists to continue bringing community partners together on a more regular basis to facilitate the sharing of information.

**PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED:**

- "I think that having sessions like this is very valuable. My brain is sparking in so many directions, but we have to be aware of what's going on in the community."
- "There's value in partnering on a number of levels. It would be great to work together to make sure that all of our planning is heading in the same direction."
- "We need a continuation of the one-on-ones and partnerships, but I think there is also value in that multijurisdictional, cross-functional work, so we know what everyone is doing."

**6 The opportunity exists to simplify and streamline community engagement networks and coordination of partnerships.**

One area of advice participants offered was to simplify the way the community is engaged across the University. While there is now a designated Community Relations team within the President's Office, many partners have multiple relationships with different units within the institution. It was suggested that a simplified, centralized approach to this relationship management would make it easier for partners, and the University to co-ordinate resources and efforts. There is an opportunity to leverage the Office of Government and Community Relations as the central hub for partners to approach the University and receive co-ordinated service, while also working with faculty and students to facilitate outreach to the community.

**PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED:**

- "We need to know more about what all the different pieces of Brock do – someone was looking at research projects, co-op students, and he had to make 4-5 phone calls to figure out where to go. There were no formal ties between the different places at Brock."
- "People draw connections to specific pockets, and we need to make sure we respect those connections."
- "A good start would be a coordinated approach, and the first step is to inventory – reflect on what's been working in isolation, scale those up. I bet it would highlight that we're doing more than we think we are."

**7 Participants discussed the need for continuing education opportunities within the region as a critical priority for Brock to**

**consider. Participants explained that as the workforce continues to evolve, Brock can play a role by offering retraining and further education opportunities to the community. While continuing education falls outside of the activities of the Office of Government and Community Relations, the Office can help to support Brock in meeting this identified need.**

Continuing education and the opportunity to up-skill the existing workforce within the Niagara region and beyond was a priority among community partners. There was agreement that education is no longer a specific period of time, but rather opportunities exist over the course of one's life to participate in formal education and skills development. There is an opportunity to better understand community needs from a skills and education standpoint, in addition to collaborating across the University to create offerings that deliver on these needs of the community.

**PARTICIPANTS OBSERVED:**

- "Now a student is any age. The opportunity is for Brock to look at continuing education. Look at areas offered in industry."
- "We partnered with Goodman and offer twice a year leadership development programs and we reach out to the community to participate in it."
- "Linkages with industry – make the linkages that might not be obvious – tie it into continuing education and skill development."



# Future state: The evolution of Brock's community engagement: "Regional Community Builder Model"

Taking into consideration the feedback received through the consultations, Brock has developed an enhanced vision for community engagement. This new model, named the Regional Community Builder Model, will expand upon Brock's current efforts to further embed Brock in all aspects of Niagara society and beyond. This plan identifies core strengths on which Brock can build its future engagement, enhancing its connections with the communities it serves locally, provincially, nationally and around the globe in order to ensure the University is an integral community resource.

This plan has provided Brock with an opportunity to rethink what additional mechanisms can be employed to ensure its activities truly relate to and strengthen communities. The plan also highlights the need to work with our partners in a more structured and co-ordinated way, that limits the duplication of efforts. The plan

recognizes that building awareness within the University and creating a culture of community engagement are important for success. The plan is critical to ensure that those synergies are identified, and that the resulting collaborations lead to direct, meaningful and measurable impacts. Finally, the plan also lays out a vision where Brock can exercise its full capacity as a community builder, knowing that working with and for community partners makes it a better university.

Brock plays an integral role in the overall health of the community and welcomes the opportunity to serve as a community resource. The University recognizes that by preparing educated and engaged citizens with an innovative experience that is not limited to a particular discipline, it is contributing to the public good. Furthermore, efforts to retain graduates in Niagara also serve to strengthen the community's overall well-being. And lastly, community-based research, scholarship and creative activity all strengthen the partner organizations themselves and the communities they serve.

This new and enhanced vision outlines how the University can do more. We can expand current activities and capitalize on the expertise and assets that the communities have, recognizing that partnerships and collaborations with them bring value and benefit to everyone, including Brock. Furthermore, we can also embrace our ability to serve as a catalyst, bringing diverse groups together to support the broader community's capacity and civic dialogue.

When successful, it will support shared ownership and vision of the University's community engagement among those internal to Brock and the community. It will also help a broad cultural shift to a fully engaged university. And finally, it will make sustainable and meaningful impacts from our partnerships a reality.



# How will we get there? Five strategic goals

The outcomes of the recent community consultations, and the earlier findings of the President’s Task Force on Community Engagement, have helped to develop a new model that not only aligns with the University’s mission and vision, but also reflects the needs and concerns of the broader community. This new Community Builder Model is aligned with the institution’s Strategic Plan, Niagara Roots-Global Reach, and will enable the University to deliver on its overarching priorities.

The community engagement goals align with the Institutional Strategic Plan as follows:



Community Engagement Goal	Institution’s Strategic Priority
Foster a Culture of Meaningful Community Engagement	Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond
Support Knowledge Mobilization	Build research capacity across the University
An Open and Accessible Community Resource	Foster a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization
Communicate and Connect with the Community	Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond
Support Experiential Learning and Educational Pathways	Provide a transformational and accessible academic and University experience

# 1 FOSTER A CULTURE OF MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Under the new Regional Community Builder model, the University will focus on growing and sustaining meaningful partnerships with local organizations and groups, as well as at a national and global level. The goal for our community partnerships is to create meaningful and mutually beneficial initiatives, outcomes and impacts for our shared communities.

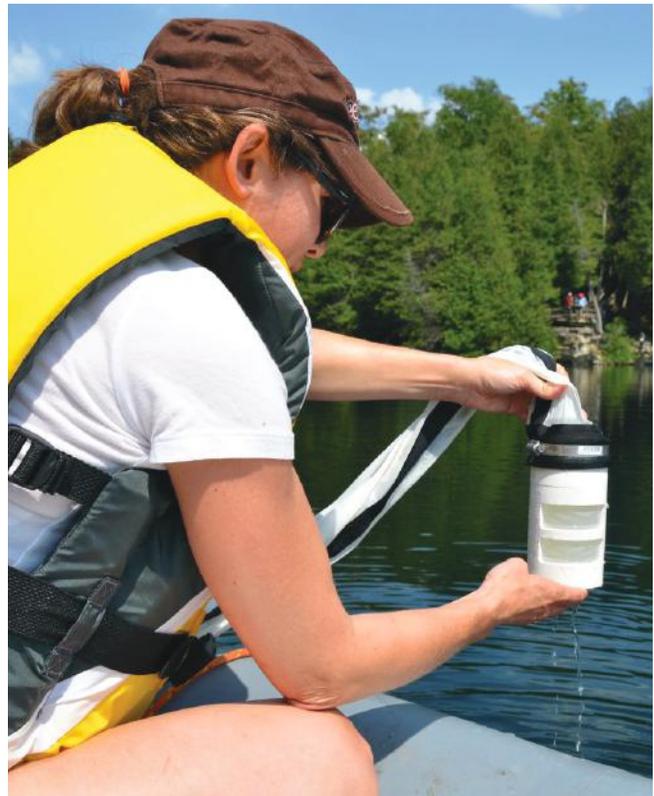
There is also a focus on expanding the breadth and depth of these partnerships and to work together with our partners to create dynamic solutions to issues facing our communities.

## GOALS

- Build community partnerships that advance Brock's strategic priorities and support Niagara's social and economic development.
- Strengthen and expand existing relationships between the University and our partners through the use of more formal agreements, such as MOUs.
- Identify opportunities to bring partners together to make connections, share information and explore broader collaborations.
- Establish a clear mechanism for providing support to University-community partnerships.

## OUTCOMES

- An increase and/or deepening of partnerships focused on Brock's areas of institutional strength throughout the Niagara region and beyond.
- Continue to grow the overall number and/or breadth and scope of MOUs, ensuring mutually beneficial outcomes for all partners.
- Develop meaningful metrics with partners to begin tracking and determining shared milestones that demonstrate a mutual benefit for a future celebration.
- Increase opportunities that bring partners together to explore broader collaborations on important cross-sector issues.
- An increased emphasis on community-based research.



## 2 SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

It is not enough for Brock to produce knowledge alone. That knowledge must be disseminated to impact social change and benefit society. At Brock, we recognize that in addition to sharing research and supporting the community’s research and innovation needs, there is an immense wealth of knowledge in the community that can guide and support the work Brock researchers do. Specifically, Brock has looked to the knowledge mobilization (KMb) literature and previous projects, and recognized that integrated people/community engagement is key, and as stated by Bowen and Graham (2013), that our KmB work should “[reflect increased] societal expectations that knowledge must not only be scientifically valid, but also socially robust”.

Together, with the Office of Research Services, we will work to more effectively inform, highlight and mobilize the insights and innovations of our faculty and students, and ensure we are working collaboratively to learn from our communities to further strengthen our research, learning, teaching and impact — locally and globally.

### GOALS

- Leverage community partnerships and identify strategic opportunities to encourage bilateral and equitable knowledge sharing.
- Widely communicate Brock’s research successes and relevance to the community. Share Brock’s research output through open access publications and dissemination.
- Support the community by connecting relevant research facilities to community needs.
- Continue to grow the culture of community-engaged faculty, to support more in-depth research and community partnerships.
- Ensure the knowledge and expertise of Brock’s internal community are leveraged and sought after by local boards, public policy forums, businesses and not-for-profit organizations.

### OUTCOMES

- An increase in the number and/or scope of community-based research projects.
- An increase in KmB efforts created and supported by Brock to share knowledge with community partners.

- An increase in the number of staff and faculty participating in relevant local boards and public policy forums.

## 3 AN OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Recognizing its responsibility as a public institution, Brock strives to make itself open and accessible. Brock seeks to increase its presence, reduce barriers and make the University open, available and fully integrated into the community.

Truly opening Brock’s metaphorical doors also requires a concerted effort to overcome systemic barriers and include peoples of diverse backgrounds including physical, social, political, economic, cultural, age, sexual and health differences. Inclusivity is essential to ensuring that community engagement efforts address diverse needs and benefit everyone. Our support for diverse needs is complemented by our efforts to build awareness of accessibility, reconciliation, diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of our programming and processes.

### GOALS

- Reduce barriers and simplify the process of engaging with Brock to make it easier for partners and community members.
- Identify opportunities to improve Brock’s accessibility for the community in partnership with faculties, departments, offices and community partners.
- Reinforce a culture of accessibility, diversity and inclusivity through our practices, initiatives and communication efforts.
- Increase outreach by engaging with diverse, marginalized and Indigenous communities.
- Enhance and expand non-traditional and inclusive learning options for community members.

### OUTCOMES

- Increase the number of community members coming to campus to access our facilities and/or utilize our services.
- Increase the number of community partner events held on and off campus.
- Increase the number of and strengthen existing relationships with organizations that target their support to minority and marginalized peoples.

Bowen, S. J., & Graham, I. D. (2013). From knowledge translation to engaged scholarship: promoting research relevance and utilization. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 94(1), S3-S8.



- Increase the number of pathways and opportunities for learning and accessing Brock’s resources for non-traditional groups.

## 4 COMMUNICATE AND CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

Maintaining and nurturing ongoing communication with community partners will allow Brock University to expand its partnerships and impacts. Effectively communicating Brock’s contributions to the region should increase positive perceptions of the University, support the recruitment of local students and help manage issues when they arise. Facilitating a two-way dialogue with our community and our partners should also help us tailor our approaches and contributions to ensure we are truly meeting the needs of all involved.

### GOALS

- Promote Brock’s community engagement activity and its impact on the Niagara community.
- Work with our partners to jointly produce and share content that highlights the collective benefits we generate from our partnerships.
- Work with student organizations to share the positive impacts of our students throughout our community.
- Position Brock as a clear and vast resource for the community.
- Develop and maintain a database to track and report on Brock’s community engagement activities.
- Leverage opportunities to showcase our partnerships and successes, internally and externally, through our partner organizations.
- Develop mechanisms to better identify, understand and consider community needs, enabling Brock to explore ways to support our partners and the broader community.

### OUTCOMES

- Develop reports that highlight both the social and economic impact that Brock has on the community — to be delivered in alternating years.
- Brock’s continued presence at and/or support of community events and activities.
- Recognize faculty, staff, students and partners for their contributions to enhancing our community.

## 5 SUPPORT EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

The Office of Government and Community Relations supports experiential learning and educational pathways by working closely with departments and faculty across the University to support their efforts to identify and nurture strategic, community-based opportunities that are mutually beneficial for Brock and our community partners.

### Experiential Learning

To provide a transformative experience for students and to help them reach their full potential as educated and engaged citizens, we must think of education beyond the traditional classroom setting. By engaging with the community, we can provide meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities for our students that are memorable and impactful.

Through co-curricular and extra-curricular clinical, practicum and other novel curricular opportunities, students engage with the larger community in ways they might not otherwise experience. By providing opportunities for students to work with and engage the community — including non-profit organizations, start-up companies and larger businesses — Brock will ensure students gain an appreciation for and contribute positively to the community during their studies.

### Educational Pathways

Educational pathways include formal programs, certifications, micro-credentials, non-credit courses, curricular learning opportunities, and other forms of continuing education and professional development opportunities.

Recognizing this as a facet of our educational mandate, Brock is continuing to explore how best to ensure the pathways we offer align with the needs of our communities. This is reflected in a recent survey we have embarked upon in partnership with local chambers of commerce to understand the labour skills gap better.





**Building vibrant  
communities**  
**Bâtir des collectivités  
dynamiques**

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# Conclusion

The Community Engagement Strategic Plan honours our vision and mission while delivering focused support for key priorities of the Institutional Strategic Plan. It demonstrates an evolution from a city builder model to a regional community builder and resource. Strengthening and expanding our efforts has seen our activities maturing from ad-hoc individualized collaborations to well-defined, outcome-driven partnerships.

We know that by integrating engagement into the University's policies and practices, and by building it into our culture, we will strengthen our communities and our institution. Furthermore, by creating opportunities for the two-way exchange of ideas, knowledge, skills and expertise, and by communicating the mutual benefits, we can collaboratively work to break down barriers and position Brock as a public resource that supports the social and economic well-being of our community. This model for engagement can then be replicated beyond our Niagara borders to support the larger communities.

# Next steps

The Institutional Strategic Plan defined the need for a number of faculty and departmental plans, such as this plan for community engagement. Informed by the directions within Brock's Institutional Strategic Plan, the Community Engagement Strategic Plan will now move towards implementing the goals within while reporting regularly on outcomes to the Board of Trustees. Review of resource allocation to specific goals and coordination of efforts throughout the University has already started and will continue.

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