

Niagara Health Services and Brock University

2023 PARTNERSHIP UPDATE



Master of Science in Health Sciences student Rebecca Rios was one of 23 Brock authors presenting research posters during the Niagara Health Research Day held at the University on May 4, 2023.

On March 8, 2019, Niagara Health and Brock University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize a collaboration that places a focus on co-creating research and student experiences that help people stay healthy and improve both patient outcomes and the way health care is delivered across Niagara. Together, Brock and Niagara Health are working towards a shared commitment of improving the health and vitality of residents in Niagara. The agreement represents the mutual advantage of working together in research and knowledge mobilization to inform local health care delivery and provide real world experiences for students to apply and inform in-class learning.

Projects and Initiatives in 2023

As two of the largest organizations in the region, the partnership between Brock and Niagara Health was formalized to improve the overall health and well-being in our region and beyond. It places a heightened focus on research that will help people stay healthy, improve both patient outcomes and the way health care is delivered, and create training and employment opportunities for Brock students and graduates.

Research

Niagara Health and Brock University collaborate regularly on a variety of studies and co-create meaningful research opportunities with researchers from across the university that aim to support health outcomes through better scientific understanding.

In 2023, research collaborations included:

Early Career Research and Creative Activity Project

Brock University's Annual Award for Early Career Research and Creative Activity was awarded in 2023 to Dr. Asif Khawaja, whose research area concerns the intersection of health and economics. In addition to efforts analyzing and assessing existing programs, and co-creating new learning opportunities in health economics internationally, Dr. Khawaja works with Niagara Health to assess the cost effectiveness of their Pediatric Tele-resuscitation program.

Niagara Health Research Day

- Brock hosted the annual Niagara Health Research Day in May 2023.
- This annual research day showcases the ongoing collaborations between Niagara Health and Brock, and other local partners including Niagara College, in terms of research and student experiential learning.
- In addition to poster presentations from 23 Brock research authors, Brock community members facilitated workshops supporting health research, including:
 - "Stories, Words, Observations – Everything is Data: An introduction to Qualitative Research," presented by Madelyn Law, Associate Professor, Health Sciences, and Kelly Pilato, Health Sciences Instructor and Research Associate.
 - "Economic Evaluation in Health Research," presented by Asif Khawaja, Assistant Professor, Health Sciences.
 - "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Considerations in Research," presented by Syna Thakur, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research Advisor.
 - "The Quality Improvement Journey: Where QI and Research Intersect," presented by Niagara Health Critical Care Physician Dr. Benjamin Tam with Brock alumnae Anna Boric (BRLS '17, MBA '19) and Megan Brown (BSc '17, MPH '22, MBA '22), who are both Quality and Patient Safety Specialists with Niagara Health.

Service

Niagara Health and Brock supported each other in several ways in 2023, in efforts to improve the health, wellbeing, and awareness of residents in the Niagara region through service.

This includes:

- Brock University's Dean of the Goodman School of Business, Barry Wright, served on the Board until June 2023.
- Brock University's Goodman School of Business Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, Jennifer Li, serves on the Board.
- Brock University's Co-op, Career, and Experiential Education Office's Associate-Director of Career Education, Shane Malcolm, serves on the Board.
- Niagara Health Foundation hosted a fundraising Gala in support of the new South Niagara Hospital site project of Niagara Health. Senior Leadership from Brock attended in support.
- Brock Student Life and Success hosted a volunteer fair on campus for community partners, and Brock Co-op, Career and Experiential Education hosted a job fair, with Niagara Health attending, resulting in job opportunities and supports for Brock students.
- Niagara Health participated in an employer roundtable event hosted by CCEE, where partners can share their feedback on the collaboration with Brock to better support students' training.
- Niagara Health participated in Co-Op's 5N90 networking event and preparation course, where students network with employer partners.
- An inaugural meeting was held at Brock for a Forum of community partners dedicated to improving the health of Niagara, through collaborative research endeavors.

Student Experiential Learning

Student experiential learning provides unique opportunities for students and the university to gain real world experience as part of their studies.

In 2023, the partnership between Brock University and Niagara Health facilitated experiential learning opportunities including:

- 60 Recreation and Leisure students engaged in practicum in outpatient mental health, inpatient mental health, and extended care Long Term Care.
- Internships in outpatient mental health positions, resulting in career connections for students.
- 2,100 hours of co-op experience for Public Health, Psychology, and Business Administration students, in roles related to Project Management, HR, research and knowledge translation.

Niagara Health was named Co-Op Employer of the Year in the non-profit category for 2023 by Brock CCEE.

This award recognizes the hospital network's commitment to fostering incredible experiential learning opportunities for Brock students. Over the last 10 years, Niagara Health has facilitated more than 50 co-op work terms, resulting in five hires in 2023, along with diverse co-op programs across Brock faculties including Applied Health Science, Business, and Math and Science.

Additionally in the 2023 CCEE Awards, Niagara Health team member Laurel Broski, Change Management Specialist, was awarded the Outstanding Brock Co-Op Supervisor for Summer 2023.

Niagara Health's dedication to the collaborative education of Brock students has been and continues to be invaluable in the training of Niagara's healthcare professionals and support teams.

Other

With recent healthcare workforce pressures and concerns, including the need to respond to the rising population and age of Niagara residents, Niagara Health and Brock began conversations in 2023 related to supporting the healthcare industry in creative ways. This resulted in the following in 2023:

- Brock Professional and Continuing Studies has been working with Niagara Health to create continuing education offerings for their staff, focused on human resource pressures and ways to mitigate healthcare workforce needs.
- Connections between Brock and Niagara Health have explored additional experiential learning and training opportunities outside of the assumed or typical frontline healthcare positions, including Business Administration, coordination and research opportunities, communications, and more.

Next Steps

Brock University and Niagara Health collaborated on a variety of student experience and service initiatives in 2023. As a result of these collaborations, Brock and Niagara Health will be exploring opportunities to continue their relationship and the MOU agreement in 2024, to continue their shared pursuit of improving health outcomes in Niagara.

2024 will be an exciting period of co-creating new opportunities that build on the shared history between these two organizations. The partnership's activities in research will grow, including through the collaborative forum with other community partners, and additional leadership, research, and work-integrated learning opportunities will be struck to best support student learning and community health.