

# **Degree-Completion Opportunities for Ontario College Students A Framework for Understanding and Facilitating College University Collaboration**

## **ABSTRACT**

This descriptive, qualitative study examines the contextual, institutional, and leadership factors that influence collaboration between colleges and universities and explores what might be done to facilitate the development of collaborative programs between the colleges and universities in Ontario. Using a collaborative model identified by Couture, Delong and Wideman (1999), this study focused on degree-completion programs as the only type of college university collaborative program that builds on a previously earned community college diploma, does not have university entrance requirements, and is common to both the Colleges' of Applied Arts and Technology collaborations with universities inside and outside the province.

Individuals within the Ontario community college system who had been involved in developing degree-completion programs with Canadian universities were interviewed. It is their personal "stories" about their collaborative experiences with universities and a review of the literature on leadership that provided the basis for this research.

The study found leadership to be an important factor in college university collaboration and reinforced the need for "missionaries" on both sides. Successful collaboration seemed to have more to do with the leadership skills and abilities of the individuals involved in the process and their desire to create a more seamless system of education that provides students with ongoing opportunities including pursuing degree credentials, than it had to do with formalized management responsibilities or policies within the institutions.

A better understanding of college university collaboration in Ontario puts government officials and postsecondary leaders alike, including administrators and educators, in a stronger position to positively impact future college university collaborative efforts in this province.