

College-University Partnership Models

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In the following report, Hanover Research identifies and describes models for academic program partnerships between colleges and universities. The report focuses primarily on Canadian examples, but includes notable models from the United States as well.



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Recommendations

Based on an analysis of college and university partnerships, Hanover recommends that institutions:

- 1 **Consider technology-enabled partnerships to deliver collaborative instructional content online or at multiple locations.** Advances in instructional technology are enabling new forms of collaboration that make partnerships feasible even when partner institutions are far apart.
- 2 **Investigate consortium and international program licensing agreements to expand the reach of academic programs.** These initiatives are proving successful at other institutions, though the administrative and logistical considerations are complex and require careful planning.

Fast Facts



3

Major types of academic program agreement types including articulation agreements, collaborative programs, and memoranda of understanding.



111

Number of college-university collaborative academic programs offered in Ontario as of fall 2018.

Key Findings

International partnerships and consortia are emerging types of partnerships among higher education institutions. Some Ontario colleges, such as Niagara College, already offer dozens of articulation agreements with universities in other Anglophone nations. Consortium agreements whereby two or more institutions commit to sharing courses and programs with students from other member institutions are also becoming increasingly common and ambitious in scope.

Partnership agreements should account for community educational needs and institutional capabilities and contexts. As indicated by a recent study of academic program partnerships by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, partnerships should be carefully planned and implemented, and must advance clearly defined goals that are beneficial to all partners.

Improvements in communications technology are marking partnerships between geographically-distant institutions more feasible and productive. Interactive technologies such as video conferencing and advanced whiteboards such as the Google Jamboard are helping to connect faculty and engage students across multiple classrooms at different campuses.

While complex, technology-enabled, highly integrated, or international partnerships are increasingly common and feasible, well-planned traditional partnerships between nearby institutions can be equally as effective. The Police Foundations diploma + bachelor's degree accelerated program offered by Brock University and Niagara College is one example of how a carefully-scheduled program can deliver unique and affordable educational opportunities to local students.

Degree or diploma licensing agreements with international institutions have proven successful for some Ontario colleges, and may be combined with college-university articulation agreements. Northern College's partnerships with nine Chinese institutions and Algoma University allows students from those institutions to complete a Northern College diploma in China and matriculate to Algoma University for a bachelor's degree.

Introduction

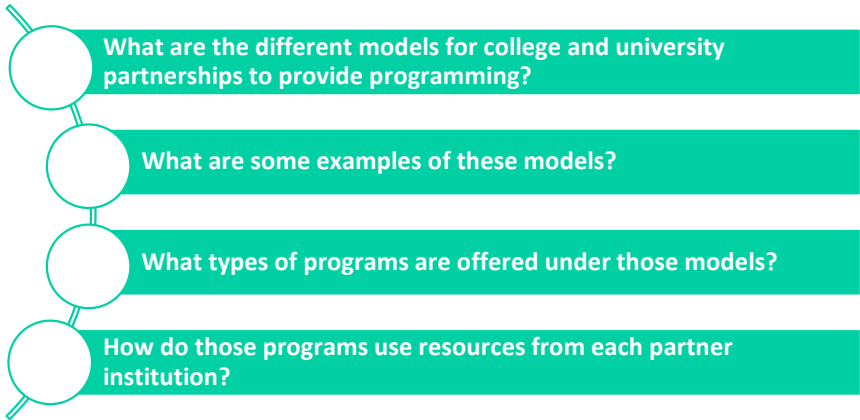
This report provides a literature review of college-university partnership types and trends, as well as best practices for planning, evaluating, and implementing partnerships. As might be expected, many of these considerations are specific to the needs, missions, capabilities, and competitive environments of the institutions entering an agreement. The literature and examples below are intended to illuminate these contextual factors and describe especially innovative examples of partnerships.

Profile Selection Methodology

There are hundreds of collaborative programs and college-university partnerships offered throughout Canada and North America, and most of them have been developed to meet specific institutional contexts. The [Ontariocolleges.ca “Program Search”](#) tool shows programs sorted by a range of variables including field of study, institution, collaborative delivery format, degree level, etc. It provides an illustrative, but not exhaustive, overview of the 111 academic collaborations extant in Ontario. As shown in the graph to the right, most of these partnerships are concentrated in health, food, and medical disciplines.

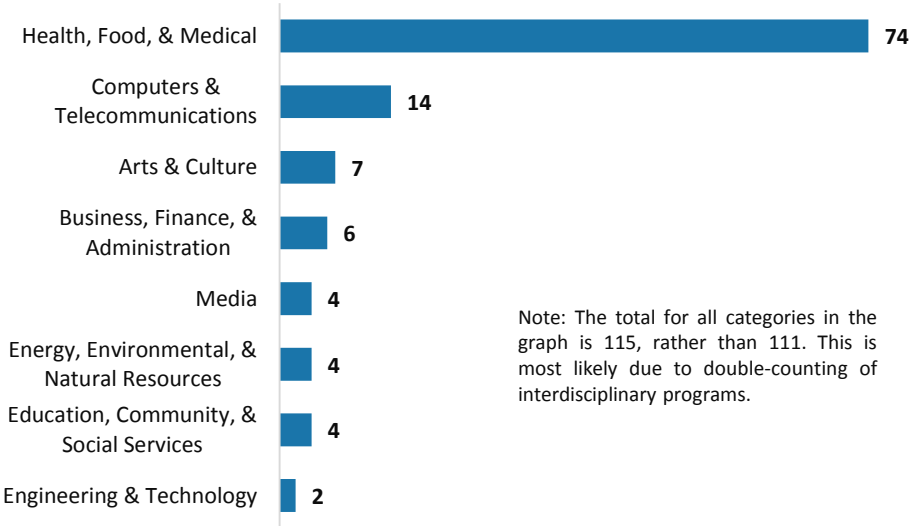
Programs selected for profiling in this report have been chosen because they are strong examples of (1) technology-enabled course/program sharing, (2) an online education consortium, (3) a complex international collaborative program agreement spanning multiple institutions, or (4) a simple, well-designed collaborative program that uses careful planning to deliver two related credentials.

Research Questions



Overview of Collaborative Programs in Ontario

The graph below shows the number of Ontario collaborative (college and university partnership) programs offered throughout the province, sorted by program category based on data from [Ontariocolleges.ca](#).



Overview of Profiled Partnerships

The table below summarizes the four partnerships highlighted in this report as particularly noteworthy or innovative. Information presented herein derives from the profiles below.

Partnership	Location(s)	Objective(s)	Notable or Innovative Features
Selected Michigan Colleges Alliance Institutions and Google	Michigan, United States	The Michigan small, private liberal arts colleges are piloting state-of-the-art Google technologies to share courses among participating institutions. The goal of the project is to expand the academic content offered at all participating institutions by sharing faculty expertise.	The three first-phase institutions have received funding, technical support, and equipment from Google to equip classrooms for distance learning. Key components include video conferencing software and Google Jamboards for interactive teaching and learning across three or more geographically distant classrooms.
Canadian Virtual University-Université Virtuelle Canadienne (CVU-UVC)	Canada, with some international recruiting	A consortium of nine prominent Canadian universities offers dozens of online degree programs through this initiative with easy transfer of credits, courses, and programs across consortium institutions.	This initiative is notable for its ambitious scope, which includes certificates, diplomas, and bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as the ease with which students in one institution's online programs can take applicable online courses from the other institutions.
Northern College, Algoma University, and Chinese Institutions	Ontario and China	Northern College and Algoma University entered into a Joint Admission Agreement in 2015 and extended it to students enrolled in licensed Northern College programs at nine of the college's Chinese partner institutions.	This complex partnership combines what is essentially an articulation agreement between Algoma University and Northern College with Northern College's licensing/collaborative programming partnerships in China, expanding access to higher education.
Niagara College and Brock University	Ontario	To meet demand for Police Foundations graduates who also hold a bachelor's degree, Niagara College and Brock University have devised a collaborative program that offers a police foundations diploma alongside a bachelor's degree in an accelerated four-year configuration.	This partnership offers an accelerated program that neither party could host alone, and at a reduced time-to-degree and cost. The program is carefully scheduled to allow students to earn a bachelor's degree at Brock in years 1, 2, and 4, and complete the police foundations component at Niagara in year 3. This program is included as a strong example of a collaborative program offered without sophisticated technology and relying instead on careful academic planning by the partner institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW – PARTNERSHIP MODELS AND BEST PRACTICES

Academic Program Partnership Types

Partnerships by which two or more institutions of higher education offer academic programs can take several forms that vary by scope and the degree of integration between them. Terms used to describe different types of partnerships vary, but the three major types are outlined below. This report focuses primarily on jointly-offered collaborative programs.



Articulation Agreement: Facilitates student transfer and the articulation of credit between institutions, such as outlining the mechanisms for associate degree or diploma transfer to a baccalaureate program.

Collaborative Agreement: Formalizes a general partnership between two institutions. A collaborative agreement can also serve as an umbrella agreement for related sub-agreements, such as memoranda of understanding for specific partnership provisions.



Memorandum of Understanding: Creates a partnership between a college or university and the other party and outlines the provisions for specific partnership activities and projects.

Partnership Trends

Collaborative agreements differ from articulation agreements in that students are continuously enrolled at both institutions throughout the duration of the program. Meanwhile an articulation agreement provides for the student's transfer from a program at one institution to another program at a second institution, provided predefined conditions for admission have been fulfilled. Because they integrate institutional resources more completely, collaborative agreements tend to be more ambitious and far-reaching, and require higher levels of investment and planning on the part of the participating institutions.

A 2017 American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) report entitled [*Making Partnerships Work: Principles, Guidelines and Advice for Public University Leaders*](#) describes emerging trends in partnerships between higher education institutions (bolded elements quoted from p. 7):

- **Public colleges and universities also have established partnerships and exchange agreements with institutions of higher education in countries around the world.** There is evidence that some Ontario colleges are developing extensive international articulation and collaboration agreements. For instance, Niagara College's [Pathway Finder](#) tool highlights a number of partnerships with international universities, most of which send Niagara students abroad to complete their program. One example is the 26 program-specific agreements Niagara has reached with Griffith University in Australia whereby students at the college can apply three to four semesters of Niagara College credits toward a bachelor's degree at Griffith.
- **Increasingly, universities are forming or joining consortia to help them achieve economies of scale in such areas as purchasing and information technology (IT) and to share courses and programs.** In fall 2017, Alma College, Albion College, and Calvin College in Michigan [introduced](#) a "pilot course-sharing program that makes use of Google hardware, including its brand-new Jamboard for interactive videoconferencing" and enables the member colleges to share their most popular academic programs. Long-established consortia such as the Western Massachusetts Five Colleges Consortium [offer](#) students from each institution the chance to take courses at other member institutions without incurring additional tuition costs.

Source: Miami-Dade College [Guide for Establishing Agreements and Partnerships](#)

Planning and Investing for Success

Regardless of the partnership type, there are numerous considerations that must be accounted for in the planning, implementation, and sustaining stages of the relationship. The AACU provides a list of general recommendations for planning and pursuing partnerships with other institutions. These best practices are summarized in the graphic to the right. The list below summarizes the most relevant planning questions asked by planners at Miami-Dade College, a large, multi-campus, primarily-associate's degree-granting institution in Florida.

Miami-Dade College Guiding Questions

Based on the list of questions governing partnerships at Miami-Dade College

Institutional Characteristics

- Is the institution regionally and/or nationally accredited?
- Is the institution public, private, or private for-profit?
- What are the institution's graduation and retention rates?

Agreement Provisions

- What does the agreement require of the partner institutions? Can those conditions be met?
- Would the agreement benefit the college community?
- What program-level considerations, such as enrolment trends and specialized accreditation, should be considered?

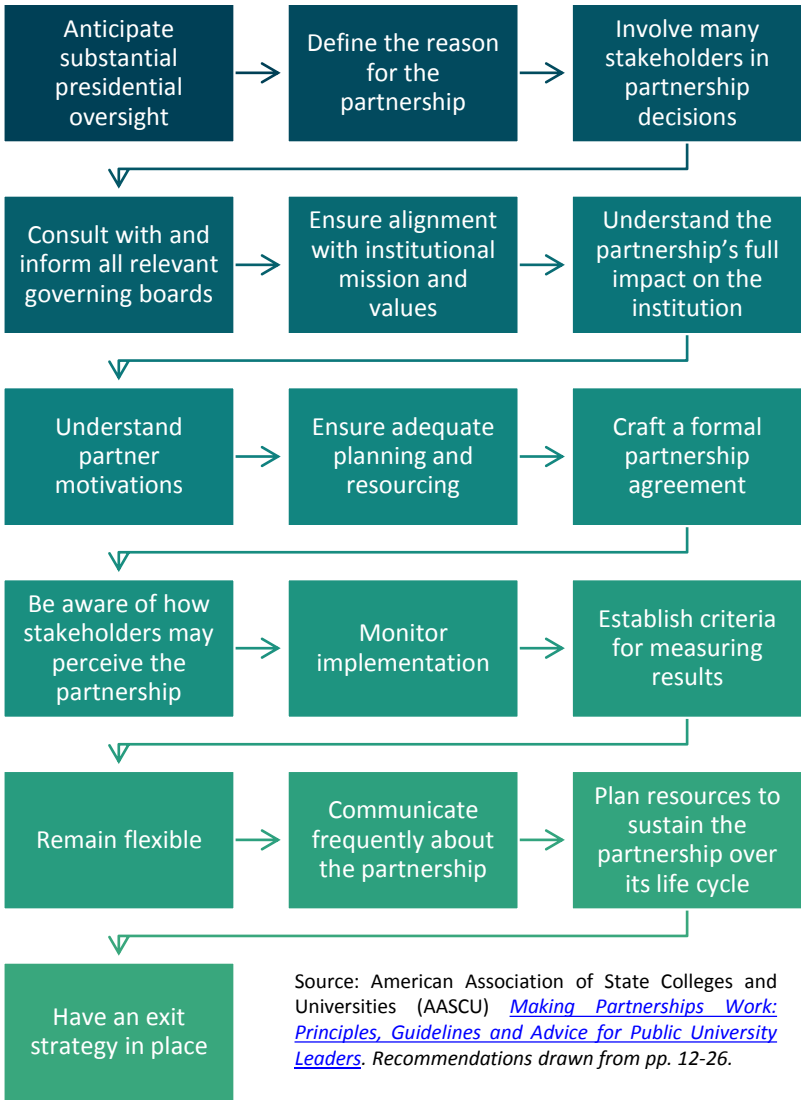
Student Impacts

- Will the agreement benefit students? How widespread is its impact?
- Does the agreement include scholarship opportunities, reduced tuition, or guaranteed admission for students?
- Will the agreement facilitate credit transfer or articulation?

Source: Questions adapted from Miami-Dade College [Guide for Establishing Agreements and Partnerships](#)

AASCU Partnership Formation Best Practices

Based on the AACU's Principles, Guidelines, and Advice for Public University Leaders



PROFILES OF EXEMPLARY PARTNERSHIPS

Technology–Enabled Collaborative Programs at the Michigan Colleges Alliance

College–University Partnership Models

Michigan Colleges Alliance

Three institutions from the Michigan Colleges Alliance—a group of 14 private colleges and universities in Michigan—piloted a technology-enabled program designed to share courses and resources across participating campuses. As [reported](#) by *Inside Higher Ed* in February 2018, the initiative began in fall 2017 when three small, rural, liberal arts colleges—Alma, Albion, and Calvin Colleges—initiated a program to share three courses.

Logistics and Technology

The major technologies used for the program are summarized below.



Google Jamboard: This 55-inch (140 cm) “collaborative, digital whiteboard” interfaces with phones and tablets to create “a shared collaborative space for distributed teams.” Features include drawing tools, handwriting and shape recognition, pre-made stickers and sticky notes, and the ability to display and edit Google Docs. Sessions are saved to Google Drive, making them easy to revisit after the fact.

Classroom TV Monitors: Each classroom is outfitted with two 50-inch (127 cm) television screens for video conferencing via Google Hangouts or other video conferencing software programs. These units cost \$2,500 USD each.



Samsung Galaxy Tablets: In addition to the shared hardware outfitting its connected classrooms, Alma College purchased 19 Samsung Galaxy tablets (\$200 USD each) for use by participating students and faculty. These devices interface with the Jamboards.

Sources: [Inside Higher Ed](#) and [Google](#)

Costs and Capabilities

The Jamboard component of this partnership is the first of its kind in a collaborative educational partnership. Google [subsidized](#) the \$6,000 (USD) cost of each Jamboard unit. Advocates say the technology:

...allows the instructor and students in classrooms across all three institutions to write and draw simultaneously on the same surface – similar to the interconnected experience of a shared Google Doc, but with functions like drawing shapes in different sizes and colors, pulling photos and website screenshots, taking pictures with a built-in webcam, and videoconferencing.

The first three partnership courses—one from each participating institution—[were](#) in art history, communications, and sociology. The Albion College art history course included 15 students. Four of them came from Calvin College and another four from Alma College. The course used GoToMeeting videoconferencing software and a Moodle site for assignments. It required faculty training to master and integrate the technologies used for instruction, and Google technicians “remain[ed] in constant contact to ensure everything proceed[ed] smoothly.”

The Alma College media studies professor who taught using the platform in its first semester [observed](#) that, coupled with the small class sizes, it fostered a strong sense of community. Part of what made the experience novel and rewarding was the chance for students to engage with their peers at other colleges.

Future Directions

As of February 2018, planners at the three pilot campuses [expected](#) to offer six more courses and enlist three more Michigan Colleges Alliance members to participate. Future participants include Adrian College, Hope College, and Kalamazoo College. It is not yet clear whether the program will scale up to offer entire joint degrees or course clusters.

Collaborative Online Programs via Canadian Virtual University-Université Virtuelle Canadienne

College-University Partnership Models

CVU-UVC

Canadian Virtual University-Université Virtuelle Canadienne (CVU-UVC) is “a consortium of innovative Canadian Universities collaborating in online and distance education.” The consortium includes nine leading Canadian universities and lists six goals (list quoted from [CVU-UVC](#)):

- Facilitate access to, and student mobility within, university education
- Increase flexibility for learners
- Encourage joint program development
- Reduce duplication across institutions
- Advocate for online and distance learning
- Disseminate best practices across Canada and around the world

Consortium members are all public universities throughout Canada. Between them they offer dozens of online certificate, diploma, bachelor's, and master's degrees, in addition to nondegree credit and short programs. Fees are based on the host institution's costs, but typically [range](#) from \$800 to \$1,000 CAD for a three-credit undergraduate course. CVU-UVC markets its programs primarily to Canadian students, but also has a webpage dedicated to [recruiting](#) international students, who can “complete a whole degree without ever coming to Canada.”

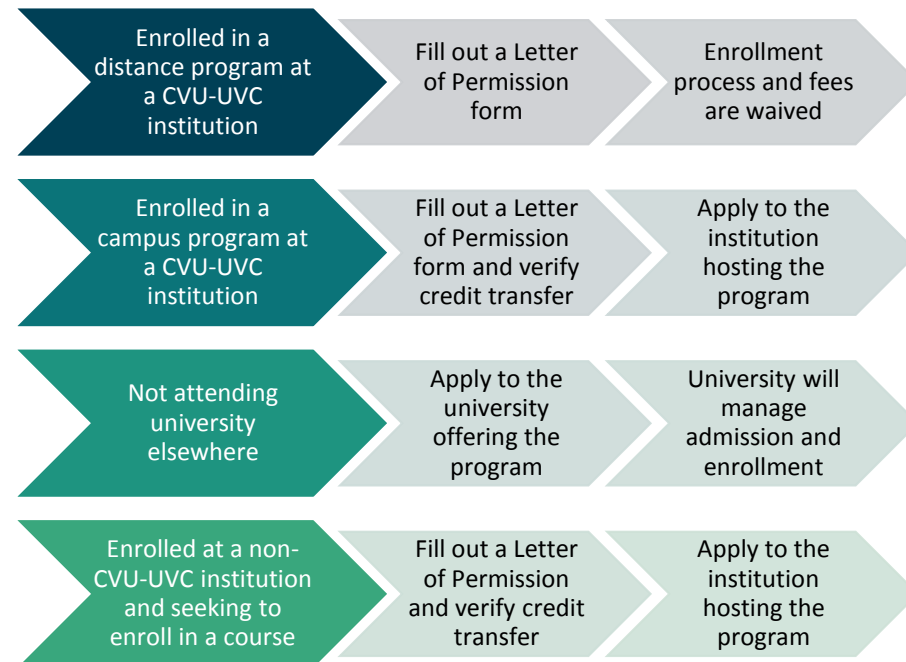
Participating institutions are listed below:



Source: Graphic derives from CVU-UVC [Homepage](#)

Application Procedures

All CVU-UVC programs and courses are open to students at consortium institutions and beyond. Enrolment procedures for different populations are shown below.



Sources: CVU-UVC [Admission Information](#)

Logistics and Technology

The major advantage of CVU-UVC programs is that students can choose from and combine over 2,500 courses from participating institutions with ease. All students [receive](#) their credential from the institution they are primarily enrolled in, and the Letter of Permission from their home institution confirms that it will count consortium credits toward a student's degree. Home institutions also handle financial aid and costs, but CVU-UVC universities are responsible for technical support for courses they host. Most courses are offered via a combination of online and print materials sent by mail, with phone, email, or mail access to tutors. Exams must be written at an acceptable institution or via an approved invigilator.

Northern College International Collaborations

Ontario's Northern College has established international partnerships with nine Chinese vocational and technical colleges, polytechnic institutions, and universities and [offers](#) between one and three collaborative credentials with each. These programs—hosted by Chinese partners—[convey](#) Northern College diplomas by licensing the college's English language curricula to the partner institutions. Under these agreements, "all Northern College programming offered in China features identical curriculum to what Northern offers in Canada" and students in China "pay tuition fees to Northern College and will meet the same required learning outcomes as Ontario graduates, therefore graduating with a Northern College diploma."

In 2015 Algoma University and Northern College signed a Joint Admission Agreement [allowing](#) Northern College diploma graduates seamless entry into Algoma University bachelor's degree programs in business, liberal arts, computer science, fine arts, sciences, and social work.

A 2016 agreement between Algoma University and Northern College extends the two institutions' 2015 Joint Admission Agreement to students in the licensed programs offered by Northern College's Chinese partners. Thus, the agreement combines a collaborative partnership between Northern College and its Chinese partners with an articulation agreement between Northern College and Algoma University.



Partnership Advantages

All of the institutions governed by this partnership benefit through increased access to academic content and streamlined student recruiting. Comments from the presidents of Northern College and Algoma University elaborate on what each partner hopes to gain through this initiative:

"We are excited to sign this MoA with Algoma University as it allows us to further strengthen our existing international student recruitment initiatives in China. This agreement represents a natural extension of the productive partnership we have been able to develop with Algoma University given our mutually shared goal of increasing student access to a quality post-secondary education."

Fred Gibbons, President of
Northern College

"Algoma University is very pleased to be working with Northern College to create new pathways that enable international students to have increased access to university level study. We are delighted with our expanding collaboration with Northern College and see this as another step in our ongoing efforts to expand post-secondary educational access."

Dr. Craig Chamberlin,
President of Algoma
University

Source: [Northern College](#), May 2016

Logistics and Technology

The international collaboration between Northern College and its Chinese partners requires a significant investment on both ends. Delegations from the Chinese partners [participate](#) in weeks-long visits to Northern College to observe teaching methods in its licensed programs, meet with staff, and visit classrooms, labs, and facilities. Similar visits have occurred almost annually since the first China-Northern College partnership in 2012. Western teaching and learning practices are a major [focus](#) of these visits.

Policing + Criminal Justice Combined Credentials

The policing and criminal justice collaborative program offered by Brock University and Niagara College is among the exemplary joint programs highlighted by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). COU [describes](#) the program as follows:

Brock University and Niagara College have teamed up to develop the Collaborative Study in Policing and Criminal Justice Program. **In just four years, students in the program earn both a 20-credit BA degree from Brock University and a diploma in Police Foundations from Niagara College.**

Partnership Advantages

There are several factors leading the institutions to combine these credentials in a streamlined, collaborative program. They include:



Employer Demand and Social Need: “Increasing demand in society for professionals who possess both solid applied skills and the substantive knowledge needed to apply them to the areas of policing and criminal justice.”

Streamlined Time-to-Degree: Obtaining a university degree and a police foundations diploma “would ordinarily involve attending college after gaining a university degree, but the Brock and Niagara program combines the two in a single integrated package.”



Source: Graphic derives from the Brock University [2018-2019 Undergraduate Calendar](#)

Logistics and Technology

This traditional collaborative program relies on careful scheduling, rather than instructional technology, to enable students to complete a bachelor’s degree in Sociology, Psychology or Criminal Justice in addition to the Police Foundations diploma. As shown in the figure below, students complete their academic major and general education coursework for the bachelor’s degree at Brock University in their first, second, and fourth years. The third year is [taken](#) at Niagara College and includes the Police Foundations Accelerated Program in which students take “a variety of courses in topic areas such as Criminal and Civil Law, Interviewing and Investigations, Provincial Offenses, and Fitness/Lifestyle Management,” and “engage in required practical volunteer work.”

Students appear to pay tuition for each program component to the institution that provides it—for instance, the one-year accelerated Police Foundations program at Niagara College [costs](#) \$4,598 for Canadian students.



Institutional Contexts and Future Directions

This program with Niagara College is part of a broader effort at Brock University to enhance its partnerships with Ontario colleges. Brock University’s current [strategic plan](#) states that:

Brock should continue to develop innovative academic partnerships to create new academic and career-oriented programs and add additional pathways to the university education with Ontario’s community colleges, especially Niagara College. Brock should also pursue new international academic partnerships to establish, for example, successful two-plus-two degree programs to enhance our student diversity and to meet our international enrolment goals (p. 10).

