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University of Winnipeg Undergraduate Programs to Encourage Indigenous Students to Undertake Graduate Studies in Science and Engineering

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Undergraduate research activities, strong mentorship and peer support have been demonstrated to improve the experiences of students studying science in the last few years and the community has grown on campus. The University of Winnipeg has a large number of Indigenous students per capita, and is uniquely situated to support and encourage Indigenous students in the sciences. This presentation will describe two programs: the Pathway to Graduate Studies (P2GS) program for junior students and our chapter of the Canadian Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (.caISES), which is open to all Indigenous students studying science. These two programs offer a rich environment for research and scholarly success as well as a means to form a sense of community and belonging on campus. The P2GS program provides opportunities for junior Indigenous undergraduate students to upgrade their basic science skills, gain research experience in a university laboratory, and to form a network of peers, graduate students and faculty, which will help increase their success and participation in natural sciences and engineering (NSE) graduate programs. The P2GS program brings students on campus for four weeks each May. They split their time between science classes led by senior Indigenous students and engaging in research projects with a faculty mentor. The program has had a wide ranging impact, with several of the participants crediting this experience with their decision to continue in NSE or to enroll in graduate school.

Our .caISES chapter meets at least monthly and hosts events which bridge culture and science. Students also attended national and regional meetings for .caISES and the American AISES parent organization. The University of Winnipeg was the recipient of the 2020 Stelvio J. Zanin Chapter of the Year in our inaugural year. The authors wish to acknowledge funding for the P2GS program from NSERC PromoScience and the University of Winnipeg and from the University of Winnipeg, scholarships and fundraising for .caISES.

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