

## Working Concept Paper

### MT Engage: Engage Academically, Learn Exponentially, Showcase Yourself

The MT Engage QEP is focused on enhancing student academic engagement. This will be accomplished by:

1. Incorporating high impact pedagogies within the course and through beyond-the-classroom engagement activities / strategies:
  - High Impact Pedagogies: learning communities, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, project-based learning, etc.
  - Beyond-the-Classroom examples: service-learning, research, co-curricular activities, attending related campus events, attending off-campus events, etc.
2. Challenging students to use integrative thinking and reflection across multiple contexts and educational experiences. Students will develop an ePortfolio which will showcase the integration of the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained during their time at MTSU.

MTSU defines academic engagement as a student's active learning experiences as demonstrated through quality of effort, physical and psychological involvement, and participation in productive learning activities. Productive learning activities might include high impact activities outlined in the Association of American Colleges & Universities *High Impact Educational Practices* (Kuh, 2008).

Some examples include:

- first-year seminars and experiences
- common intellectual experiences
- learning communities
- writing intensive courses
- collaborative assignments and projects
- undergraduate research
- diversity/global learning
- service learning/community-based learning
- internships
- capstone courses and projects

plus other activities identified at MTSU (e.g., project based learning, EXL, civic engagement, flipped classrooms, Reacting to the Past, education abroad, etc.). Beyond-the-classroom experiences could also include co-curricular activities, participation in related campus events, service learning, research, etc.

Incoming freshmen will be recruited during CUSTOMS (MTSU's freshmen orientation program) to take part in the MT Engage Program which will include registering for MT Engage

courses in the freshman and sophomore year (minimum of 4 courses) and constructing an ePortfolio. At the end of the sophomore year, ePortfolios will be reviewed and awards will be given to exemplary MT Engage students in each college. These awards may include a scholarship for the Junior and Senior year. Awards and recognition will be available for senior MT Engage students.

The ePortfolio concept will be introduced in UNIV 1010 and/or a freshman-level introduction course in the major such as Introduction to Theatre Studies. A foundation course could (1) introduce the ePortfolio concept; (2) discuss skills needed for success in academics and profession; (3) help students plan for MTSU beyond-the-classroom opportunities to build these skills and require attendance in at least one beyond-the-classroom experience; and (4) require integrative thinking and reflective ePortfolio assignments regarding career exploration and academic and career goals.

MT Engage students will be required to complete an ePortfolio that could include the items below:

- An “About Me” section
- Academic and Career Objectives
  - Academic commitments
  - Short-term and long-term career objectives
- Knowledge/Skills/Abilities
  - evidence acquired from classroom and beyond-the-classroom learning
  - integrative thinking and reflective assignments
- Resume

#### **Student Touch Points for ePortfolio Development:**

- CUSTOMS
- Professional Advisors (ongoing)
- UNIV 1010
- General Education Instructors
- The Student’s Major
- Digital Media Studio, University Library
- The University Writing Center
- ePortfolio mentors (ongoing)

#### **Student Learning Outcomes**

This project enriches MTSU’s commitment to students’ academic engagement and challenges students to use integrative thinking and reflection across multiple contexts and educational experiences. The emphasis on integrative thinking and reflection will encourage more attention to reflection, deeper thinking, and synthesis and assist students in understanding and communicating their experiences and knowledge to others.

**The student learning outcome for MT Engage is:**

*Students will use integrative thinking and reflection to demonstrate the ability to make connections across multiple contexts and educational experiences.*

The following five student indicators, adapted from the AACU Value Rubric for Integrative Thinking, will be used to assess students' integrative/reflective thinking.

- 1) The ability to connect relevant experiences and academic knowledge (connections to experience),
- 2) The ability to make connections across disciplines and perspectives (connections to discipline),
- 3) The ability to adapt and apply information to new situations (transfer),
- 4) The ability to use effective, appropriate, and various forms of communication to enhance the quality of their assignments (effective and integrated communication), and
- 5) The ability to demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts, especially as it relates to their personal and professional development (self-assessment and reflection).

**Program Goals**

This project supports MTSU's commitment to student success both in and out of the classroom by taking steps to improve the quality of students' education and preparation for the future. The following two program goals will be assessed using student surveys, university and program data, and the ePortfolio.

- To foster a culture of engaged learning
- To improve student retention, progression, and graduation.

**MT Engage Initiatives**

In order to meet the Student Learning Outcome and Program Goals MT Engage will focus on five initiatives--two curriculum initiatives and three support initiatives.

Two curriculum initiatives:

**1. MT Engage Foundation Pathway:** Support will be provided to faculty who teach lower-division courses to enhance existing courses through the use of high impact, engaging pedagogy, a co-curricular experience, and integrative/reflective thinking and/or writing assignments placed in an ePortfolio. Phase I involves a revision of the UNIV 1010 University Seminar and selected general education courses, such as English 1010 and English 1020.

**2. MT Engage Major Pathway:** Departments will be provided support to engage in curriculum development and redesign to incorporate MT Engage components into the major. Departments will have support to revise classes to incorporate high impact, engaging

pedagogies and integrative/reflective thinking assignments, as well as assistance tailoring the ePortfolio to the major in order to showcase students' (a) engagement in their learning, (b) reflections about their experiences, and (c) personal and professional development.

Three initiatives will support these curricular pathways:

**3. MT Engage Faculty Development:** General workshops and learning communities will be held each semester through the Learning Teaching & Innovative Technology Center which focus on high impact, engaging pedagogy and integrative/reflective thinking pedagogy. In addition, the Faculty Instructional Technology Center will provide faculty training in ePortfolio technology on a regular and one-on-one basis.

**4. MT Engage Experiences:** A searchable database consisting of high impact beyond-the-classroom experiences will be developed and maintained to provide students greater awareness of available beyond-the-classroom activities. This database will include a general list of academic and student affairs experiences (e.g., student organizations, student leadership, volunteering), as well as suggested activities for students by major (e.g., internships, research experiences, tutoring opportunities). Also, an MT Engage Week will be held each fall semester to provide focused attention on the many opportunities available to students.

**5. MT Engage Recognition Program:** A program will be developed to recognize students who complete various levels of these learning experiences both within the general education curriculum (i.e., the first two years) and beyond.