



A Report On The
1st Women In Skilled Trades (WIST) Program
at Mohawk College

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The views expressed in this document do necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada or the Government of Ontario.

PART ONE: THE WIST INITIATIVE AND THE WIST STUDY

Introduction

The Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) is a division of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and provides focus for government action on issues of concern to women. A primary mandate of the OWD is the promotion of women's economic independence.

In support of this mandate, the OWD has developed the **Women in Skilled Trades (WIST)** Initiative, a special pilot project giving unemployed and underemployed women training for entrance level jobs in the skilled trades. Through a partnership of local non-profit training providers and the OWD, the WIST program provides women with Pre-Apprenticeship training programs in non-traditional occupations with an identified shortage of skilled trades people.

In the fall 2001, Mohawk College in partnership with the OWD launched its' first Women in Skilled Trades (WIST) program. Mohawk, pre-eminent in the field of trades training and proven in its successful delivery of accessible and progressive programs for women, provided an excellent launching point for this WIST initiative.

The WIST Study

As is characteristic of pilot projects, this WIST initiative was designed to be in part experimental. The first-time design and delivery of WIST was intended to illuminate issues and compel improvements to the design and delivery of future program iterations. In support of this objective, the Hamilton Training Advisory Board (HTAB) partnered with Mohawk College to undertake a study of this inaugural WIST initiative. The Training Board's interest in WIST falls out of its own mandate to, in part, support women in the workplace. The HTAB has a specific interest in training and skills building for women, and undertakes initiatives to encourage women to consider trades and non-traditional employment opportunities¹.

Study Limitations

The WIST study used two specific research methodologies - written surveys and telephone interviews- to develop a profile of the women enrolled in the program, and to monitor the experiences of both these learners and of the employers and college faculty involved in the program. It should be acknowledged at the outset of this study report that the information captured here is neither comprehensive nor necessarily complete in its scope. In considering this study report, the reader should be cognizant of the following:

¹ Extracted from the Terms of Reference of the Women's Reference Group, a subcommittee of the HTAB.

1. *Not everyone who participated in the WIST program participated in this study.* Written surveys were administered on set dates at Mohawk College, after each of the three in-school components of the program. Not all WIST students were in attendance on the dates that the written surveys were administered, and although attempts were made to have the absent students complete the surveys at later dates, this was not fully achieved. A structured telephone interview was conducted with participants after they completed the final component of the program, the work placement. It proved particularly difficult to contact participants who completed work placements, with only 69 percent of the students who completed this component of the program participating in this part of the study. Due to confidentiality concerns, it was not possible to contact the five women who dropped out of the WIST program prior to its completion. As such, the study findings do not represent a comprehensive student perspective on the WIST program.

2. *The tight time parameters of the study limit the scope of critical assessment that can be undertaken.*

A study conducted over several years would be required to assess the broader impact of the WIST program, both in terms of students' long-term employment and employability, and in consideration of whether the targeted skilled trade, in its human resourcing and gender-culture, is impacted by the WIST initiative.

Study Objectives

These caveats notwithstanding, the study results furnished here do aspire to a number of objectives:

- To provide constructive information and perspective regarding the design and delivery of a training program of this nature, and its accompanying implications for women;
- To provide the community with greater insights into the particular training needs of women, and the issues and obstacles that they might encounter in their pursuit of skilled trades training.

It is hoped that this information will facilitate the recruitment, design and delivery of future WIST offerings, at Mohawk College and elsewhere.

Launching WIST at Mohawk College

The first WIST program focused on the Industrial Electrician trade. The original curriculum was planned to include the common core courses required for 1st year apprentices in the electrical trades. Initially, program admission criteria required WIST program candidates to demonstrate grade 12 equivalency and complete assessments in mathematical skills, communications and mechanical reasoning.

Mohawk College launched an extensive marketing and promotional campaign throughout the Hamilton and Brant Haldimand region to recruit suitable program participants. In addition to advertisements in local newspapers, flyer and brochure inserts (see Appendix A for sample) in area outreach publications and web based information networks and links, public speaking arrangements were conducted at local training agencies and

community organizations. Interested candidates were then invited to attend one of the numerous free Information Sessions held at the Stoney Creek campus.

First Intake Challenges

The WIST program, based on this initial design and admission criteria, was originally planned to commence in March 2001. A number of recruitment and admission challenges were encountered, however, and Mohawk College was unable to admit a sufficient number of qualified candidates into the program. Intake challenges fell into two categories:

1. Program Design-Related Issues, both Real and Perceived

Anecdotal feedback from potential program candidates suggests that the program was perceived as too risky in its vocational non-traditionalism, too long in its required training commitment (five-year apprenticeship), and lacking the necessary family and living financial supports for those not eligible for Employment Insurance or Ontario Works Assistance. Ninety-two women signed-up to attend the first WIST information session, but only 61 actually attended.

2. Academic Readiness Issues

Many candidates could not meet the grade 12-equivalency requirement of the program. Additionally, only 25 percent (14/55) of the candidates who took the admission test met the acceptance criteria. Weak mathematical ability was identified as a primary barrier to accessing the program.

Program Design Revisions and Second Intake Process

The program developers at Mohawk College subsequently revised the admission criteria and incorporated a more extensive mathematics-upgrading component into the WIST program curriculum. Some of the original WIST candidates had attributed their lack of a satisfactory score on the initial admission test to simply not being prepared for it. The college subsequently arranged for a second re-write opportunity and candidates were encouraged to prepare for the test by attending the College's math-learning centre. Eighteen candidates wrote the next admission test. The College's remediation efforts resulted in a total of 22 women being admitted to the first WIST program, launched in October 2001 – seven months later than originally scheduled.

Tuition and Financial Assistance

The cost of tuition for the WIST Industrial Electrician Program was approximately \$10,000. Financial assistance to cover tuition costs was available to eligible participants by the Ontario Women's Directorate. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Ontario Works (OW) and other community agencies provided full, partial tuition funding and/or living allowance support to eligible participants, while some of the participants utilized other means of support such as savings, part-time employment and /or family assistance to sustain them while they were in training. All of the students who enrolled in the WIST Program qualified for the tuition assistance funding.

PART TWO: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE WIST PROGRAM

This section of the report contains both information and study findings, organized into three categories:

PART 2A A PROFILE OF THE WIST PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

This section of the report is a demographic profile of the women who enrolled in the WIST program, and the documented basis for their program participation.

PART 2B THE PROGRAM AND THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

This section of the report documents the program and summarizes the student feedback received via the survey instruments after each component of the program was completed.

PART 2C ADDITIONAL FINDINGS AND SUMMARY ANALYSIS

This last section of the report provides some additional data and perspective on the program, and offers some summary analysis of the program and the study findings.

PART 2A A PROFILE OF THE WIST PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS²

As part of completing the first written survey administered at the completion of the first component of the program, WIST participants provided a range of demographic and related information. It is summarized here:

- Participants ranged in age from 19 to 51. 40 percent were in the 20-30-age range. 30 percent of students were 31-40 years old and 25 percent were 41 years of age and above.
- 50 percent of WIST students identified their marital status as single, 30 percent stated that they were either married or in a common-law relationship, and 20 percent said that they were either separated or divorced.
- 55 percent of the respondents had children. Among this group, 73 percent were single mothers.³ 27 percent of women with children were either married or in a common-law relationship.

² Based on survey participation from 20 of the 22 students admitted to the program.

³ This percentage (73%) includes those participants with children who identified their marital status as separated or divorced.

- 50 percent reported an annual income in the range of \$10,000- \$20,000. 15 percent received less than \$10,000 a year and 15 percent stated that they received \$21,000-\$30,000 annually.
- 50 percent identified social assistance or employment insurance as their source of income during the first component of the program. 25 percent cited employment as their present source of income, and 15 percent identified family support. One student said that she had taken out a personal loan and one student chose not to answer the question.
- The educational backgrounds of the WIST students ranged from elementary school to university. 55 percent of the WIST participants identified grade 11 or 12 as the highest level of education they had completed. Twenty percent had completed grade 13 and/or some courses at the university level. One student reported that grade 8 was the highest level of formal education she had finished.
- In terms of previous employment, almost half of the participants stated that they were last employed in the sales and service sector, 15 percent had worked in the manufacturing sector, and the remaining participants were employed in a variety of positions: labourer, custodian, lifeguard, multi-media specialist, dental ceramist and street sweeper driver.
- The majority of the WIST participants, 65 percent, were paid \$10 per hour, or less, in their previous occupations. Fifteen percent were paid between \$11 and \$15 per hour. One student reported that she received \$18 an hour working in the manufacturing sector and one student received \$25 per hour as a multi-media specialist. One student did not answer the question.
- The WIST participants learned of the program through community organisations (35 percent), the newspaper (25 percent), and the Internet (20 percent). The remaining 20 percent heard about the program through friends or “word of mouth”.
- The majority of participants identified their desire to achieve financial stability as their primary motivation for enrolling in WIST. The possibility of pursuing a career, as opposed to merely having a job, and an interest in the electrical trade were the other most frequently cited reasons. The physicality of the vocation also appealed to fifty percent of the first survey respondents.

PART 2B

THE PROGRAM AND THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Overview of the Program Design

The first WIST initiative ran as a WIST Industrial Electrician Program, from October 29, 2001 to October 4, 2002, and was forty-two weeks in duration. The program was comprised of four components:

1. Academic upgrading, employability skills and orientation to trades.
2. Additional academic upgrading, employability skills and pre-apprenticeship skills training.
3. Basic Level 1 - Apprenticeship Training (Industrial Electrician – Common Core Curriculum).
4. Work Experience Placement.

The first two components were designed to prepare students for the standardized curriculum delivered in the Basic Level 1 Apprenticeship Training. Core Curriculum Courses delivered in the third component were those delivered to all first year electrical apprentices. While trainees usually complete the Basic Level 1 curriculum after being signed on as apprentices, the WIST program was designed to give participating women their Basic Qualifications before beginning an apprenticeship. It was felt that this would give the WIST graduates an advantage over other candidates seeking an apprenticeship. The WIST program also delivered an additional employment support through the inclusion of Employment Preparation courses in each of the first three components of the program, leading up to the Work Experience Placement

Program Credentialing

Students were required to complete all four components in order to receive a WIST Certificate. Students received an additional certificate for successfully completing the Basic Level 1 curriculum. The WIST students graduated on October 4, 2002.

Survey Administration

The WIST participants agreed to complete a survey upon completion of each program component. The surveys included questions regarding personal demographic information, the course content in each component, and personal challenges experienced during the component. Students were also given the opportunity to add other comments about their experience with the program. See Appendix B for copies of the surveys used. More detailed information on each of the four program components, and the survey results gathered at the end of each learning experience, are provided here.

Component One:

Academic Upgrading, Employability and Orientation to the Trades

- 10 weeks in duration.
- Focused on upgrading of Mathematics, Communication and Computer Skills, and Employability Skills.

- Academic upgrading components were designed to begin preparations for Basic Level 1 Apprenticeship Training to be delivered as Component Three.

Survey Administration

- 20 of 22 program participants completed a written survey at the end of this program component (90 percent)

Survey Highlights

Feedback regarding the curriculum:

- The Mathematics and Communications upgrading components were considered very useful by over 80 percent of respondents.
- The Mathematics component was considered the most academically challenging aspect of the curriculum.
- The Computer Skills upgrading and Employability Skills components were evaluated less highly but still considered useful by the majority of respondents. 25 percent of respondents suggested less employability skills training were required.
- Students with higher education levels felt they required less academic upgrading and were anxious to move to hands-on training.

Personal Information:

- 45 percent of respondents stated that they were facing additional financial challenges as a result of taking the program.
- Program scheduling had required some of the participants with part-time jobs to reduce their number of hours of work, resulting in reduced income and additional financial worries.
- Two respondents reported childcare issues and suggested that coordination support would be beneficial.
- 20 percent stated that they had considered quitting the program due to personal challenges or dissatisfaction with the course content (no distinction provided).
- No dropouts occurred.
- A number of respondents commented positively on the women-only aspect of the program, and their increased self-confidence and optimism for the future

Component Two:

Pre-Apprenticeship Academic Skills and Apprenticeship Skills Training

- 8 weeks in duration
- Focused on further academic upgrading in mathematics and communications, and further employability skills training of a highly practical nature: students were required to research employers, arrange informational interviews and organize their work placements during this component.

- The apprenticeship skills training entailed instruction in Electrical Theory and Practical Shop classes, where Mathematics and Electrical Theory were applied through hands-on learning.
- This component was designed to further prepare for the Basic Level 1 Apprenticeship Training, to be delivered as Component Three.

Survey Administration

- 14 of the 20 remaining students who completed this component of the program participated in the second written survey (70 percent) (2 of the former students were forced to exit the program due to family and financial obligations and commitments)

Survey Highlights

Feedback regarding the curriculum:

- The academic-based parts of the second component curriculum were well received by the respondents. Over 90 percent felt that Practical Shop, Electrical Theory and Mathematics were challenging, but very useful. The majority of respondents considered Communications less difficult than the other subjects but still useful.
- Respondents' appreciation of the academic curriculum appears rooted in the hands-on, applied-learning opportunities provided to the students in this component of the program. As students were provided with hands-on learning opportunities, their appreciation of the relevance and utility of the mathematical and electrical theory they had been taught incrementally increased. Even the students who had previously completed grade 13, or university level mathematics courses, stated that they now perceived the mathematics upgrading as very useful.
- A co-relation is evident in the relationship between student perception of usefulness and academic results: all of the respondents ranked the Mathematics as "Very useful", or "Useful", and none of the respondents considered the Mathematics "Easy"⁴; all of the respondents reported a final grade of 80 percent or higher in Mathematics.
- At this juncture in the program, respondents considered themselves well prepared academically for the upcoming Basic Apprenticeship Training, to be delivered as Component Three.
- Respondents were less enthusiastic and appreciative of the Employability skills aspect of the second component curriculum. Fifty percent of respondents did not consider this component very useful.
- Respondents expressed negative opinions of two facets of the Employability Skills training they received in this component of the program: 1) Many respondents felt that the topics discussed were too personal and therapeutic in nature, and that the course should have a more practical and objective orientation; and 2) Some students felt that they should have received more administrative support in their efforts to secure work placements, as part of the Employability Skills course.

⁴ As per results of the survey questions on the usefulness and the level of difficulty of selected subjects in this component of the WIST program.

Personal Information:

- Most respondents felt they were dealing with escalating personal challenges as the program progressed. A number of factors contributed to this dynamic. Among the factors cited by respondents:
 - financial pressures resulting from various factors, including increased living and daycare costs and unforeseen program expenses, such as extra tools not covered by the basic tool allowance of the program;
 - personal stresses resulting from their sustained efforts to balance school and family life, particularly for the large percentage of single parents in the program;
 - a number of students reported that they were having difficulties securing the requisite work placement.
- Fifty percent of the students reported that they had considered quitting the program, but did not do so.
- Conversely, students also mentioned the personal benefits of the program, the sense of accomplishment they had derived from the experience, and their appreciation of the camaraderie and support they were receiving from teachers and classmates.

Component Three:**Basic Level 1 Common Core Curriculum for Electrical Apprentices**

- 12 weeks in duration.
- Requisite training for all first year electrical apprentices.
- Includes five standard courses: Canadian Electrical Code, Prints, Electrical theory: Lab and Lecture, Electronics, and Installation methods.
- In addition to the Basic Core courses, the third component also included more Employment Preparation.

Survey Administration

- 15 of the 17 remaining students who successfully completed this component of the program participated in the third written survey (88 percent). Additional former students exited this program at this point due to not receiving the acceptable academic standing in courses within the program.

Survey Highlights**On the Curriculum:**

- Although over 80 percent of the WIST students passed all five of the Core Curriculum courses, respondents ranked the core curriculum courses as overall more difficult than the courses that they had taken in previous components of the program.
- Respondents ranked Electronics as very difficult, and Electrical Theory as the second most difficult subject. The majority of the small number of course failures occurred in these subjects.

- While respondents did perceive the Core Curriculum courses as rigorous, they all stated that they had been adequately prepared for this curriculum through the Pre-Basic components (components 1 and 2) of the program.

Personal Information:

- The general dynamics of respondents feeling financially and circumstantially stressed by the program, while also feeling personally empowered and individually supported by peers and teachers continued, and became more pronounced at this juncture of the program.
- Similarly, negative feelings regarding the work placement portion of the program were increasingly prevalent among the respondents; 80 percent stated that they had experienced difficulties securing a work placement; more than half had not found a placement at the time of the survey, and many felt that students should have received more help in securing placements.
- Many respondents continued to perceive their participation in the program as tenuous, due to the demanding nature of the program and the financial hardships they were facing. Many respondents cited the supportive college staff and collegial learning environment as offsets to these difficulties.
- Despite these expressed opinions, 93 percent of respondents stated that they would recommend the WIST program to a friend.

Component Four:

Work Experience Placement

- 12 weeks in duration.
- The work placement required that the participant work the equivalent of 40 hours/week.
- The work placement required that individual have the opportunity to have hands-on experience as industrial, construction or maintenance electrician.
- Individual employers and students entered into an agreement regarding hours and duties with respect to their work placement.

Survey Administration

- 11 of the 16 students who completed work placements (69 percent) participated in the final survey, which consisted of a structured telephone interview. Participants were asked about their experiences with the work placement, the personal challenges they encountered, and their future plans. They were also asked to comment on their overall experience with the program
- 16 of the 17 remaining students completed the mandatory requirements of the work experience. This participant refused to alter her paid unrelated employment to secure an appropriate electrical work experience.

Survey Highlights

On the Work Placement Experience:

- The majority of respondents were largely satisfied with the work placement experience. Most felt that their placements were very useful or useful and each respondent evaluated her own work performance as at a minimum satisfactory.
- The most favoured aspects of the work placement included the hands-on experience and the variety of tasks and functions involved.
- When asked what they disliked about their work placement, respondents were most critical of the unpaid nature of the experience (36 percent). A couple of students also felt they weren't given an opportunity to do anything during the placement.
- Respondents considered the Basic Component (component three) and the hands-on learning they previously received as the most relevant preparation for their work placements.
- The majority of respondents did not experience any gender-based problems or issues in their respective workplaces. While a small number had anticipated the possibility of issues, most commented in the survey that their male colleagues had been more supportive than they had expected. A notable but small exception is the one respondent who quit her placement in construction in part because there were no washrooms on site.

On Future Plans

- All of the WIST graduates surveyed felt that their overall employability had been enhanced by the program, yet aspired to find jobs in the electrical field – not necessarily as apprentices.
- At the time of the final interviews:
 - Two WIST graduates were enrolled in the Electrical Engineering Technician Certificate Program
 - Two graduates were upgrading their qualifications through correspondence courses and part-time studies
 - One graduate was hired as an Electrician's Assistant.
 - One graduate had secured an apprenticeship in construction
- A number of graduates, who had sent out numerous resumes and received no responses, suggested that employers might not be taking the course seriously either because they had never heard of WIST or because the program was stigmatized as a "woman's course". Other women observed that many employers do not hire apprentices without an Electrical Engineering Technician certificate. At least two graduates felt that their host employers would have offered them employment but could not due to union issues.

PART 2C

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS AND SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Graduation Rate

17 of the original 22 WIST participants completed the program = 77% completion rate
16 of the 17 WIST participants completed all mandatory requirements = 94% WIST Certificate of Completion rate

14 of the 17 WIST participants successfully passed all 6 Industrial Electrician – Common Core Curriculum subjects Basic Level 1 Certificate of Completion rate (Eighty two percent).

Employment Status - Six Months after Graduation

Six months after graduation Mohawk College was able to contact 15 of the 17 WIST graduates to confirm their current employment status. The results are depicted below:

- 6 were employed in electrical related positions;
- 3 had returned to school; to further their education in the electrical area and to upgrade academic skill base
- 2 were currently unemployed and job searching in the field
- 4 were currently employed in unrelated positions: and
- 2 had relocated out of the area and were unable to be contacted

Of the 15 WIST graduates that participated in the 6 month follow-up study a total of 9 graduates (sixty percent). Six were employed in a related occupation and three moved on to further education. These are considered a positive program outcome under the goals and objectives of the WIST directive. Mohawk College is pleased with the initial results of their first WIST initiative and anticipates an increase in the employment status of these graduates when they conduct the one year follow-up.

Other Participants' Perspective included in the Study

In addition to the student feedback sought at the conclusion of each component of the WIST program, the study also sought opinion and critical commentary from the other two major categories of program participants:

1. The College Instructors who taught the WIST students.
2. The Employers who hosted a WIST student during the Work Placement component of the program.

Instructors' Perspective

The Instructors involved in the WIST Program were asked how teaching an all female class differed from teaching the regular pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship classes that have a predominantly male population (see Appendix D for survey).

Instructors noted that the female students had more difficulty understanding the technical and practical applications in both the trade specific training and math courses. The WIST students were more concerned about their grades than former groups of male students

that the instructors had taught previously. However, the WIST students gradually overcame their initial anxiety of returning to school with the assistance of the employability skills and job readiness curriculum integrated in the program content.

While the instructors appreciated the fact that the majority of WIST participants had other employment barriers such as transportation, sole support parenting and daycare responsibilities, financial constraints and working while attending school (see detailed specifics referenced elsewhere in this report), in school attendance was a direct correlation to academic success.

For the most part the WIST students did better in the program than had been initially anticipated and expected. Overall, the instructors were thrilled with the commitment and abilities of the WIST students. The general consensus was that their performance in the program was similar to that of male students.

Host Employers' Perspective

Employers who hosted a WIST student were mailed a short questionnaire (see Appendix C) and asked to complete and return it once the student had completed the work placement. Fourteen of the sixteen host employers (87.5 percent) completed and returned the work experience questionnaires. Employers were asked to rate the student's training and performance in the work placement; to identify any problems related to the participant being a woman; and whether they would host or hire WIST participants in the future.

The majority of host employers rated the students' training positively and their performances during the work placement as satisfactory or very satisfactory. The only gender-related issue identified in the employers' feedback was that of the job site washroom, as previously referenced in this report. Like the program instructors, employers appear to have perceived the on-the-job performance of WIST students as similar to that of male students.

In response to the questions concerning the future hiring or hosting of WIST participants, twelve of the fourteen host employers (86 percent) stated that they would host a WIST student again and seventy nine percent stated that they would consider hiring a WIST graduate if they were recruiting apprentices. While a small minority of employers did respond negatively to these questions, their accompanying rationales were not attributable to either gender or WIST-specific issues.

A Summary Analysis

The study findings yielded a number of summary observations about the learning styles and learning experiences of the WIST program participants, and the challenges and stresses they faced over the course of the 42-week program. Six primary observations are articulated here.

1. The majority of these learners carried with them complex circumstances and considerable personal and financial responsibilities in endeavouring to fulfill the requirement of the WIST program.
2. The majority of these learners brought modest levels of proficiency and self-confidence to the more technical academic components of the program, most notably Mathematics and Electronics.
3. A hands-on, applied learning style was the definite preference of the learners.
4. The learners' stresses and anxieties throughout the program were derived from personal rather than academic issues.
5. The Employability Skills component of the program was not valued by the students, and most were uncomfortable and/or ill-suited to exercise the levels of autonomy and initiative required to manage this component of the program successfully. A specific issue for many of the study participants was the student's required role in locating and arranging their Work Placement Experience.
6. As the program progressed, personal challenges escalated for the students. In the face of mounting personal pressures, students sought out and highly valued the formal and informal support systems provided by their peers and instructors in the program.

Suggestions for Improving WIST

As was previously stated in this report, it is hoped that the study findings may be valuable in the realization of improvements to future WIST initiatives. In the interest of solidifying this objective, two strategies for program improvement have been formulated in response to the issues and insights articulated above. It should be noted that these suggestions are made in a spirit of minor refinements only.

Strategy #1

Broaden the program curriculum to facilitate learning success.

For a variety of very legitimate reasons, WIST learners struggled most with the theoretical based and technical components of the program curriculum, and felt most comfortable with the hands-on learning components. Additionally, the study findings suggest a considerable variance in the academic backgrounds, and corresponding required levels of academic upgrading, among the WIST participants. In light of these factors, program planners might wish to consider amendments to the rigour and specificity of the WIST curriculum. While any such changes would need to be made within the parameters of a skills training/ pre-apprenticeship model, a more modest and broader based, more generic skills training curriculum could serve to minimize the level

of difficulty for many participants, and might also better accommodate the variance in levels of academic preparedness.

Two other aspects of the study findings also support the notion of a more generic skills training model serving the needs of WIST learners well:

- WIST participants are a diverse group and are highly motivated to learn and succeed. As such, they are likely to benefit from more opportunities to customize their learning to their particular interests and/or strengths. A broadened training curriculum might afford this kind of flexibility.
- In light of the personal responsibilities and pressures faced by many of the WIST study participants, greater flexibility in the delivery of the program is also likely to be valuable to women in WIST. Again, a broader, more generic curriculum might afford this kind of flexibility.

Strategy #2

Formalize and enhance the non-academic support services available to WIST participants.

This strategy falls out of the critical importance accorded to support services by participants in the WIST Study. The term “support services” is broad and open-ended and could encompass a broad range of possible supports, from financial assistance to guidance and counselling, to peer support. The demographic profile of the women who participated in the WIST Study provides a clear rationale for why support is required. For the purpose of identifying a strategy to improve WIST, defining the requisite scope of this term is less important than being clear about how crucially important such services appear to have been to the women who participated in the WIST Study. With support, they succeeded in the program. The study findings imply that without it, they likely did not. In light of this dynamic, WIST planners are encouraged to consider ways of improving, enhancing and wherever possible formalizing the supports available to women who participate in WIST.

Conclusion

The study results documented here serve as a clear and convincing testimonial to the overall success of the first WIST initiative. The large majority of program participants expressed positive feelings about most aspects of the program throughout their training experience, and instructors and employers favourably reviewed both the program and the learners. Perhaps most significantly, the study findings suggest considerable personal growth occurred among the survey respondents over the course of the WIST program.

Considered as a whole, the participants demonstrated tenacity and commitment to the program, overcame significant challenges, and realized significant training and personal achievements. Participating in a non-traditional pilot initiative of this nature is inherently difficult, and the demographic characteristics of this group created additional and considerable challenges. Credit should be given to those who guided and facilitated the first WIST process for these women, and their own efforts and accomplishments should be acknowledged and applauded.

APPENDIX A - WIST FLYER



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Weeks 19 - 30

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APPENDIX B - QUESTIONNAIRES

- Component 1 Questionnaire
Academic upgrading, Employability and Orientation to the Trades
- Component 2 Questionnaire
Pre-Apprenticeship Academic Skills and Apprenticeship Skills Training
- Component 3 Questionnaire
Basic Level 1 Common Core Curriculum for Electrical Apprentices
- Component 4 Questionnaire
Work Experience Placement

Questionnaire 1

Academic upgrading, Employability and Orientation to the Trades

Background Information**Please circle your answers**

1. What is your age group?
 - A. UNDER 20
 - B. BETWEEN 20 AND 30
 - C. BETWEEN 31 AND 40
 - D. BETWEEN 41 AND 50
 - E. (SPECIFIC AGE)_____

2. What is your marital status?
 - A. SINGLE
 - B. MARRIED/COMMON LAW
 - C. DIVORCED
 - D. OTHER _____

3. Do you have any children?
 - A. YES
 - B. NO (**PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 6**)

4. How many children do you have? _____

5. What are the ages of your children? _____

6. Are you a member of a visible minority?
 - A. YES (please specify) _____
 - B. NO

7. Are you a person with a disability?
 - A. YES
 - B. NO

8. Is English your first language?
 - A. YES
 - B. NO. What is your first language? _____

Education/Work Experience

9. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - A. HIGH SCHOOL: GRADE _____
 - B. SOME COMMUNITY COLLEGE
 - C. COMMUNITY COLLEGE
 - D. SOME UNIVERSITY
 - E. COMPLETED UNIVERSITY
 - F. OTHER _____

10. What is the highest level of math you have completed? _____

11. How long have you been out of school? _____
12. When was the last time you were employed? _____
13. What was your job title? _____
14. Approximately, how much were you paid?
- A. MINIMUM WAGE
 - B. _____
15. What did you like about your last job?
16. What did you dislike about your last job?
17. What is your present source of income?
- A. EMPLOYMENT
 - B. E.I.
 - C. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
 - D. FAMILY
 - E. OTHER _____
 - F. RATHER NOT SAY
18. What is your annual income range?
- A. UNDER \$10 000
 - B. BETWEEN 10 000 AND 20 000
 - C. BETWEEN 21 000 AND 30 000
 - D. BETWEEN 31 000 AND 40 000
 - E. OVER 40 000
 - F. RATHER NOT SAY

Experiences with WIST program

19. How did you hear about Mohawk College's WIST program?
- A. NEWSPAPER
 - B. JOB FAIR
 - C. COMMUNITY AGENCY
 - D. OTHER _____
20. Why did you apply for this program?
21. What parts of the admissions test did you find most difficult?
- A. MATH
 - B. MECHANICAL REASONING
 - C. ENGLISH
 - D. EVERYTHING
 - E. NONE
22. Why did you find this part the most difficult?
- A. LACK OF EDUCATION
 - B. OUT OF SCHOOL A LONG TIME
 - C. OTHER _____

23. What parts of the admissions test did you find easy?
- A. MATH
 - B. MECHANICAL REASONING
 - C. ENGLISH
 - D. EVERYTHING
 - E. NONE

Experiences in Term 1 of the WIST program: course content

The first eight weeks of the program focussed on mathematics, employability skills, communications and computer skills.

24. In your opinion, was the math component:
- A. VERY USEFUL
 - B. USEFUL
 - C. NOT VERY USEFUL
 - D. NOT USEFUL
25. Did you find the math subject material:
- A. VERY DIFFICULT
 - B. DIFFICULT
 - C. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - D. NOT DIFFICULT
 - E. EASY
26. In your opinion, were the employability skills
- A. VERY USEFUL
 - B. USEFUL
 - C. NOT VERY USEFUL
 - D. NOT USEFUL
27. Did you find the communications component:
- A. VERY DIFFICULT
 - B. DIFFICULT
 - C. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - D. EASY
28. Was the communications component:
- A. VERY USEFUL
 - B. USEFUL
 - C. NOT VERY USEFUL
 - D. NOT USEFUL
29. Did you find the computer skills component:
- A. VERY USEFUL
 - B. USEFUL
 - C. NOT VERY USEFUL
 - D. NOT USEFUL
30. At *this point* in the program, what type of electrical work do you think you'd like to do? (e.g. construction)

31. Is there anything in term 1 that you think should be changed in order to better suite your needs?

- A. NO
- B. YES. Please explain?

32. What did you like most about term 1 of the program?

Personal Challenges

It is important for us to understand what kind of non-academic challenges/difficulties you may be encountering during the course of this program?

33. Are you experiencing any additional financial burdens as a result of taking this program?

- A. NO
- B. YES. Why?

34. Do you need help with childcare?

- A. NO
- B. I DON'T HAVE CHILDREN
- C. YES. Please explain

35. Do you need help balancing family/work with school?

- A. NO
- B. YES. Please explain

36. Are you experiencing any other difficulties that you hadn't expected when you began this program?

- A. NO
- B. YES. Please explain

37. Do you ever feel like quitting this program?

- A. NO
- B. YES. Why?

38. If you answered **YES** to question 36, could you please explain what makes you stay in this program?

Overall Experiences

39. If a friend asked you what you liked about the program so far, what would you say?

40. If a friend asked you what you disliked about the program, what would you say?

41. If a friend were considering taking this program, would you recommend it?

- A. YES. Why?
- B. NO. Why not?

Other Comments?

Thank you for your participation.

Questionnaire #2

Pre-apprenticeship Academic Skills and Apprenticeship Skills Training

Background Information**Please circle your answers**

1. What is your age group?
 - A. UNDER 20
 - B. BETWEEN 20 AND 30
 - C. BETWEEN 31 AND 40
 - D. BETWEEN 41 AND 50
 - E. (SPECIFIC AGE)_____

2. What is your marital status?
 - A. SINGLE
 - B. MARRIED/COMMON LAW
 - C. DIVORCED
 - D. OTHER _____

3. Do you have any children?
 - A. YES
 - B. NO (**PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 6**)

4. How many children do you have? _____

5. What are the ages of your children? _____

6. What is your present source of income?
 - A. EMPLOYMENT
 - B. E.I.
 - C. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
 - D. FAMILY
 - E. OTHER _____
 - F. RATHER NOT SAY

Experiences in Term 2 of the WIST program: course content

Math, communications and employability skills continued in term 2. Term 2 also included 11 hours of trade-specific Electrical theory and practical shop classes designed to prepare you for the Basic Level 1 curriculum that began March 25th.

7. In your opinion, was the math component?
 - A. VERY USEFUL
 - B. USEFUL
 - C. NOT VERY USEFUL
 - D. NOT USEFUL

8. Did you find the math subject material:
 - A. VERY DIFFICULT
 - B. DIFFICULT
 - C. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - D. NOT DIFFICULT
 - E. EASY

9. How did you do in the math component?

- A. EXCELLENT
- B. VERY WELL
- C. WELL
- D. FAIRLY WELL
- E. NOT VERY WELL

10. What was your final grade in the math component?

11. In your opinion, were the employability skills:

- A. VERY USEFUL
- B. USEFUL
- C. NOT VERY USEFUL
- D. NOT USEFUL

12. Did you find the communications component:

- A. VERY DIFFICULT
- B. DIFFICULT
- C. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
- D. EASY

13. Was the communications component:

- A. VERY USEFUL
- B. USEFUL
- C. NOT VERY USEFUL
- D. NOT USEFUL

14. Did you find Electrical theory:

- A. VERY USEFUL
- B. USEFUL
- C. NOT VERY USEFUL
- D. NOT USEFUL

15. Was Electrical theory:

- A. VERY DIFFICULT
- B. DIFFICULT
- C. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
- D. EASY

16. Did you find the practical shop:

- A. VERY USEFUL
- B. USEFUL
- C. NOT VERY USEFUL
- D. NOT USEFUL

17. What part of the practical component did you like the most? Please explain why.

18. What part of the practical component did you like the least? Please explain.

19. What part of the practical component did you find the most challenging? Why?
20. Was the practical component different than what you thought it would be?
- A. NO
 - B. YES Please explain how or why it was different.
21. Do you think the course material in term 2 has prepared you with the skills needed for the Basic Level 1 curriculum?
- A. YES
 - B. NO. Please explain
22. What components of the program have been most useful in preparing you for the Basic Level 1 curriculum?
23. Is there anything in term 2 that you think should be changed in order to better suit your needs?
- A. NO
 - B. YES Please explain
24. What did you like most about term 2 of the program?

OCCUPATIONAL GOAL

In December, we asked what type of electrical work you would like to do (e.g. construction, industrial). Some of you were not sure.

25. What was your occupational goal in term 1 of the program? (e.g. industrial, construction, didn't know).
26. At this point in the program, what type of electrical work would you like to do?
27. Has your occupational goal changed during the course of this program?
- A. NO
 - B. YES. Please explain why.

Personal Challenges

It is important for us to understand what kind of non-academic challenges/difficulties you may be encountering during the course of this program.

28. Are you experiencing any additional financial burdens as a result of taking this program?
- A. NO
 - B. YES. Why?
29. If you were working (part-time) in term 1, are you still working?
- A. YES
 - B. NOT APPLICABLE
 - C. NO Please explain
30. If you were not working in term 1, are you working now?
- A. NO
 - B. NOT APPLICABLE
 - C. YES Please explain

31. Do you need help with childcare?
A. NO
B. I DON'T HAVE CHILDREN
C. YES. Please explain
32. If you were having problems with childcare in term 1, has the situation:
A. IMPROVED
B. STAYED THE SAME
C. GOTTEN WORSE
33. Do you need help balancing family/work with school?
A. NO
B. YES. Please explain
34. Are you experiencing any other difficulties that you hadn't expected when you began this program?
A. NO
B. YES Please explain
35. The Basic Level 1 curriculum begins at 8am. Are you having any difficulties adjusting to this schedule?
A. NO
B. YES Please explain
36. Do you ever feel like quitting this program?
A. NO
B. YES. Why?
37. If you answered yes to question 36, could you please explain what makes you stay in this program?

Overall experiences

38. If a friend asked you what you liked about the program so far, what would you say?
39. If a friend asked you what you disliked about the program, what would you say?
40. If a friend were considering taking this program, would you recommend it?
A. YES. Why?
B. NO. Why not?

Other comments

Thank you for your participation.

Questionnaire #3:
Basic Level 1 Common Core Curriculum for Electrical Apprentices

Background Information

Please circle your answers

7. What is your age group?
 F. UNDER 20
 G. BETWEEN 20 AND 30
 H. BETWEEN 31 AND 40
 I. BETWEEN 41 AND 50
 J. (SPECIFIC AGE)_____
8. What is your marital status?
 E. SINGLE
 F. MARRIED/COMMON LAW
 G. DIVORCED
 H. OTHER _____
9. Do you have any children?
 C. YES
 D. NO (**PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 6**)
10. How many children do you have? _____
11. What are the ages of your children? _____
12. What is your present source of income?
 C. EMPLOYMENT
 D. E.I.
 E. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
 F. FAMILY
 G. OTHER _____
 H. RATHER NOT SAY

Experiences with Basic Level 1 component: reportable subjects

7. Did you find the Canadian Electrical code subject material:
 C. VERY DIFFICULT
 D. DIFFICULT
 E. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 F. NOT DIFFICULT
 G. EASY
8. How do you think you did in this subject (Canadian Electrical Code – Level 1)?
 F. EXCELLENT
 G. VERY WELL
 H. WELL
 I. FAIRLY WELL
 J. NOT VERY WELL
9. How did you find the Prints – Level 1 material:
 A. VERY DIFFICULT

- B. DIFFICULT
 - C. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - D. NOT DIFFICULT
 - E. EASY
10. How do you feel you did in this subject (*Prints*)?
- A. EXCELLENT
 - B. VERY WELL
 - C. WELL
 - D. FAIRLY WELL
 - E. NOT VERY WELL
11. Did you find *Electrical Theory – Level 1*:
- E. VERY DIFFICULT
 - F. DIFFICULT
 - G. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - H. EASY
12. In *Electrical Theory – Level 1*, how do you think you did?
- A. EXCELLENT
 - B. VERY WELL
 - C. WELL
 - D. FAIRLY WELL
 - E. NOT VERY WELL
13. Was *Installation Methods – Level 1*:
- E. VERY DIFFICULT
 - F. DIFFICULT
 - G. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - H. EASY
14. How do you think you did in this subject (*Installation Methods - Level 1*)?
- A. EXCELLENT
 - B. VERY WELL
 - C. WELL
 - D. FAIRLY WELL
 - E. NOT VERY WELL
15. Was the material in *Electronics – Level 1*?
- A. VERY DIFFICULT
 - B. DIFFICULT
 - C. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - D. EASY
16. Overall, how do you think you did in *Electronics – Level 1*?
- A. EXCELLENT
 - B. VERY WELL
 - C. WELL
 - D. FAIRLY WELL
 - E. NOT VERY WELL
17. What part of the Basic Level 1 component did you like the most? Please explain why.
18. What part of the Basic Level 1 component did you like the least? Please explain.
19. What part of the Basic component did you find the most challenging/difficult? Why?

20. Was the Basic component different than what you thought it would be?

- C. NO
- D. YES Please explain how or why it was different.

21. Do you think the course material in term 2 adequately prepared you with the skills needed for the Basic Level 1 curriculum?

- A. YES
- B. NO. Please explain

Work placement

The work placement component of the WIST Industrial Electrician program begins June 17th.

22. Have you found a work placement?

- A. YES
- B. NO (Why?)

23. When did you finalize your work placement?

24. Did you have any difficulties finding a work placement?

- A. NO
- B. YES (Please explain)

25. Do you feel that the Basic Level 1 curriculum has prepared you with the skills and knowledge required to succeed in your work placement?

- A. YES
- B. NO (Why?)

26. What type of electrical work will you be doing in your work placement (eg. Industrial, Construction, Maintenance)?

27. Is your work placement in the same area (Industrial, Construction) you planned to work in before you started the Basic Level 1 curriculum?

- A. YES
- B. NO (Why?)

28. What is your occupational goal at this point in the program?

29. At this point, how do you feel about the work placement (e.g. worried, excited, confident)?

30. What do you expect the work placement to be like?

31. Do you anticipate any problems related to the fact that you are a woman in a traditionally male-dominated trade?

- A. YES (Why?)
- B. NO (Why?)

32. At this point, what do you plan to do once you have finished the work placement?

Personal Challenges

It is important for us to understand what kind of non-academic challenges/difficulties you may be encountering during the course of this program.

33. Are you experiencing any additional financial burdens as a result of taking this program?

- A. NO
- B. YES. Why?

34. If you were working (part-time) in term 2, are you still working?

- D. YES
- E. NOT APPLICABLE
- F. NO Please explain

35. If you were not working in term 2, are you working now?

- D. NO
- E. NOT APPLICABLE
- F. YES Please explain

36. Do you need help with childcare?

- D. NO
- E. I DON'T HAVE CHILDREN
- F. YES. Please explain

37. If you were having problems with childcare in term 2, has the situation:

- D. IMPROVED
- E. STAYED THE SAME
- F. GOTTEN WORSE

38. Do you need help balancing family/work with school?

- C. NO
- D. YES. Please explain

39. Are you experiencing any other difficulties that you had not expected when you began this program?

- A. NO
- E. YES Please explain

40. Do you ever feel like quitting this program?

- C. NO
- D. YES. Why?

41. If you answered yes to question 40, could you please explain what makes you stay in this program?

Overall experiences

42. If a friend asked you what you liked about the program so far, what would you say?

43. If a friend asked you what you disliked about the program, what would you say?

44. If a friend were considering taking this program, would you recommend it?

- C. YES. Why?
- D. NO. Why not?

Other comments?

Thank you for your participation.

Questionnaire #4 – Telephone Interviews Work Experience Placement

Background Information

13. What is your age group?
- K. UNDER 20
 - L. BETWEEN 20 AND 30
 - M. BETWEEN 31 AND 40
 - N. BETWEEN 41 AND 50
 - O. (SPECIFIC AGE)_____
14. What is your marital status?
- I. SINGLE
 - J. MARRIED/COMMON LAW
 - K. DIVORCED
 - L. OTHER _____
15. Do you have any children?
- E. YES
 - F. NO (**PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 6**)
16. How many children do you have? _____
17. What are the ages of your children?_____
18. What is your present source of income?
- I. EMPLOYMENT
 - J. E.I.
 - K. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
 - L. FAMILY
 - M. OTHER _____
 - N. RATHER NOT SAY

Experiences with work placement

7. In your opinion, was the work placement:
- C. VERY USEFUL
 - D. USEFUL
 - E. NOT VERY USEFUL
 - F. NOT USEFUL
8. Did you find the work placement
- H. VERY DIFFICULT
 - I. DIFFICULT
 - J. SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT
 - K. NOT DIFFICULT
 - L. EASY
9. How would you rate your performance in the work placement?
- K. VERY SATISFACTORY
 - L. SATISFACTORY

- M. UNSATISFACTORY
 - N. VERY UNSATISFACTORY
10. What part of the work placement did you like the most? Please explain why.
11. What part of the work placement did you like the least? Please explain.
12. Was the work placement different than what you thought it would be?
- E. NO
 - F. YES Please explain how or why it was different.
13. What components of the WIST program were most useful in preparing you for the work placement?
14. Is there anything in the WIST program that you think should be changed in order to better prepare students for the work placement?
- C. NO
 - D. YES Please explain
15. Were the physical demands of the work placement:
- A. MORE THAN YOU EXPECTED
 - B. WHAT YOU EXPECTED
 - C. LESS THAN YOU EXPECTED

OCCUPATIONAL GOAL

In previous surveys, we asked what type of electrical work you would like to do (e.g. construction, industrial). Some of you were not sure.

15. What was your occupational goal before the work placement? (eg. industrial, construction, didn't know).
16. What type of electrical work did you do in your work placement?
17. Has your occupational goal changed since completing the work placement?
- A. NO
 - B. YES. Please explain why.
18. At this point what type of electrical work would you like to do?

Personal Challenges

It is important for us to understand what kind of non-academic challenges/difficulties you may have encountered during the work placement.

19. Did you experiencing any additional financial burdens as a result of taking the work placement?
- A. NO
 - B. YES. Why?
20. If you were working (part-time) before the work placement, did you continue to work during the placement
- G. YES
 - H. NOT APPLICABLE

- I. NO Please explain
- 21. Did you need help with childcare during the work placement?
 - G. NO
 - H. I DON'T HAVE CHILDREN
 - I. YES. Please explain
- 22. If you were having problems with childcare before the work placement, did the situation:
 - G. IMPROVE
 - H. STAY THE SAME
 - C. WORSEN
- 23. Did you need help balancing family and work?
 - F. NO
 - G. YES. Please explain
- 24. Did you experience any other difficulties that you hadn't expected when you began the work placement?
 - A. NO
 - B. YES Please explain
- 25. Did you have any difficulties adjusting to your work schedule?
 - A. NO
 - B. YES Please explain
- 26. Do you ever feel like quitting the work placement?
 - E. NO
 - F. YES. Why?
- 27. If you answered yes to question 36, could you please explain what made you stay in the placement?

Overall experiences

- 28. If a friend asked you what you liked about the work placement, what would you say?
- 29. If a friend asked you what you disliked about the work placement, what would you say?
- 30. If a friend were considering taking this program, would you recommend it?
 - E. YES. Why?
 - F. NO. Why not?

31. What are your future plans?

Other comments?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C – WORK EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Work Experience Research Questionnaire
(Women in Skilled Trades - Industrial Electrician Program)

Please circle your answer

1. How would you rate the student's training?
 - A. VERY GOOD
 - B. GOOD
 - C. FAIR
 - D. NOT VERY GOOD

2. How would you rate the student's performance in the work placement?
 - A. VERY SATISFACTORY
 - B. SATISFACTORY
 - C. UNSATISFACTORY
 - D. VERY UNSATISFACTORY

3. Were there any problems related to the participant being a woman?
 - A. NO
 - B. YES (Please explain)

4. Would you host a WIST student again?
 - A. YES
 - B. NO (Please explain)

5. Would you consider hiring a WIST graduate if you were recruiting apprentices?
 - A. YES
 - B. NO (Please explain)

Other comments

APPENDIX D – INSTRUCTOR’S SURVEY

WIST (Industrial Electrician) Instructor Survey

1. What subject did you teach in the WIST program?

2. What did you expect when the course began (e.g. How did you expect the students to perform in the subject?)?

3. Did the WIST participants do better or worse than you expected?

4. Were there any unexpected issues that arose during the course?

5. How did teaching female students differ from teaching male students?

6. How did the WIST participants perform in the subject area compared to male students?

7. Is there anything that you would change for similar/ future programs of this kind?

Other comments

BUSINESS, LABOUR & COMMUNITY

**Together... developing today's workforce
for tomorrow's workplace!**

About the Hamilton Training Advisory Board...

The Training Board is a community based not-for-profit organization established to act as a local catalyst for labour force development. The Board's strength lies in its unique model with representation from business, labour, education and training and equity groups.

The Board keeps in touch with local needs and issues with respect to labour force trends. Annually our activities include:

- An annual overview of the employment and training situation.
- Facilitation of an inclusive and consultative community planning process that addresses the issues raised by our research.

- An inventory of programs and services leading to employment
- Projects, partnerships and linkages forged with our community partners to address the issues identified by our research.

The Training Board has been involved in a number projects and partnerships that promote building a skilled workforce for our community. The WIST Research Report is only one.

For information on all our past projects and copies of our project and research reports please go to our website – www.htab.ca



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