



**Niagara College Student
Commons**

Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

Gow Hastings Architects

Toronto

At Niagara College, the new learning commons and cafeteria has become one of the most sought-after spaces on campus, says Gow Hastings Architects, who renovated the former gym and cafeteria. The existing facility had an unsightly divider splitting the space into two; the new design breaks down the large volume through subtler means into activity zones for eating, socializing and group and individual study. By eliminating the physical barrier, the cafeteria was doubled in size, allowing it to offer additional seating in the informal

lounge area while keeping the space open and flexible for popular events like job fairs. A bulkhead with acoustically absorbent aluminum slats lowers the double-height ceiling over the cafeteria area to make it feel more intimate. Strip LED lights strategically integrated within the slat system provide texture and depth to break up the bulkhead's mass. Flanking the bulkhead, custom lighting made by joining two LED strip lights to form a cruciform-shaped pendant light further helps to create a distinctive sense of place.