

Successes & Challenges of the University of Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC)

Paul DePasquale
Department of English

Abstract

This study examines the University of Winnipeg Education Centre's (WEC) successes and challenges. The history and contribution of WEC is deeper and richer than the institutional memory acknowledges. WEC has long reflected "Indigenized" values and practices in teacher education. Various institutional and systemic forces – Eurocentric pressures outside WEC – present considerable challenges for students. Despite strong supports, and excellent and caring faculty and staff, these challenges keep the program from making its fullest contribution to the education and well-being of its student teachers, and possibly to that of their young students in Manitoba.

About WEC

WEC has been around since the 1970s, first at Brandon University (1972-1978), then University of Manitoba (1978-1997), and now University of Winnipeg (1998-present) housed in the Helen Betty Osborne Building. WEC's purpose is to address inequality by educating socially and economically disadvantaged people living in the inner city or neighborhoods with inner-city characteristics. It does so by accepting only those students who require academic and/or financial support. WEC is a highly successful program that has educated about 400 students since 1998. Many of its graduates have gone on to teach in areas with inner-city characteristics.



First location of WEC in decommissioned elementary school, Sir Sam Steele School. Photo Credit: Gordon Goldsborough, MHS.



Second location of WEC in U of M facility on Selkirk Avenue, William Norrie Centre. Photo Credit: Prairie Architects.



Current location of WEC at UW on Ellice Avenue, Helen Betty Osborne Building. Photo Credit: University of Winnipeg

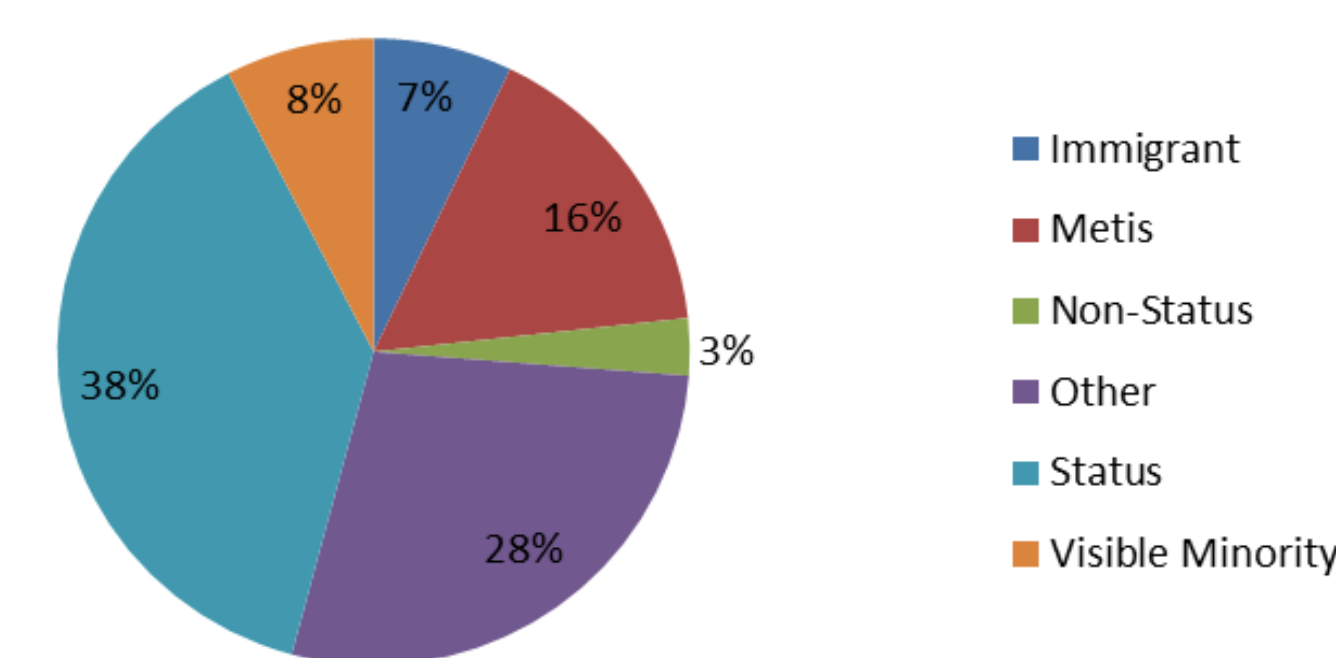
Key Findings

- Outside perceptions of ACCESS programs (WEC, CATEP, PBIK, ITEP) are impacted by outdated thinking about Indigenous and other socio-economically disadvantaged people – and stereotypes work both ways. A sense of "two solitudes" does not further good relations between communities of students.
- ACCESS programs at the Helen Betty Osborne Building would benefit from attention to institutional space that reflects Indigenous knowledge, cultures, and values.
- A disconnect between Math and Education is preventing the education of student teachers in a way that can equip them with the pedagogical skills necessary to inspire the next generation. Math continues to be a significant source of anxiety and psychological harm for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

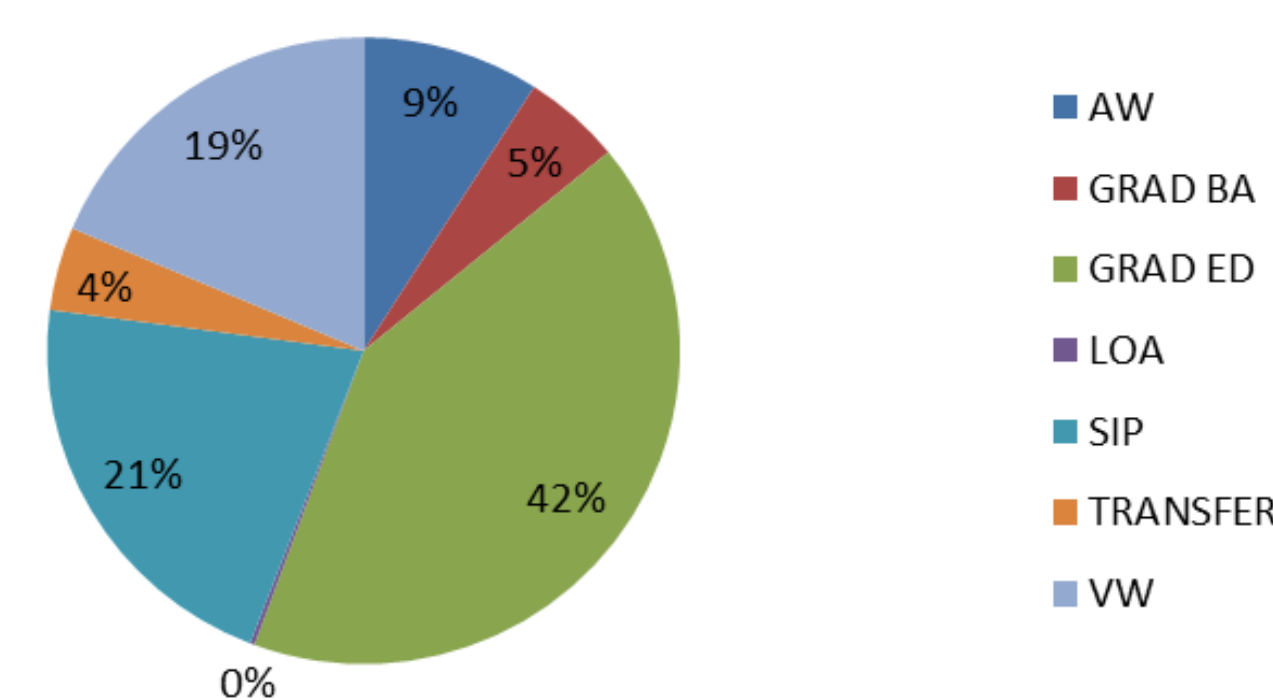
Methods & Data

- Online survey questionnaire distributed to about 400 past and present WEC students in the fall of 2016
- Interviews with past and present administrators, staff, and faculty
- Student focus groups

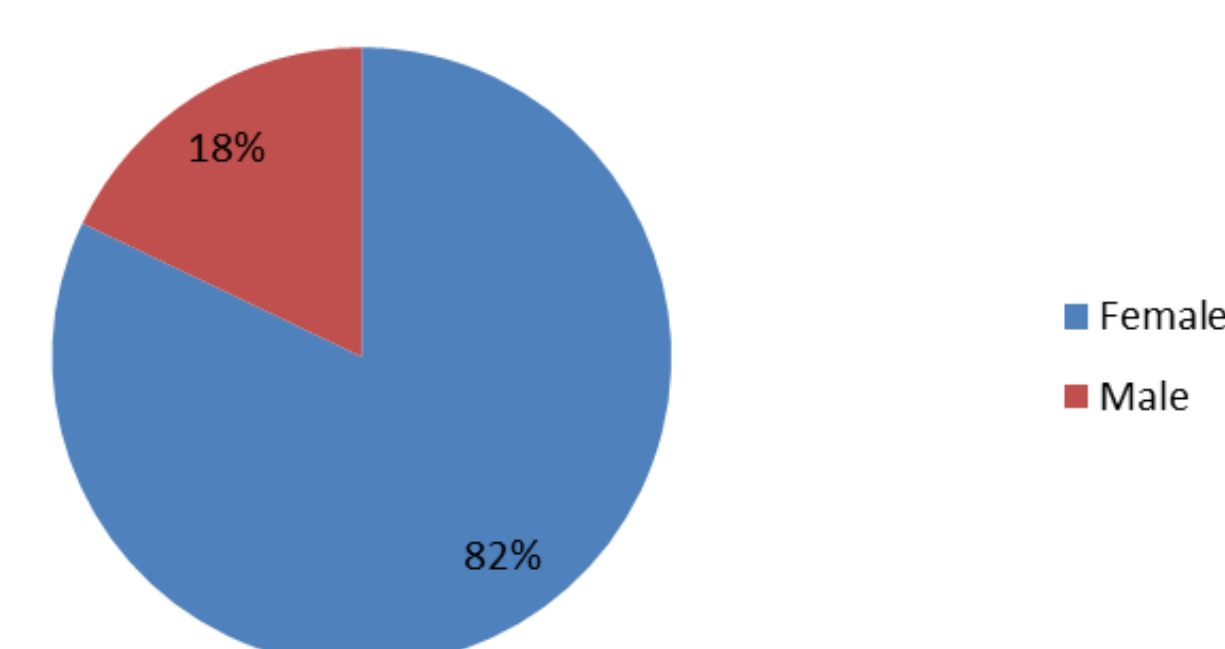
WEC Cultural Breakdown (n=419)



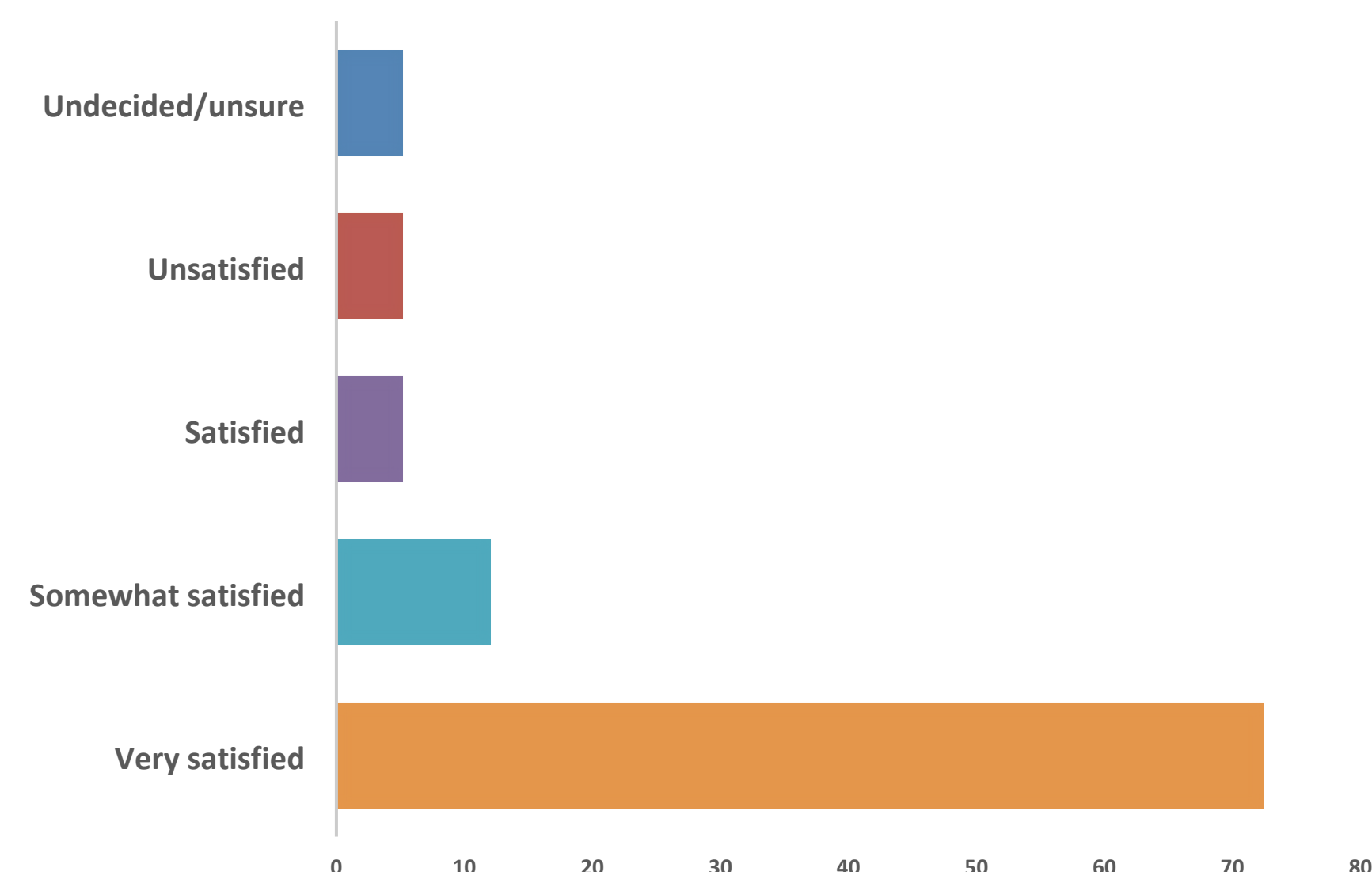
Success of WEC Students



Gender Breakdown for WEC



Student Satisfaction with the WEC Program



Conclusions & Recommendations

- Strengthen efforts to encourage males to want to be teachers.
- Develop meaningful ways for main campus and ACCESS students to work together and interact.
- Recognize and develop prior learning, especially Indigenous languages, to get more language experts into Manitoba classrooms.
- Offer childcare in an adjacent building or expand hours and service of existing UW daycare.
- Math needs to work with Education to create highly effective pedagogies and strategies that can enable Math to be part of the solution. Leadership on this important issue is required.

Acknowledgments:

Thank you to all past and present WEC administrators, staff, faculty, and students who participated in this study. Thank you to Dan Bailey for the intake demographic data and visuals presented here. Thank you also to Doris Wolf and research assistants Chris Campbell, Catherine van Reenen, and Larissa Wodtke.

References:

Baker, P. A., et al. (2003). ACCESS review: Winnipeg Education Centre, Bachelor of Education Program. The University of Winnipeg.
 Hesch, R. (1999). Culturally relevant teacher education: A Canadian inner-city case. *Canadian Journal of Education/ Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 24(4), 369-382.
 Mays, A. (1996). Education Review. Prepared for Dr. Bernard Shapiro.
 McCluskey, K. W., et al. (2013). *Celebrating diversity: Problems, perspectives, and possibilities*. UWEC, 2003; *The MERN Journal: Special Issue: Mathematics Education*, 7.