

Strategic Mandate Agreement (2014-17)

Between:

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

&

Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology

ONTARIO'S VISION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Ontario's colleges and universities will drive creativity, innovation, knowledge, and community engagement through teaching and research. They will put students first by providing the best possible learning experience for all qualified learners in an affordable and financially sustainable way, ensuring high quality and globally competitive outcomes for students and Ontario's creative economy.

NIAGARA COLLEGE VISION/MANDATE

Vision

Enriching lives and fulfilling dreams

Mission

Providing outstanding applied education and training for a changing world

PREAMBLE

This Strategic Mandate Agreement between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (the Ministry) and Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology (the College) outlines the role the College currently performs in the postsecondary education system and how it will build on its current strengths to achieve its vision and help drive system-wide objectives articulated by the Ministry's Differentiation Policy Framework.

The Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA):

- Identifies the College's existing institutional strengths;
- Supports the current vision, mission, and mandate of the College within the context of the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002*, and outlines how the College's priorities align with Ontario's vision and Differentiation Policy Framework; and
- Informs Ministry decision making through greater alignment of Ministry policies and processes to further support and guide the College's areas of strength.

The term of the SMA is from April 1, 2014, to March 31, 2017. The SMA proposal submitted by the College to the Ministry has been used to inform the SMA and is appended to the agreement.

The agreement may be amended in the event of substantive policy or program changes that would significantly affect commitments made in the SMA. Any such amendment would be mutually agreed to in writing, dated, and signed by both signatories.

NIAGARA COLLEGE KEY AREAS OF DIFFERENTIATION

Niagara's key areas of differentiation build on the College's expertise and the unique regional economy, which is built on a mix of agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing, with the distinctive features of being a world recognized biosphere, tourism destination, and international border region. The areas include:

- Supporting culinary, viticulture, and other agri-business sectors;
- Supporting the restructuring of the region's advanced manufacturing base; and
- Supporting the region as a world tourism destination through educating a skilled tourism and hospitality workforce.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE DIFFERENTIATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

The following outlines areas of strength agreed upon by the College and the Ministry, and the alignment of these areas of strength with the Ministry's Differentiation Policy Framework.

1. JOBS, INNOVATION, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This component highlights institutions' collaborative work with employers, community partners, and regions, or at a global level, to establish their role in fostering social and economic development, and serving the needs of the economy and labour market.

1.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Niagara College focuses on jobs, innovation, and economic development in the areas of:

- Through Niagara's Canadian Food and Wine Institute, the College works closely with the culinary, viticulture, and agri-business sectors.
- Examples of strengths in applied research include:
 - Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Research Chair.
 - Centres of Excellence in Food and Beverage Innovation, Advanced Manufacturing, and Agriculture and Environment.
 - 3rd party research funding awards.
- The College is integrated with the region's innovation system through links with Innovate Niagara, the Regional Innovation Centre, and industry associations.

1.2 Additional Comments

- The Ministry notes that in 2012-13 Niagara’s graduate employment rate six months after graduation was 85.3% (above the sector average of 83.1%). Niagara’s employer satisfaction rate was 93.5% (slightly above the sector average of 93.2%).

Institutional Strategies

- The Ministry notes that Niagara is in the process of expanding its Innovation Centre in Advanced Manufacturing, an addition to the Rankin Technology Centre, with funding announced in Ontario’s Fall Economic Statement. The College has also received a five year (renewable) Technology Access Centre grant through NSERC to support the operation of the facility.

1.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dollar value of funded applied research projects• Number of companies assisted through course-based or funded projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduate employment rates• Employer satisfaction rates• Number of graduates employed full-time in a related job

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING

This component captures institutional strengths in program delivery methods that expand learning options for students, and improve their learning experience and career preparedness. This may include, but is not limited to, experiential learning, online learning, entrepreneurial learning, work integrated learning, and international exchange opportunities.

2.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Niagara College offers programs through a number of delivery methods, including:

- Demonstrated strength in co-operative and experiential education.
- “Learning Enterprises” provide students with in-depth work experience and industry-based knowledge through on-campus businesses.
- Course-based research projects that link students with companies.
- A “Be World Ready” program that integrates global perspectives into curriculum.
- Use of online courses to increase student flexibility.

¹ Additional system-wide metrics focused on applied research, commercialization, entrepreneurial activity, and community impact will be developed in consultation with the sector.

2.2 Additional Comments

- The Ministry notes student satisfaction as an overall strength at Niagara, as indicated through the key performance indicators. The College has high result for overall quality of services provided to students (81.8%) and quality of the learning experience received by students (85.7%).
- Niagara is in the top quartile among all colleges with regard to retention rates for students advancing from first year to the second year (90.4%).
- The Ministry also acknowledges that Niagara College has a higher than sector average number of students participating in co-op education.

Institutional Strategies

- The College has recently launched a Centre for Student Engagement and Leadership, including a co-curricular record to recognize additional competencies.
- The College intends to build course-based research into all advanced manufacturing programs over the next three years.

2.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of students with credit experiential learning• Number of students with active co-curricular transcript	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Satisfaction Survey results• Graduation rates• Retention rates• Number of students enrolled in a co-op program at institution• Number of online course registrants, programs, and courses at institution

3. STUDENT POPULATION

This component recognizes the unique institutional missions that improve access, retention, and success for underrepresented groups (Aboriginal, first generation, students with disabilities) and francophones. This component also highlights other important student groups that institutions serve that link to their institutional strength. This may include, but is not limited to, international students, mature students, or indirect entrants.

3.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Niagara College focuses on improving access and success for underrepresented groups in the areas of:

- Strategic recruitment focussed on meeting the needs of mature and non-traditional learners.
- College initiatives include:
 - A revamped academic schedule to enhance student retention;
 - Online courses integrated into programs to increase student flexibility; and
 - Expanded vocational program offerings to those who are academically under-prepared.

3.2 Additional Comments

- The Ministry notes that Niagara’s number of students with disabilities as a percentage of the total student population is above the sector average (18.2% versus 15.2%). This is also the case for international students (13.6% versus the sector average of 11.3%).
- Niagara College’s student population metrics were lower than or similar to sector and regional averages in the areas of first generation and Aboriginal students.
- 75.9% of Niagara students received OSAP in 2012-13.

Institutional Strategies

- Niagara College is planning expansion and changes to both the Niagara-on-the-Lake and Welland Campuses to support student life, engagement, and student success strategies.

3.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of students not direct from high school • Percentage of students from outside the region • Percentage of mature learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and proportion of Aboriginal, first generation, students with disabilities, and francophone students at an institution • Number and proportion of international students enrolled in Ontario (as reported in annual institutional enrolment reporting) • Proportion of an institution’s enrolment that receives OSAP

4. PROGRAM OFFERINGS

This component articulates the breadth of programming, enrolment, and credentials offered, along with program areas of institutional strength/specialization, including any vocationally oriented mandates. This component also recognizes institutions that provide bilingual and/or French-language programming for students.

4.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Current program areas of strength include:

1. Canadian Food and Wine Institute (CFWI)
2. Hospitality Management
3. Business Management
4. Horticultural and Environment
5. Advanced Manufacturing
6. Digital Technologies
7. Health and Wellness
8. Community Services
9. Preparatory and Access
10. Community Security

Proposed program areas for growth include:

1. Canadian Food and Wine Institute (CFWI)
2. Hospitality Management
3. Business Management
4. Advanced Manufacturing
5. Health and Wellness

4.2 Additional Comments

- Niagara has plans to expand its credential offerings in existing areas of program strength that are supported by strong student outcomes and very strong program infrastructure, particularly in the areas of Food and Wine, Hospitality Management, Advanced Manufacturing, and Health and Wellness.
- When new Business Management programs are proposed, they will be considered and discussed by both the Ministry and Niagara in the context of the College's overall Business Management offerings.

4.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportion of enrolment at colleges by occupational cluster and by credential• Institution's system share of enrolment by occupational cluster and by credential• Number of apprentices in each trade

5. INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT STUDENT MOBILITY

This component profiles partnerships between institutions that ensure students have access to a continuum of learning opportunities in a coordinated system. This may include, but is not limited to, credit transfer pathways and collaborative or joint programs between or within sectors.

5.1 Areas of Institutional Strength

Niagara College focuses on improving collaboration, pathways, and student mobility in the areas of:

- Niagara has agreements with a number of local universities and with postsecondary institutions across Canada and around the world.

5.2 Additional Comments

- Niagara College has defined pathways programs in health sciences, community services, technology, and humanities, and had 140 graduates enrolled in an Ontario University in 2012-13.

Institutional Strategies

- Niagara College will continue to work with Brock University to develop bilateral student transfer agreements, especially for students within the Business program clusters.
- The College will focus on multi-institutional provincial arrangements through the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT).
- The College will also be developing international opportunities in particular areas of program focus.

5.3 Metrics

Institutional Metrics	System-Wide Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of university graduates enrolled, Number of Brock graduates at Niagara, Number of Niagara graduates at Brock• Number of students receiving advanced standing, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), and transfer credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of college and university pathways and/or articulation agreements (college-college, college-university, university-college)• Number of transfer applicants and registrants• Number of college graduates enrolled in university programs

ASPIRATIONS

The Ministry recognizes the importance of supporting institutions to evolve and acknowledges the strategic aspirations of its postsecondary education institutions; the SMA is not intended to capture all decisions and issues in the postsecondary education system, as many will be addressed through the Ministry’s policies and standard processes.

Expanded Credentials

The Ministry has noted the College’s aspirations to expand degree granting activity and this will be examined as part of the Ministry’s policy review of Ontario’s credential options.

ENROLMENT GROWTH

The strategic enrolment and planning exercise is in the context of a public commitment in the 2011 Budget to increase postsecondary education enrolment by 60,000 additional students over 2010-11 levels. This government has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to ensuring access to postsecondary education for all qualified students.

Niagara College's planned enrolment forecast as expressed in this baseline eligible enrolment scenario is considered reasonable and in line with Ministry expectations, based on the current and projected demographic and fiscal environments.

Baseline Projected Eligible Full-Time Headcounts

Level	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Certificate/Diploma	7,380	7,417	7,454
Degree	170	171	172
Niagara Total	7,550	7,588	7,626

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Ministry and the College recognize that financial sustainability and accountability are critical to achieving institutional mandates and realizing Ontario's vision for the postsecondary education system. To this end, it is agreed that:

- It is the responsibility of the governing board and Senior Administrators of the College to identify, track, and address financial pressures and sustainability issues. At the same time, the Ministry has a financial stewardship role. The Ministry and the College agree to work collaboratively to achieve the common goal of financial sustainability, and to ensure that Ontarians have access to a full range of affordable, high-quality postsecondary education options, now and in the future; and
- The College remains accountable to the Ministry with respect to effective and efficient use of resources to maximize the value and impact of investments made in the postsecondary education system.

The Ministry and the College agree to use the following metrics to assess the financial health and sustainability of the institution:

1. Annual surplus/deficit
2. Accumulated surplus/deficit
3. Net Assets to Expense Ratio
4. Debt Servicing Ratio
5. Quick Ratio
6. Debt to Asset Ratio
7. Net Income to Revenue Ratio

MINISTRY/GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Over time, the Ministry commits to align many of its policy, process, and funding levers with the Differentiation Policy Framework and SMAs in order to support the strengths of institutions and implement differentiation. To this end, the Ministry will:

- Engage with both the college and university sectors around potential changes to the funding formula, beginning with the university sector in 2014-15;
- Update the college and university program funding approval process to improve transparency and align with institutional strengths as outlined in the SMAs;
- Streamline reporting requirements across Ministry business lines with the goals of (1) creating greater consistency of reporting requirements across separate initiatives, (2) increasing automation of reporting processes, and (3) reducing the amount of data required from institutions without compromising accountability. In the interim, the Multi-Year Accountability Report Backs will be adjusted and used as the annual reporting mechanism for metrics set out in the SMAs;
- Consult on the definition, development, and utilization of metrics;
- Undertake a review of Ontario’s credential options; and
- Continue the work of the Nursing Tripartite Committee.

The Ministry and the College are committed to continuing to work together to:

- Support student access, quality, and success;
- Drive creativity, innovation, knowledge, and community engagement through teaching and research;
- Increase the competitiveness of Ontario’s postsecondary education system;
- Focus the strengths of Ontario’s institutions; and
- Maintain a financially sustainable postsecondary education system.

SIGNED for and on behalf of the
Ministry of Training, Colleges and
Universities by:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Deborah Newman
Deputy Minister

March 31, 2014

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of The
Niagara College of Applied Arts and
Technology by:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Dr. Dan Patterson
President

April 15, 2014

Date