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**Schools of Education
Learning Collaborative**

Alumni Perceptions of a School of Education – *William Paterson University*

Custom Research Report

Alumni are largely satisfied with the preparation they received from the College of Education at William Paterson University (WPU)

Alumni report feeling prepared to teach across core areas of instruction

- Several areas emerged in which the vast majority of alumni (90% or more) either *strongly agree* or *agree*
  - Learned to be open to new ideas and become lifelong learners
  - Learned to be resourceful
  - Learned to collaborate and communicate with colleagues and families
  - Learned to hold high expectations for all students to learn
  - Learned to create a physically and psychologically safe learning environment

Overall, alumni are pleased with the services available at WPU

- More than 80% of alumni are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the quality of instruction, library services, field experiences, and availability of technology

Despite overall satisfaction with WPU, opportunities for improvement emerged

Several areas emerged in which, relative to its strengths, alumni identify opportunities for improvement

- Working with diverse learners – particularly English Language Learners – is a challenge noted by WPU alumni and shared by new teachers across the country
- Managing classroom behavior, developing effective assessment strategies, and integrating technology are other identified challenges

Despite overall satisfaction with available WPU services, advising is an area in which additional support is recommended

- One-quarter of alumni are dissatisfied with the quality of advising they received

A low sample from which to survey (538 valid email addresses) led to a relatively low sample size to review

- WPU should begin collecting permanent e-mail addresses of its students prior to graduation to build a database for future alumni surveys

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Part I – Background

Part II – Unit Competencies

Part III – Unit Operations

Part IV – Specialized Professional Association Competencies

Part V – Employment

Part VI – Analysis and Recommendations

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This research sought to identify alumni perceptions about the effectiveness of William Paterson's initial licensure programs

Goals

1. Identify recent alumni perceptions related to satisfaction with the preparation they received to enter the field

2. Identify recent alumni perceptions related to satisfaction with William Paterson University and the College of Education

3. Identify recent alumni employment status

Survey Development

*   William Paterson developed a survey that aligns with its internal college standards as well as with specialized professional association (SPA) standards.

*   Eduventures provided feedback on the survey instrument and programmed it into a Web-based format, and William Paterson had the opportunity to review and refine the survey instrument.

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Response and completion rates mirror those of schools that have also used email-based outreach only

- **From October through November 2008, 595 alumni who recently graduated from William Paterson's undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and MAT initial teacher education programs were invited by e-mail to participate in a survey**

- **The majority of targeted alumni graduated from a William Paterson initial teacher education program over the past 5 years**
  - Approximately one in five (19.6%) graduated before 2002

- **Fifty-three people clicked on the survey and 46 completed the survey, representing a 9.9% and 8.6% response and completion rate, respectively**
  - Response rates for prior Eduventures' alumni surveys range from 5% to 33%, based on list quality, outreach methods, and alumni's previous interactions with their alma maters
  - Slightly less than 10% (57) were bounced back

Alumni self-selected to participate, and thus may be more inclined to offer extreme responses, either positive or negative.

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There are several common characteristics of responding alumni:

- The average respondent is female (84.4%), White (82.2%), and in her early 30s (M=32.2)

- Nearly half of respondents (47.8%) graduated from William Paterson in 2007

- Graduates from an Elementary certification field constituted the greatest proportion of respondents (47.8%), followed by Special Education (21.7%) and Physical Education (6.5%) (as seen below)

- The majority of respondents earned an undergraduate degree (82.2%) or post-baccalaureate certificate (15.6%)

Respondents By Year of Program Completion and Largest Programs
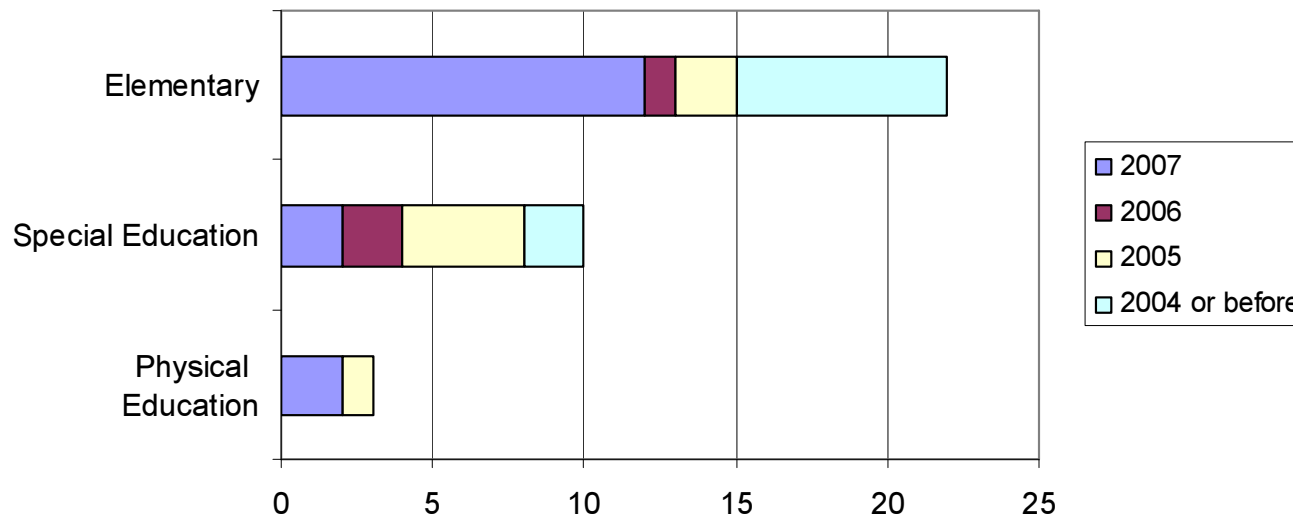
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Part I – Background

Part II – Unit Competencies
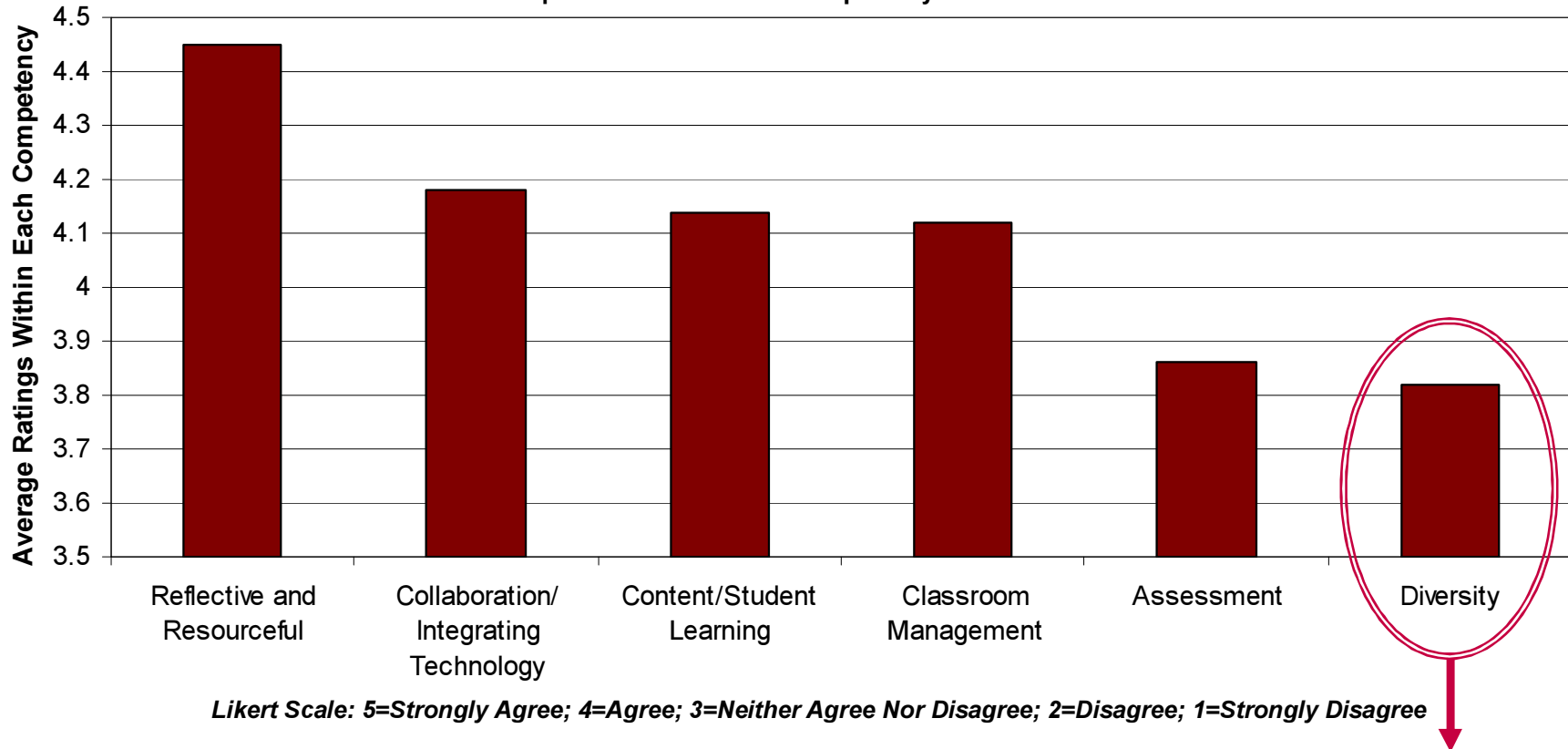
Part III – Unit Operations

Part IV – Specialized Professional Association Competencies

Part V – Employment

Part VI – Analysis and Recommendations

William Paterson alumni report that they felt prepared to teach across core areas of instruction

Alumni were asked to rate their level of preparedness across several key teaching competencies. The average ratings of questions within each competency are offered below.*

Likert Scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Working with diverse learners – particularly English Language Learners – is an area where further support or inquiry, especially in the elementary education program, may be necessary.

© Eduventures, Inc. 2008   ***Ratings of specific competencies within each core area of teaching are offered in the slides that follow.**   9

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Alumni consistently report that WPU prepared them to be reflective, resourceful practitioners

Preparedness in <u>Reflective and Resourceful</u> Competencies

Competency	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree
Learned to be open to new ideas and become a lifelong learner (n=44)	56.8%	38.6%	2.3%
Learned to be resourceful (n=44)	54.5%	38.6%	4.5%
Learned to conduct myself in a professional and ethical manner (n=43)	60.5%	25.6%	11.6%
Developed a thoughtful educational philosophy based on reflective teaching practice (n=44)	56.8%	31.8%	6.8%

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree □ Neither Agree Nor Disagree

No differences emerged among alumni by program area.

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Alumni feel prepared to communicate and collaborate with colleagues and families; however, 1 in 10 do not feel prepared to integrate technology

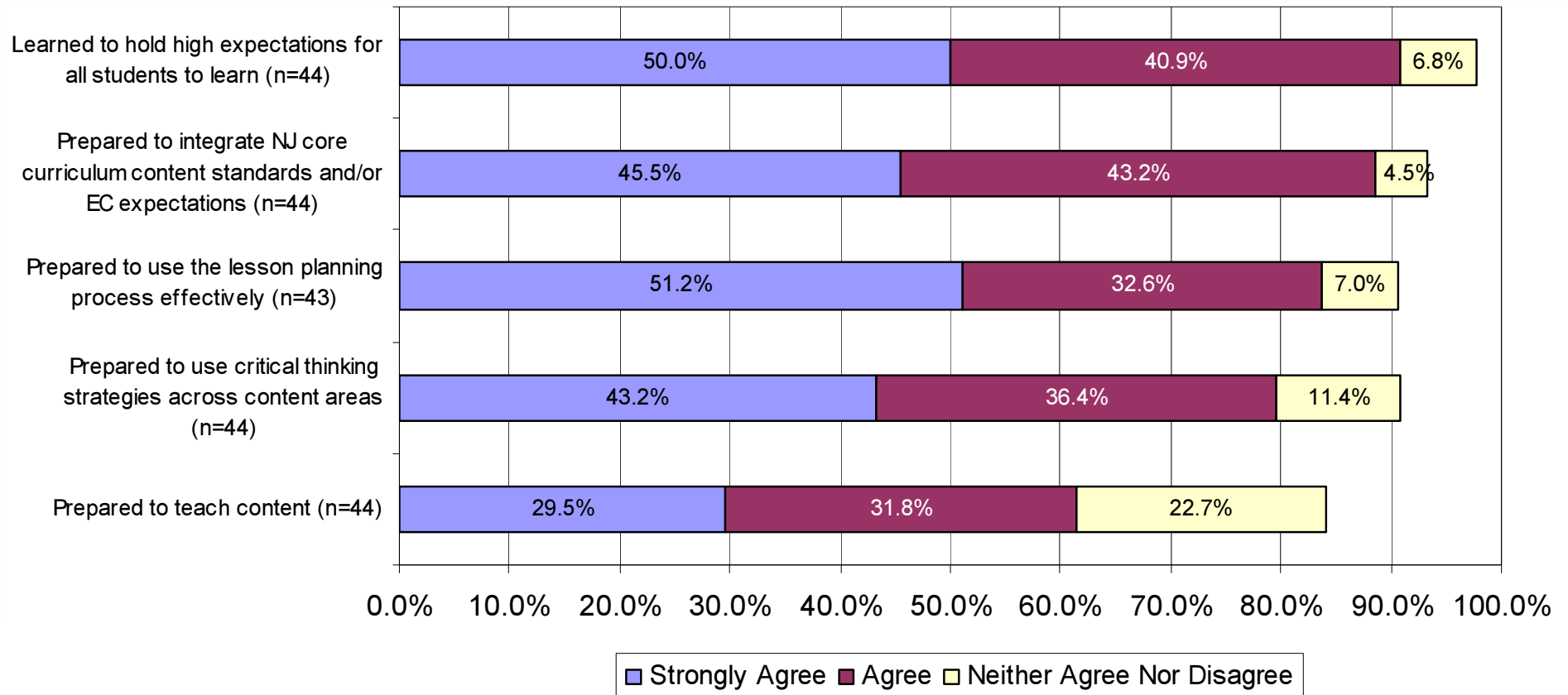**Preparedness in <u>Collaboration/Integrating Technology</u> Competencies**

Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree
Able to work collaboratively with colleagues and families (n=44)	56.8%	38.6%	2.3%
Learned to communicate effectively (n=43)	44.2%	34.9%	16.3%
Prepared to integrate technology into instructional activities (n=44)	27.3%	47.7%	13.6%

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree □ Neither Agree Nor Disagree
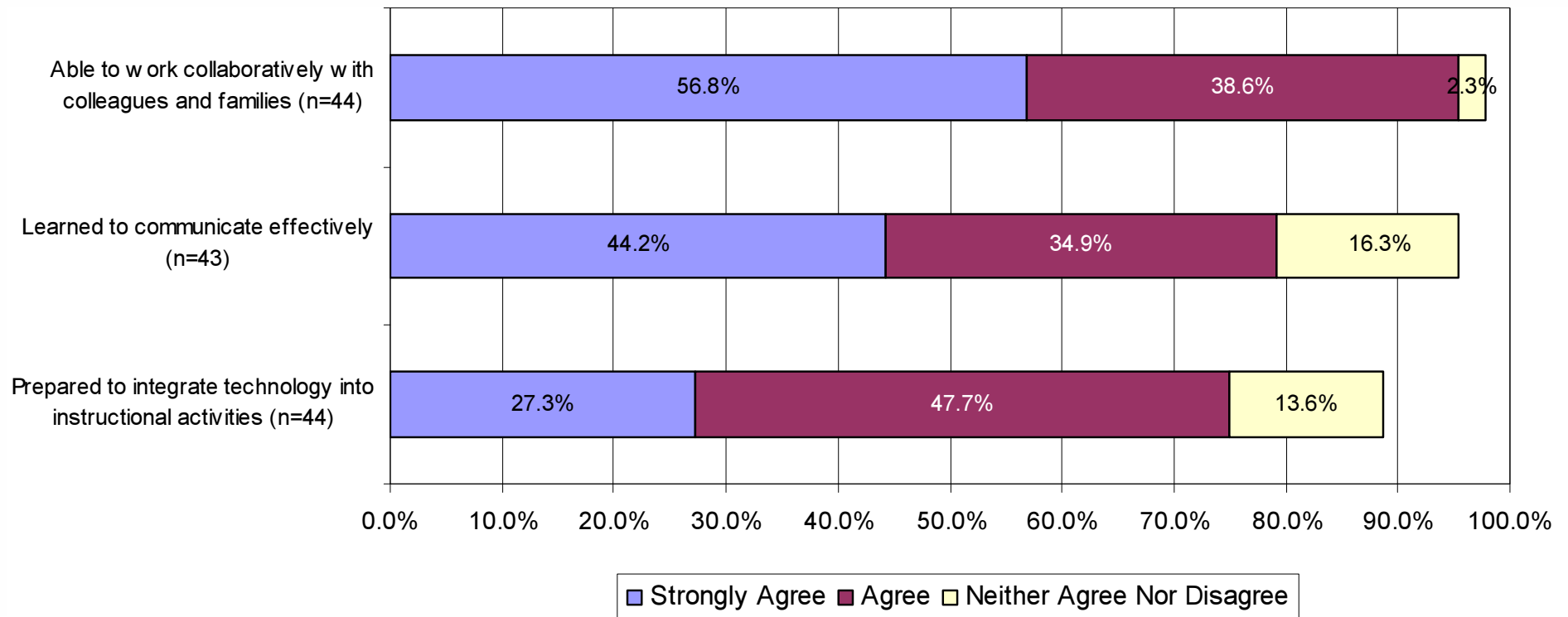
The need for technology preparation appears to be strongest at the elementary level, as 1 in 7 elementary education alumni do not feel prepared to integrate technology into instructional activities.

Alumni feel prepared to develop lessons and be accountable for student learning, but they feel less prepared to teach content
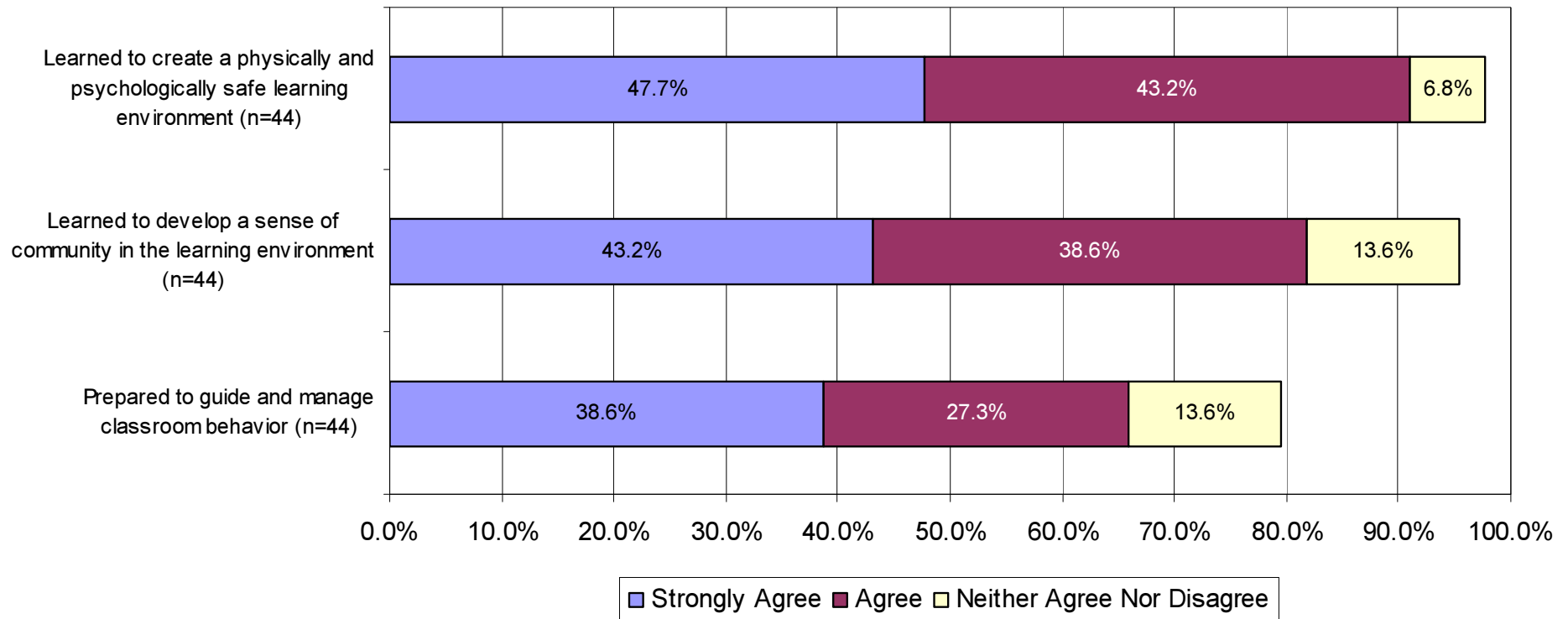
Preparedness in <u>Content/Student Learning</u> Competencies

Competency	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree
Learned to hold high expectations for all students to learn (n=44)	50.0%	40.9%	6.8%
Prepared to integrate NJ core curriculum content standards and/or EC expectations (n=44)	45.5%	43.2%	4.5%
Prepared to use the lesson planning process effectively (n=43)	51.2%	32.6%	7.0%
Prepared to use critical thinking strategies across content areas (n=44)	43.2%	36.4%	11.4%
Prepared to teach content (n=44)	29.5%	31.8%	22.7%

0.0%   10.0%   20.0%   30.0%   40.0%   50.0%   60.0%   70.0%   80.0%   90.0%   100.0%

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree □ Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Special education alumni feel least prepared to teach content, as nearly one-third of them (3 out of 10) report feeling unprepared.

Unit Competencies

Alumni largely feel prepared to handle classroom management and develop a community within the classroom

Preparedness in <u>Classroom Management</u> Competencies

Learned to create a physically and psychologically safe learning environment (n=44): Strongly Agree 47.7%, Agree 43.2%, Neither Agree Nor Disagree 6.8%

Learned to develop a sense of community in the learning environment (n=44): Strongly Agree 43.2%, Agree 38.6%, Neither Agree Nor Disagree 13.6%

Prepared to guide and manage classroom behavior (n=44): Strongly Agree 38.6%, Agree 27.3%, Neither Agree Nor Disagree 13.6%

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree □ Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Nearly one-third of alumni from special education (3 out of 10), and 1 out of 7 alumni from elementary education, do not feel they are prepared to manage classroom behavior.

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The majority of alumni feel prepared to focus on learning outcomes and engage in assessment activities
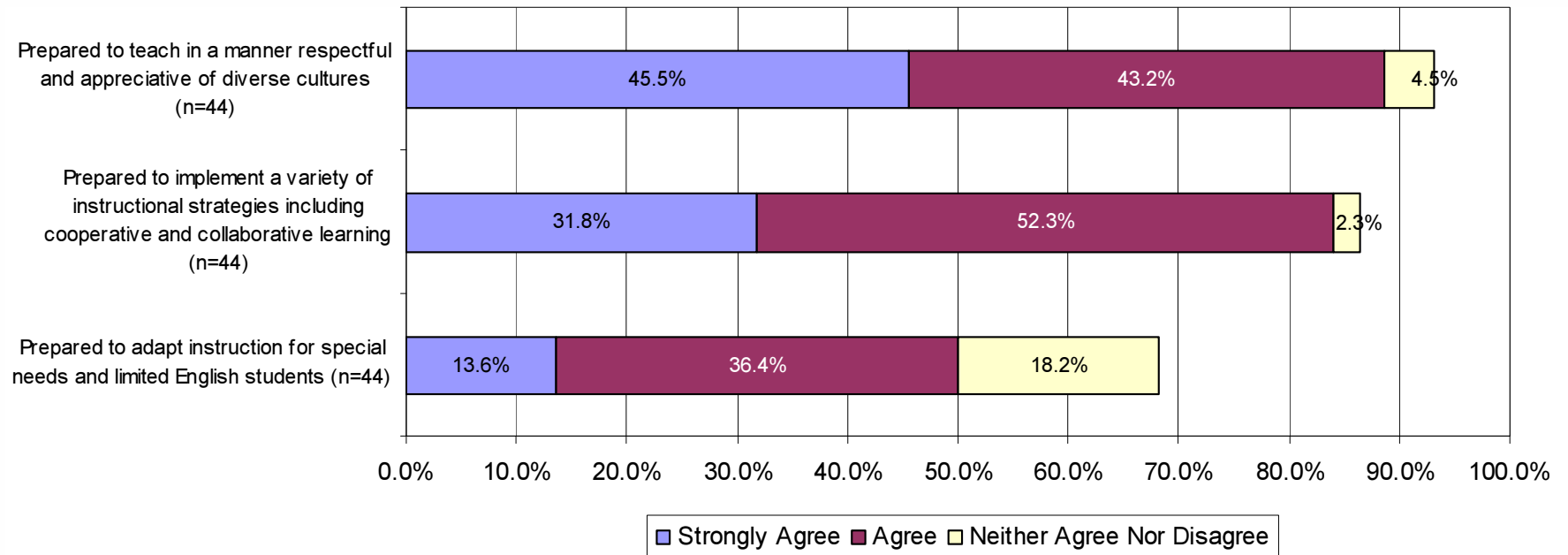
Preparedness in <u>Assessment</u> Competencies

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree □ Neither Agree Nor Disagree

- Prepared to focus my instruction on P-12 student learning outcomes to teach for understanding (n=44): Strongly Agree 38.6%, Agree 36.4%, Neither Agree Nor Disagree 15.9%
- Prepared to assess students' learning using a variety of assessment strategies (n=44): Strongly Agree 27.3%, Agree 36.4%, Neither Agree Nor Disagree 22.7%
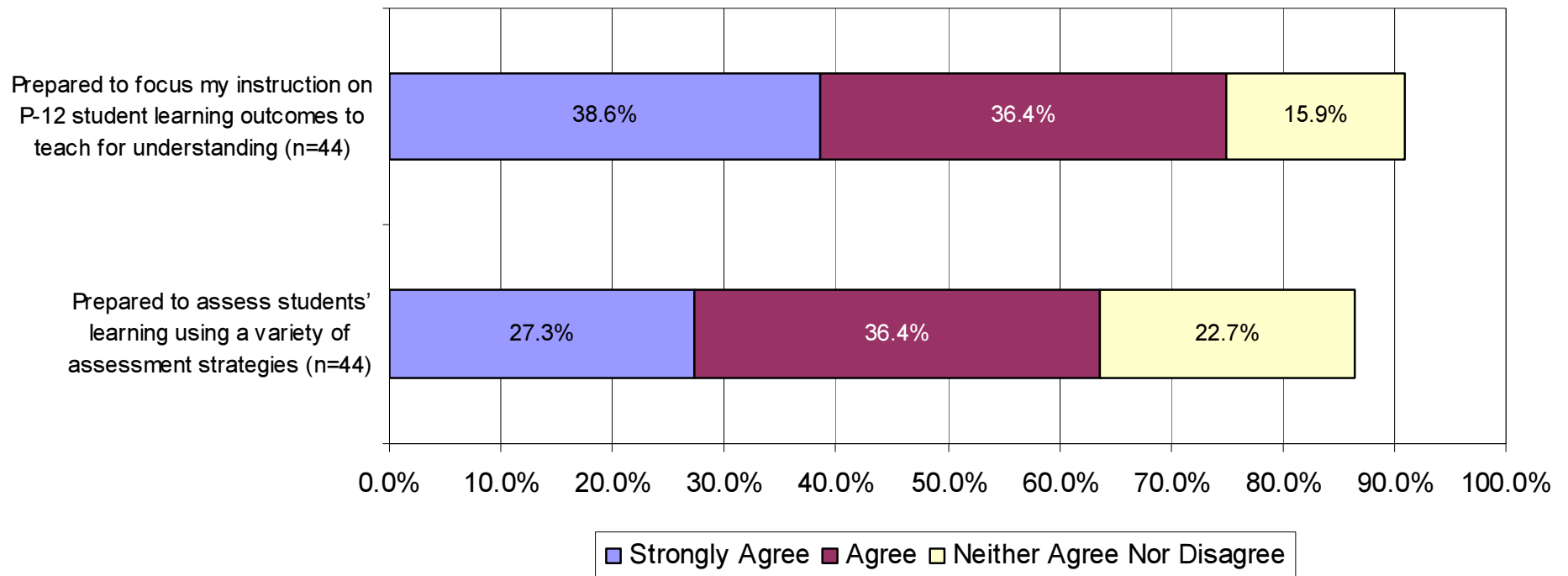
Elementary education alumni feel least prepared for assessment activities, as more than one-quarter of them (28.6%) either strongly disagreed or have no opinion about feeling prepared to engage in a variety of assessment activities.

Alumni largely feel prepared to work with diverse learners; however, only half feel prepared to work with students with limited English proficiency

Preparedness in <u>Diversity</u> Competencies

Prepared to teach in a manner respectful and appreciative of diverse cultures (n=44): 45.5% Strongly Agree, 43.2% Agree, 4.5% Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Prepared to implement a variety of instructional strategies including cooperative and collaborative learning (n=44): 31.8% Strongly Agree, 52.3% Agree, 2.3% Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Prepared to adapt instruction for special needs and limited English students (n=44): 13.6% Strongly Agree, 36.4% Agree, 18.2% Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree □ Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Nearly one-third of special education alumni (3 out of 10) do not feel they are prepared to implement a variety of instructional strategies.

One-third of elementary education alumni (7 out of 21) do not feel they are prepared to work with English Language Learners.

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Part I – Background

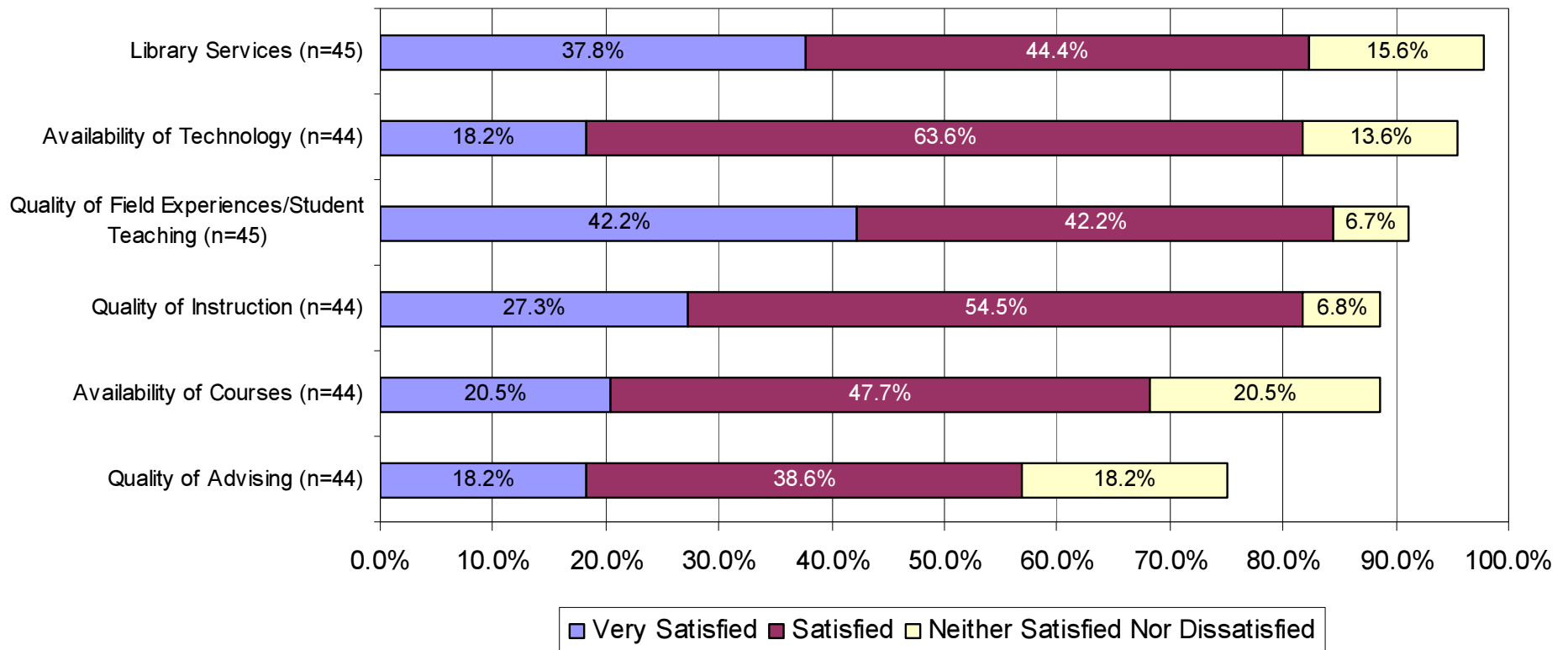**Part II – Unit Competencies**

Part III – Unit Operations

Part IV – Specialized Professional Association Competencies

Part V – Employment

Part VI – Analysis and Recommendations

The majority of alumni are *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with WPU's services; however, advising is an area in which improvement may be needed

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied
Library Services (n=45)	37.8%	44.4%	15.6%
Availability of Technology (n=44)	18.2%	63.6%	13.6%
Quality of Field Experiences/Student Teaching (n=45)	42.2%	42.2%	6.7%
Quality of Instruction (n=44)	27.3%	54.5%	6.8%
Availability of Courses (n=44)	20.5%	47.7%	20.5%
Quality of Advising (n=44)	18.2%	38.6%	18.2%

Alumni who are either *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* with the quality of advising do not vary greatly by program area:

-*Elementary Education (23.8%)*   -*Special Education (30.0%)*   -*All Other Graduates (23.1%)*

Part I – Background

Part II – Unit Competencies

Part III – Unit Operations

Part IV – Specialized Program Area Competencies

Part V – Employment

Part VI – Analysis and Recommendations

Elementary education alumni largely feel prepared for the classroom, though no one area emerged as a consistent area of strength

Competency	Mean
I was prepared to use my knowledge of language arts content and pedagogy to teach reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening and thinking (n=21)	3.76
I was prepared to use my knowledge of science content and pedagogy to teach physical, life, earth/space sciences and scientific inquiry (n=21)	3.71
I was prepared to use my knowledge of mathematics content and pedagogy to teach numbers and operations, algebra, geometry, measurement, data analysis and probability (n=21)	3.62
I was prepared to use my knowledge of social studies content and pedagogy to teach history, geography, decision-making and citizenship skills (n=21)	3.62
I was prepared to use my knowledge and pedagogical skills in the areas of visual and performing arts (n=20)	3.35
I was prepared to use my knowledge and pedagogical skills in teaching health education (n=18)	2.94
I was prepared to use my knowledge and pedagogical skills in teaching physical education (n=18)	2.61

Likert Scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Visual and performing arts, health education, and physical education are areas in which further inquiry or support may be needed.

Special education alumni feel prepared to teach across core competencies measured below

Competency	Mean
My program developed my foundational knowledge of the special education field (e.g., philosophies, theories, laws and policies, and history) (n=10)	4.40
My program developed my promotion of learning by providing planned, orderly, supportive environments that encourage participation of individuals with special learning needs (n=10)	4.10
My program developed my communication and collaboration knowledge and skills (n=10)	4.00
My program developed my knowledge and skill in managing behavior, facilitating. problem-solving, developing social skills and promoting self-advocacy of students (n=10)	3.90
My program developed my professionalism and ethical knowledge and skills (n=10)	3.90
My program developed my knowledge and skill in planning and implementing effective instruction based upon knowledge of the subject matter, developmentally appropriate practices, individual students, community, and curriculum goals (n=10)	3.80
My program developed my assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation knowledge and skills (n=9)	3.67
My program developed my understanding of learner diversity, factors that influence development, and ways to provide support for students' cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development (n=10)	3.60

Likert Scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

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Physical education alumni feel prepared to teach across core competencies measured below

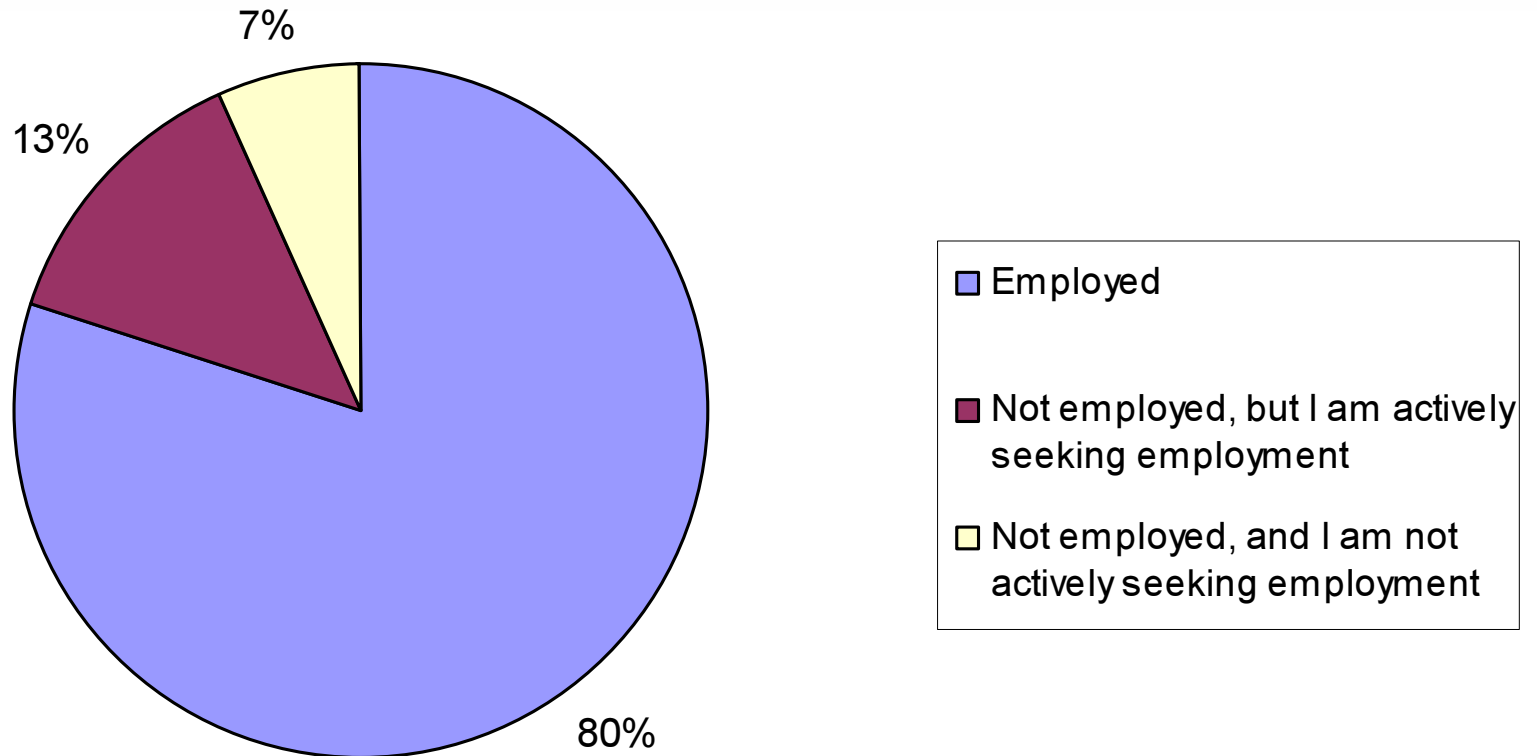| Competency	Mean
I was prepared to write developmentally appropriate instructional units (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to write developmentally appropriate lesson plans (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to demonstrate an alignment between the writing of the lesson plan and the execution/delivery of my lessons (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to demonstrate an understanding of individual and group motivation that encourages social interactions (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to select developmentally appropriate equipment for every lesson and grade level (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to provide activities/tasks supporting physical, cognitive and social development (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to deliver appropriate demonstrations to show the critical elements of a skill(s) (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to demonstrate the use of general and corrective feedback to enhance learning (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to apply the use of cues to refine specific elements of physical skills (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to portray a high professional standard through my attire, body language and enthusiasm (n=3)	5.00
I was prepared to demonstrate knowledge in the managing of students' behaviors (n=3)	4.67
I was prepared to apply a variety of psychomotor, cognitive and affective assessment strategies (n=3)	4.67
I was prepared to demonstrate knowledge of effective verbal, non-verbal, and media communication techniques to enhance learning (n=3)	4.00

Part I – Background

Part II – Unit Competencies

Part III – Unit Operations

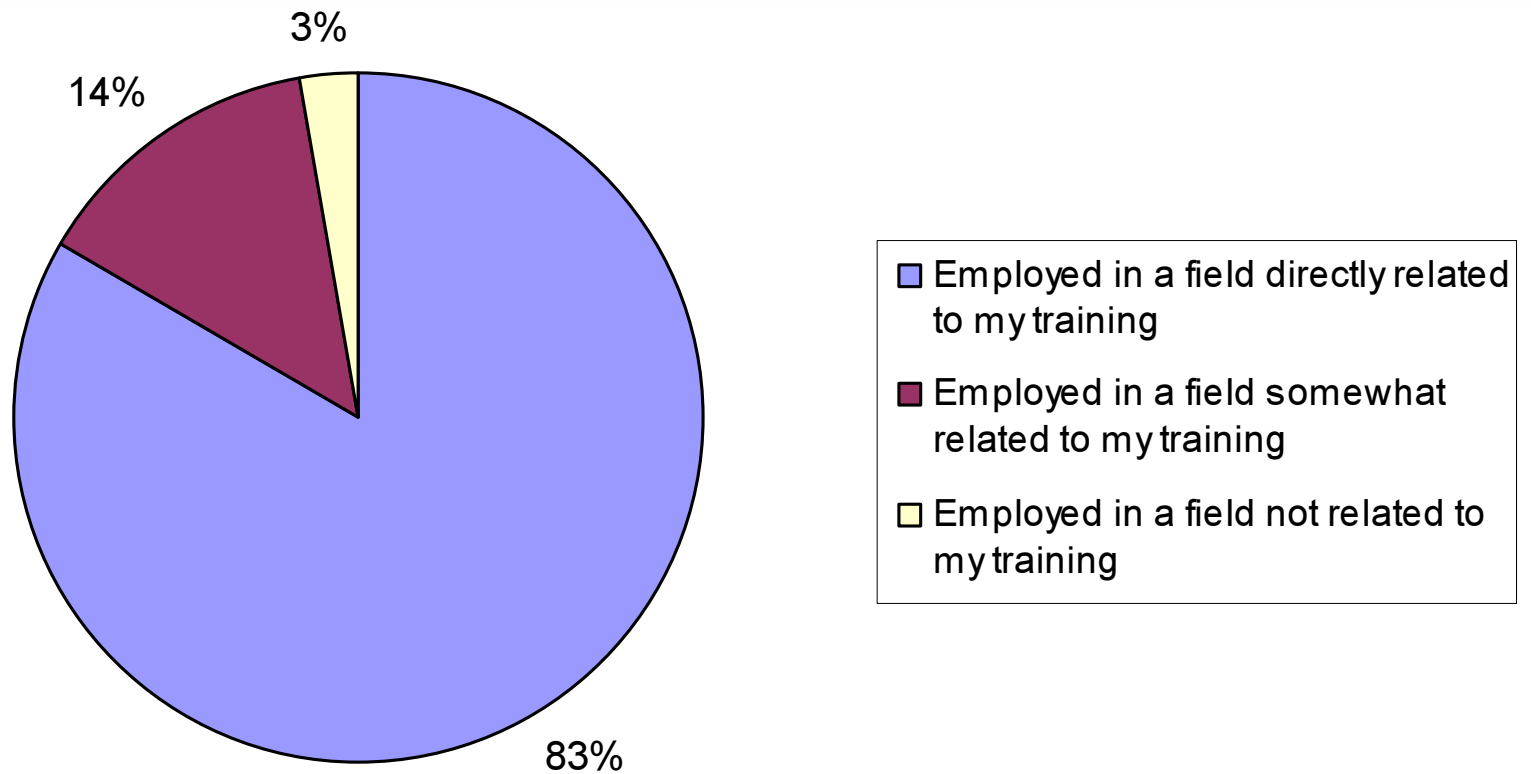**Part IV – Specialized Program Area Competencies**

Part V – Employment

Part VI – Analysis and Recommendations

The vast majority of responding alumni are either employed or not seeking employment (87%), with only 6 (13%) actively seeking a job (n=45)

Legend:
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Not employed, but I am actively seeking employment
- ☐ Not employed, and I am not actively seeking employment

Pie chart values: 80%, 13%, 7%

For those alumni that are employed, nearly all are in a position either directly related (83%) or somewhat related (14%) to their training

- Employed in a field directly related to my training
- Employed in a field somewhat related to my training
- Employed in a field not related to my training

Part I – Background

Part II – Unit Competencies

Part III – Unit Operations

Part IV – Specialized Program Area Competencies

Part V – Employment

Part VI – Analysis and Recommendations

Responding alumni appear to be satisfied with William Paterson and feel they are well-prepared to enter the classroom

- **Alumni report feeling prepared to teach across core areas of instruction**
  - **Areas of particular strength include the following:**
    - Learned to be open to new ideas and become a lifelong learner (M=4.50)
    - Learned to work collaboratively with colleagues and families (M=4.50)
    - Learned to be resourceful (M=4.45)
    - Learned to conduct myself in a professional and ethical manner (M=4.44)
    - Developed a thoughtful educational philosophy based on reflective teaching practice (M=4.41)

- **More than 80% of alumni are *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the quality of instruction, library services, field experiences, and availability of technology**

- **The vast majority of responding alumni are employed (80%), with only 7% indicating they are unemployed and actively seeking employment**

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Despite its strengths, alumni identified areas where ongoing support or improvement may be necessary

Advising	• One-quarter of all alumni indicate they are either *very dissatisfied* or *dissatisfied* with the quality of their advising. ***It is important for schools of education to understand what constitutes a successful advising relationship and to evaluate the structure, policy, and supports in place to promote a productive advising relationship across all programs in the college.***
Diverse Learners	• Working with diverse learners – particularly English Language Learners – is a challenge noted by both elementary alumni as well as alumni and employers from other schools of education. ***Therefore, additional training or coursework may be needed. Mentoring opportunities with new teachers or area principals may lead to mutually beneficial relationships.***
Classroom Management	• Alumni note challenges with guiding and managing classroom behavior. This is a consistently identified challenge for most new teachers, regardless of their training. ***Therefore, mentoring opportunities with new teachers or area teachers, or additional practical experience, may help ease the transition and provide new teachers with prepared strategies to implement and refine.***
Content Focus	• Approximately 2 out of 11 alumni – and nearly one-third of alumni from special education – do not feel prepared to teach content. Prior Eduventures research indicates that business leaders and policy leaders believe schools of education do not have a great enough focus on content preparation. ***Therefore, additional content focus – or further inquiry into this perception – is suggested.***
Assessment	• More than one-quarter of elementary education alumni (28.6%) either *strongly disagree* or have no opinion about feeling prepared to engage in assessment activities. New teachers often struggle with assessment when not guided by prescribed textbooks or assessment plans. ***Therefore, collaboration with area districts to identify commonly used and effective assessments may be beneficial.***
Integrating Technology	• One in seven elementary education alumni do not feel prepared to integrate technology into instructional activities. ***Therefore, practical experience working with innovative technology used by area districts is recommended.***