



Middle Tennessee State University

General Education Assessment Report 2014-15

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year: 2014-2015

Subject Area: Mathematics

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.
 - MATH 1710 – College Algebra
 - MATH 1710K – College Algebra
2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.
 - A total of 1,822 students were assessed in the academic year (1,200 in fall 2014 and 622 in spring 2015). Results of all (100%) of the students who took the departmental final examination were used in the assessment.
3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.
 - There were no changes from previous assessments. The procedures used are the same as used in the 2011 – 2014 reports. Each of the five learning outcomes for mathematics is associated with a specific set of questions on the final examination—40 questions for learning outcome 1; 16 questions for each of learning outcomes 2, 3, and 4; and 12 questions for learning outcome 5.

The same set of questions was used to assess both Learning Outcome 2 (real-life problems) and Learning Outcome 3 (meaningful connections), as the distinction between these two learning outcomes was too subtle to measure with a single examination.

A correct response rate of:

- At least 85% was deemed to be superior,
- Between 60% and 84% was deemed to be satisfactory, and
- Less than 60% was deemed to be unsatisfactory.

Mathematics Learning Outcome to be Assessed	Test Used	Test Item Numbers
Learning Outcome 1: Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions ALL (1-40)
Learning Outcome 2: Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 2,3,4,6,7,8,10,11,14,15,16,17,18,19,32,37
Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 2,3,4,6,7,8,10,11,14,15,16,17,18,19,32,37
Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 2,3,4,7,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,20,27,37
Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 1,5,6,7,11,12,14,25,28,29,31,39

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell.

Mathematics Learning Outcomes, Academic Year 2014-15

Mathematics Outcome to be Assessed		Superior	Satisfactory	Superior or Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
	N	# and %	# and %	# and %	# and %
1. Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.	1822	280 -15.4%	1073 - 58.9%	1353 - 74.3%	469 - 25.7%
2. Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.	1822	221 - 12.1%	955 - 52.4%	1176 -64.5%	646 - 35.5%
3. Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.	1822	221 - 12.1%	955 - 52.4%	1176 -64.5%	646 - 35.5%
4. Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.	1822	261 - 14.3%	1076 - 59.1%	1337 -73.4%	485 - 26.6%
5. Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.	1822	526 - 28.9%	970 - 53.2%	1496 -82.1%	326 - 17.9%

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

The combined results for fall 2014/spring 2015 show for each of the five TBR mathematics learning outcomes:

TBR Mathematics Learning Outcomes	% Unsatisfactory AY 2012-2013	% Unsatisfactory AY 2013-2014	% Unsatisfactory AY 2014-2015
Outcome 1	27.5	25.5	25.7
Outcome 2	37.7	35.1	35.5
Outcome 3	37.7	35.1	35.5
Outcome 4	28.4	26.6	26.6
Outcome 5	19.5	16.8	17.9

[For all learning outcomes 1-5, there were no significant changes from the previous academic year, at a significance level of 10%, in the percentages of students whose exam score ranked Unsatisfactory.]

The assessment indicates that results for student learning outcomes show improvement over the past two years in comparison to the AY 2012-2013 report. This is indicative to the Department that the recent changes that have been implemented to provide more consistency across the multiple sections of College Algebra have been successful in improving gains in all five of the TBR learning outcomes.

Students are placed in K-sections (prescribed enhanced sections) based on a Math ACT score of 17 or 18, and students are placed in non-K-sections with a Math ACT score of 19 or better. This assessment combines the results of all students (both K- and non-K-sections), so that the average math ACT score of the student population in MATH 1710 is certainly less than the ACT Test Benchmark of 22 set as the benchmark for “a high probability of success” in College Algebra (<http://www.act.org/research>). Fewer than one-quarter of College Algebra students present an ACT Math score as high as 22.

Extra support for students enrolled in K-sections includes the tenured and tenure-track faculty from University Studies who consistently teach the majority of the K-sections of MATH 1710. These students also receive extra time each week for classroom instruction, as well as the use of online programs to supplement with helping students to be more consistent in completing homework assignments. These efforts have been successful as indicated by studies consistently showing no

significant difference in the final examination results when K- and non-K-sections are compared.

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

The Department of Mathematical Sciences appointed a General Education Coordinator who chairs the Department's General Education Committee. Several strategies have been taken to provide a more consistent program for general education courses—

- The committee developed and administered a survey of faculty in general education courses, MATH 1010, MATH 1710, MATH 1810, MATH 1530, and MATH 1630. A summary of responses for MATH 1710 (College Algebra) indicated an appropriate curriculum, use of technology, and textbook for the course. However, in response to faculty feedback, the committee recommended an improvement in the sophistication and breadth of assessments for the course, including examinations that consist of different types of questions, not solely multiple-choice items.
- The Committee created common departmental syllabi and common course schedules listing topics to cover for all instructors of MATH 1710 (also for MATH 1010, MATH 1530, MATH 1630, & MATH 1810).
- All faculty members are instructed to keep accurate attendance records on each student to document D-F-W grades and to encourage students to attend classes.
- Faculty members are instructed to utilize the University's Academic Alert System early and throughout the semester to notify students who are in academic jeopardy.
- Students are encouraged to use all available resources to receive tutoring and help with classwork.
- Currently, the overwhelming majority of College Algebra sections are taught either by full-time temporary, graduate teaching assistants, or adjunct faculty. Some semesters have had as many as 34 different instructors teaching College Algebra. Consequently, the Department will continue to seek administrative support for more tenure-track lines to provide a greater consistency in instruction for all general education courses.
- The department's MS GTAs are currently supervised by Dr. Rebecca Calahan. Supervision of GTAs in the Ph.D. program and the MSPS program is assigned to Dr. Angie Murdock. In supervising the teaching assistants, these faculty members provide teaching mentoring, help with instructional practices, scheduling of workloads, and oversight of University and Departmental requirements in these graduate programs.

- Fewer than one-quarter of College Algebra students present an ACT Math score as high as 22, the ACT College Readiness Benchmark for a 75% chance of passing College Algebra with a C or better.
- In the Department of Mathematical Sciences, College Algebra is taught almost entirely by full-time temporary instructors, adjunct instructors, and GTAs.
 - ❖ Fifty-five sections were taught in F2014 (27-K sections & 28-non K sections) by 28 different faculty members. For the 28 non-K sections, only the online section was taught by a tenured faculty member; for the 27 K sections, 16 were taught by tenured faculty.
 - ❖ In S2015, 36 sections were taught (22-K sections & 14-non K sections). These were taught by 21 different faculty members, of which only the online 1710 section was taught by a tenured faculty member and 12 sections of 1710K were taught by tenured faculty.

Because of an inherently higher turn-over rate for non-tenured and non-tenured faculty, the Department continues to request more tenure-track faculty lines to meet the needs of the student population enrolling in MATH 1710 to satisfy general education requirements for their majors.

MATH 1710 Course Redesign:

Four faculty have received funding to redesign aspects of College Algebra during fall 2015. The redesign will address the following aspects of the course, and the redesigned course will be piloted in spring 2016.

The following aspects of College Algebra are found difficult by students of all abilities, but especially by students who are less experienced or whose mathematical skills are out-of-date:
--

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical skills in basic algebra and computational processes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of written mathematics that acts as a communication of reasoning and logic |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the use of this material in unrestricted context for future courses instead of relying on the instructions and section context to determine how to work the problem |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in an environment that encourages persistence through productive struggle, with appropriate dedication of time, rather than in a more passive multiple-choice response mode |

Additionally to be addressed:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence of class with academic standards (transferability, preparation for future classes, etc.) within TBR and nationally |
|--|

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence of class with requirements of course needs (with respect to service departments) for which it is a prerequisite |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence across sections given the large number of adjuncts and GTA instructors for multi-section course |

7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments? If yes, please explain.

- In order to insure greater uniformity in syllabi, grading, and learning expectations, all instructors are now required to have common information on syllabi and to use the same grading scale ranges.
- A significant goal of the Department is to develop course communities, also called professional communities, of faculty for its Gen Ed courses. MATH 1530 and MATH 1810 are examples of courses that have formed these communities where faculty teaching the courses meet on a regular basis to share and plan for ways to improve student learning in these courses. As proposed in the redesign of MATH 1710 (shown above), this is also a goal for providing coherence across the multiple sections of College Algebra.
- The Department of Mathematical Sciences and the Department of University Studies both continue to provide free tutoring to students in all General Education Mathematics courses. In support of the University's Quest for Student Success, last spring the General Education tutoring operation for MATH 1010, 1410, 1420, 1530, 1630, and 1710 was relocated to the Walker Library, extending tutoring services into the evening and weekend hours. The Department continues to offer tutoring in Calculus and Pre-calculus in KOM. The University Studies Department offers tutoring for MATH 1010-K, 1710-K, and 1530-K in the SAG building.

University Studies offers a program called Academic Intervention in Mathematics (AIM) to promote success for those highly at-risk students who are repeating prescribed General Education mathematics courses. AIM targets students who have failed the course in which they are enrolled.

These at-risk students are identified for each instructor at the beginning of the semester. The instructor meets with each student periodically to advise, to encourage, to teach study skills, and to individualize other interventions. Interventions may include assignments of time to be spent in the math lab, notebook checks, or written assignments. Simply meeting with students to show concern for them and to build relationships with them is a proven retention tool. Students are encouraged to meet with instructors during office hours. Instructors also use phone calls, emails, and Advisor Alerts to contact students who are not attending class. It is obvious that this type of intervention would be helpful to other students, so instructors intervene when any student is not progressing well. Any intervention that is designed for repeating students is also available to non-repeaters. For students who

have missed a class or for tutors who might need to review some course topic(s), videos from the online 1710K are made available for viewing with all students and all faculty given access.

- In order to identify actions and strategies to improve student achievement, assessment results are provided and shared with faculty in Mathematical Sciences, faculty in University Studies, and members of the Mathematics General Education Committee.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year: 2014-2015

Subject Area: Writing

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment.

ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

Population

The MTSU English department offered 108 sections of ENGL 1020 with a total of 2,016 students enrolled at the February 2, 2015 census in spring 2015. Of those, 28 students dropped the course after that date. For this assessment, the department collected from each enrolled student the most researched argumentative essay. The department was unable to collect the essays of 418 students. Two instructors did not submit any essays which accounted for 103 missing essays, and 315 students across different sections did not submit essays. This assessment is, therefore, based on a population of 1,570 students whose most researched argumentative essay was submitted to the department by their ENGL 1020 instructors.

Sampling

The essays were numbered and anonymized for both student-author and instructor. Next, a sample of 100 essays, or 6.4% of the population, was randomly drawn using www.randomizer.org. These essays formed the assessment sample. From the remaining 1,470 essays in the pool, 20 essays were randomly drawn to serve as the grade norming sample.

To ensure that the random sample of 100 students was representative of the population of 1,930 students, we conducted chi square analyses to evaluate possible statistical differences between the sample and the population distributions in terms of the grades earned in ENGL 1020. In the first analysis, we compared the distributions for grades A through D (eliminating the grades N and F from the calculation given the assumption that there are many reasons a student might fail a class beyond merely not performing well in the class, e.g., not attending). There were no statistical differences between the sample and the population distributions in terms of the number of students who earned the different grades, $\chi^2(6, N = 1,741) = 8.68, p = .19$. In the second analysis, we included the grades N and F in the calculation, and in that case, the statistical difference between the sample and the population barely reached significance, $\chi^2(8, N = 2,030) = 15.5, p = .05$. Based on these analyses, we concluded that the size of the sample was adequate for the results of the assessment to be considered representative of the population.

Scoring

Twelve English department faculty members representing six different levels (GTA, adjunct instructor, full-time temporary lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor)¹ were recruited and trained to score the essays. Following a three-hour grade norming session led by the department's Assessment Coordinator, the trained readers scored 16-17 essays each independently over a period of four weeks. Each essay in the sample received two separate scores from two different readers on each of the seven performance criteria (see Scoring Rubric in Appendix A). Each reader received a small stipend.

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant changes from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

Scoring scale

In earlier years, the scoring rubric involved a 3-point scoring scale (Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Superior). This year, the department's new Assessment Coordinator changed the rubric to a 5-point scale because the psychometric literature suggests that a 3-point scale does not provide enough points of discrimination (Nunnally, 1978)², and if there are not enough responses to choose from, readers are forced to use the next best alternative, introducing measurement error. In fact, some studies suggest that a 7-point scale is slightly better in this regard than a 5-point scale. Given that faculty are used to the 5-point grading scale (A, B, C, D, F), we moved to a 5-point scale for this year's assessment.

Data reporting

In earlier years, the scores assigned by each of the two readers on each criterion for each essay in the sample were reported as independent scores, and results were reported as if there were 200 essays in the sample (i.e., 2 scores x 100 essays). This year, the essays were, as in the past, independently scored by two readers, but the two readers' scores were averaged, and results are reported based on mean scores for each criterion for each of the 100 essays in the sample. Adding or averaging the scores of two trained readers in evaluations of essays is fairly standard methodology in writing assessment (e.g., on the GRE, when essays are scored by two human readers, rather than a human reader and an *e-rater*, their scores are averaged), and we, therefore, applied this methodology to the data analysis this year.

Scoring methodology

In past years' assessment, with a 3-point scale for each criterion being assessed, a score of 1 was considered unsatisfactory (representing letter grades F and D), a score of 2 was considered satisfactory (representing the letter grade C), and a score of 3 was considered superior (representing the letter grades B and A). Since scores of readers were not averaged, there were no scores falling between these three scores, i.e., 1.5 or 2.5. This year, by averaging the scores submitted by the two scorers on each essay, the data included scores between categories (e.g., 2.5, 3.5). In addition, given a 5-point scale, scores on each criterion in this year's assessment data ranged as follows: 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, 4, 4.5, 5.

¹ The department had only one faculty member at the rank of Assistant Professor. We, therefore, recruited a third Associate Professor.

² Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Cut off scores

The following cut off scores were approved by the department during its monthly meeting of Tenured and Tenure-Track faculty on September 9, 2015 (see table 1).

	Superior	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Grade	A, B	C	D, F
Score	5, 4.5, 4	3.5, 3, 2.5	2, 1.5, 1

Table 1. Score range by category

The department’s **rationale** for setting 2.5 as the floor of the satisfactory range was that it represents a score higher than the maximum of 2 points which represented the grade of D in our scoring rubric (see Appendix A). In addition, a score of 2.5 (which was largely the mean of a score of 2 and a score of 3) reflects that at least one of two readers considered the student’s performance satisfactory on that criterion/outcome.

Scoring Process

In previous assessment cycles, readers scored all of the essays on a single Saturday which started with an early morning grade norming session and proceeded with a scoring marathon with a short lunch break. This year, the scoring process changed to eliminate scorer fatigue. The norming session happened in two and half hours on one afternoon. Readers were then given four weeks to complete the scoring and submit their scores to the Assessment Coordinator. The majority of readers completed the task within a week.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Below is an example of a table for writing. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution.

Better (↑) or Worse (↓) Than Last Year	Writing Outcomes	Superior <i>Year</i> <i>N</i> <i>%</i>	Satisfactory <i>Year</i> <i>N</i> <i>%</i>	Unsatisfactory <i>Year</i> <i>N</i> <i>%</i>
↑	Outcome A <i>The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.</i> [Revised from: <i>Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.</i>]	2013 18/200 9%	2013 111/200 55.5%	2013 71/200 35.5%
		2014 11/180 6.1%	2014 96/180 53.5%	2014 93/180 40.5%
		2015 6/100 6%	2015 66/100 66%	2015 28/100 28%

↑	<p>Outcome C <i>The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.</i> [Revised from: <i>Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.</i>]</p>	2013 22/200 11%	2013 88/200 44%	2013 90/200 45%
		2014 6/180 3.3%	2014 80/180 44.4%	2014 114/180 52.2%
		2015 3/100 3%	2015 68/100 68%	2015 29/100 29%
↑	<p>Outcome D <i>Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison, contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).</i></p>	2013 20/200 10%	2013 122/200 61%	2013 58/200 29%
		2014 12/180 6.7%	2014 99/180 55%	2014 89/180 38.3%
		2015 5/100 5%	2015 79/100 79%	2015 16/100 16%
↑	<p>Outcome E <i>The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.</i> [Revised from: <i>Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.</i>]</p>	2013 20/200 10%	2013 94/200 47%	2013 86/200 43%
		2014 5/180 2.8%	2014 98/180 54.4%	2014 97/180 42.8%
		2015 5/100 5%	2015 69/100 69%	2015 26/100 26%
↑	<p>Outcome F <i>Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.</i></p>	2013 16/200 8%	2013 107/200 53.5%	2013 77/200 38.5%
		2014 5/180 2.8%	2014 83/180 46.1%	2014 112/180 51.1%
		2015 0/100 0%	2015 66/100 66%	2015 34/100 34%
↑	<p>Outcome B (Criterion added) <i>The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.</i></p>	2013 19/200 9.5%	2013 111/200 55.5%	2013 70/200 35%
		2014 7/180 3.9%	2014 80/180 44.4%	2014 113/180 51.7%
		2015 8/100 8%	2015 68/100 68%	2015 24/100 24%

↓	Outcome G (Criterion added)	Yes	No
	<i>The student writer has written a minimum of 1,000 words or four typed pages at 250 words per page.</i>	2013 164/200 82%	2013 36/200 18%
		2014 155/180 86.2%	2014 45/180 13.8%
		2015 79/180 80%	2015 21/100 20%

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

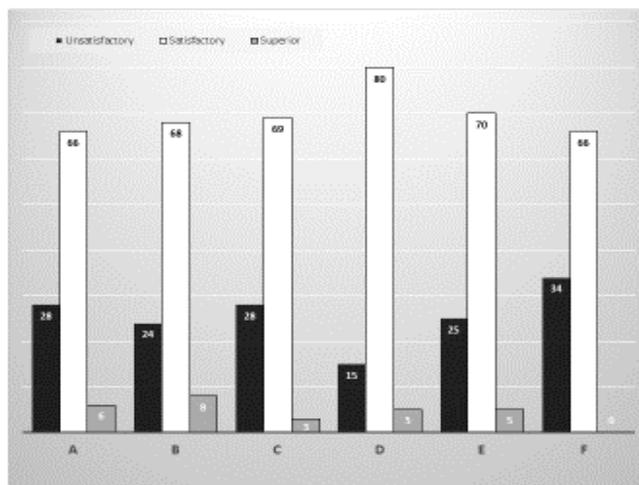
Overall Impressions and Conclusions

This year's assessment results show an increase in the percentage of students performing in the satisfactory rather than the unsatisfactory range for 6 of the 7 outcomes in comparison to earlier years. We believe there are several possible reasons for the observed improvement, including the numerous departmental initiatives to improve both the curriculum and instruction in ENGL 1020 (see answer to Question 7 below).

We also believe the improvement we observe in these results stems partly from the new scoring scale (from a 3-point to a 5-point scale) which affords a finer discrimination around the middle value of the scale. As mentioned, the psychometric literature suggests that a 3-point scale does not provide enough points of discrimination (Nunnally, 1978), and, in fact, the debate in the assessment field is between using a 5-point and a 7-point scale. We believe that the 5-point scale allowed readers to discriminate more effectively around the middle value because it provided two scores on either side of the mid-point of the scale rather than only one score on either side of the mid-point. In our context, we also believe the 5-point scale provided the number of response categories which is most meaningful to the faculty-readers who are comfortable with the 5-point A-F grade scale.

Overall, we believe the new scoring scale allowed us to more accurately measure and report students' writing proficiency levels. Ignoring Outcome G (which is a yes/no outcome), the results on the remaining outcomes should, one would expect, reflect, at a minimum, a bell-shaped curve. As is evident in the chart below, the results approximate a normal distribution more so than in past assessments. Naturally, the goal of the department is for scores to reflect a negatively skewed curve (with the majority of students performing at a 3 or above on a 5-point scale). The department's instructional efforts will, therefore, focus both on improving performance at the low end but also on increasing the percent of students performing in the superior range.

- A. The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.
- B. The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.
- C. The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.
- D. The student writer is able to develop his/her ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison, contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).
- E. The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.
- F. The student writer is able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.



Finally, another possible explanation for the improvement compared to past assessments may be the elimination of readers' grading fatigue in this year's scoring process. Scorer fatigue is a well-established factor which affects the internal validity of a study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009)³, and we introduced this change to minimize its effects on the results.

Interrater Reliability

To evaluate interrater reliability, we calculated the "average measures" intraclass correlations between the two independent scores for each outcome. The correlations ranged from .22 to .40. In light of poor correlations, we also examined interrater agreement within one point (see Table 2).

	Identical Score	Score within one point
Outcome A	36%	87%
Outcome B	45%	87%
Outcome C	33%	81%
Outcome D	30%	93%
Outcome E	33%	83%
Outcome F	27%	92%

Table 2. Interrater agreement by outcome

Low interrater agreement suggests that the current scoring rubric is not adequately specific in terms of benchmarks of achievement, even after a rigorous norming session. The Assessment Coordinator has proposed establishing benchmarks for each score (1-5) for each outcome (A-F) before next year's assessment cycle begins. An ad hoc committee consisting of faculty with experience teaching ENGL

³ Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2009). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

1020 will be constituted to help the Assessment Coordinator complete this task prior to the next assessment cycle.

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

In fall 2014, ENGL 1020 was selected by the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts as a course in need of a redesign. The department is in the middle of its redesign effort for this course (see Appendix B). The revitalized course will address the weaknesses documented in seven years of English 1020 assessment reports, specifically those identified in the following three outcomes.

Outcome B: The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.

Outcome D: Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).

Sustained reading instruction, which is a focus in the revitalized course, will address both of these outcomes. Guiding students through **rhetorical analyses** of published texts will introduce them to the rhetorical strategies authors draw from, and class discussions will give students an improved understanding of the effects these rhetorical choices have on readers. Engaging students in **reflection** by prompting them to consider how they could achieve their own purpose for a given text through the use of similar rhetorical strategies will help students become more confident in meeting the needs of diverse academic audiences. In addition, students will have the opportunity to present their work at the MTSU Scholars Day event which is held each spring. Such presentations will reinforce the importance of anticipating the needs of one's audience.

Outcome E: Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.

Research published by composition scholars, such as Rebecca Moore Howard, shows that students benefit when their instructors attend to how well students understand and can summarize source material. The current focus on teaching a particular documentation style in English 1020 is distracting from the more meaningful role sources play in student writing, as instruction in using sources too often focuses on the mechanics of citation and fails to account for the important role **reading comprehension** plays in effective source use. Also worth noting is that the traditional pace of the course and its heavy reading load discourage close reading and promote misuse of sources, including patchwriting and plagiarism. Ten essays—accounting for 10% of the randomized final sample—had to be removed from the 2014 assessment project's grading session due to plagiarism, indicating how widespread this problem is. Reducing the number of assigned readings and limiting the amount of outside research in favor of **repeated rhetorical readings of common texts, regular instruction in how to craft accurate summaries, and support in effectively engaging with source material** will address this serious problem.

Finally, the revitalized course will address the problem of instructor fatigue. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by all they are expected to accomplish in a 15-week semester, English 1020 teachers (most of whom teach a 5/5 course load) will recognize the purpose of the course and consider its outcomes within reach. Most importantly, the revitalized course will allow teachers to work more closely with students: an intense focus on rhetorical analysis will allow teachers to target weaknesses in individual students' reading skills, and extending the amount of time students spend working on one

substantial academic essay will allow teachers to guide each student as s/he engages in a recursive writing process.

7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments?

The English department has implemented a number of initiatives, which may largely, in fact, be responsible for the significant improvement in scores we observed in this most recent assessment cycle.

Curriculum-related initiatives

1. The department adopted a new curriculum for **ENGL 1010 Expository Writing** with a focus on Literacy for Life to better prepare students to transfer writing and thinking skills to other general education courses, courses in their majors, and the workforce. This revised curriculum was designed to better prepare students for the rigors of **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**.
2. The department revised the **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** curriculum to be more closely aligned with the General Education Outcomes related to writing. The revised course is a research and argumentative course that focuses on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), rather than one that focuses on literary analysis, to stimulate more student interest and more student experience in research and argumentation. The Lower Division Committee selected textbooks with a Writing Across the Curriculum focus for **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**, as well as new handbooks for both **ENGL 1010 Expository Writing** and **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** to emphasize the distinctions between the two courses.
3. The department added a required library visit (with a librarian-led introduction to conducting research) to all sections of **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** in order to improve student performance specifically in relation to Outcome E.
4. The department has further customized the new handbooks for **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** to emphasize the course objectives, the General Education Learning Outcomes, and the resources available to MTSU students specifically. Dr. Jason Vance, Information Literacy Librarian, contributed customized screen shots of library search engines that are particular to this university to be included in the handbook developed for **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**, *Research Matters at MTSU*.
5. English department faculty participated in a campus-wide General Education course redesign initiative to adopt high student-engagement pedagogies as a technique to improve student success. Under the umbrella of this larger initiative, **ENGL 1010 Expository Writing** was redesigned in 2013-14. **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** is currently being redesigned as described in the answer to Question 6 above.

Instruction-related Initiatives

1. The department now provides intensive oversight of its General Education faculty. Course objectives, syllabi, assignments, and grading are reviewed in the annual evaluation of each GTA, adjunct, and instructor in the department.
2. Tenured and TT faculty in the department are now explicitly required to teach at least one section of lower division courses each semester, including **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**.
3. The department has created two new web pages—*General Education Faculty Resources* and *Lower Division FAQs*—which include the course objectives, teaching and learning objectives, sample syllabi

and assignments, general information for General Education faculty, and specific assistance with grading, developing effective assignments, and judging written work in Gen Ed courses.

4. The department's Lower Division Director has been conducting regular "syllabus reviews" during which the syllabi of GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors are reviewed and evaluated. During this review, when appropriate, the Lower Division Director encourages more required reading and additional reading instruction in both ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020, as well as more classroom workshops and peer review opportunities.
5. The department has created opportunities for professional development for adjuncts and full-time instructors by establishing an MTSU Foundation account with grant monies donated by Bedford/St. Martin's, publisher of the department's ENGL 1010 handbook, *Easy Writer*, and McGraw-Hill, publisher of the department's 1020 handbook, *Research Matters at MTSU*. Faculty are encouraged to apply for professional development grants and information about conferences, workshops, and seminars is disseminated via the faculty listserv.
6. The Lower Division Director and GTA coordinator have been organizing regular essay grade norming sessions for adjuncts, instructors, and GTAs.
7. The department has instituted "Lower Division Curriculum Meetings" which are held before the beginning of each fall and spring semester. These meetings are day-long conferences with whole-group presentations and break-out sessions. Faculty from the department submit proposals to present at these meetings. Approximately 70 faculty members have attended these meetings each semester.

Dissemination of Assessment Results

1. At the end of each assessment cycle, the department's Assessment Coordinator and the Lower Division Director have disseminated the assessment results to the department faculty either through the listserv and/or at department meetings.
2. The assessment results have been shared annually with the university's Information Literacy Librarians who collaborate closely with the English department in a combined effort to improve student outcomes.
3. The assessment results and the assessment process are examined by the university's General Education Committee which provides feedback to the department's Assessment Coordinator.

Concluding Remarks

The Assessment Coordinator recommends the following with regard to next year's assessment process:

1. **Maintain a 5-point scoring scale.**

Rationale: This scale is more in line with how performance is typically evaluated in academic contexts and discriminates more effectively in the middle range of performance.

2. **Develop benchmarks for Outcomes A-F to ensure a higher inter-rater agreement.**

Rationale: Low interrater agreement suggests that the current scoring rubric is not adequately specific in terms of benchmarks of achievement, even after a rigorous norming session.

The Assessment Coordinator presented this information to the English department at its monthly meeting on September 9, 2015 and to the General Education Committee at its monthly meeting on October 16, 2015. Input from English faculty and from members of the General Education Committee has been incorporated in this report. Statistical analyses have been conducted in consultation with Drs. Will Langston, Psychology, and Tim Graeff, Marketing.

Appendix A
ASSESSMENT RUBRIC
GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR WRITING
MTSU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

GRADER #:

ESSAY #:

Directions:

Please enter the number (1-5) representing how well the writer performed with regard to each criterion based on this sample of his/her writing.

Scale:	1	2	3	4	5
	Unsatisfactory		Satisfactory		Superior
	Less than adequate		Adequate		More than adequate
	(F)	(D)	(C)	(B)	(A)



The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.	
The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.	
The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.	
The student writer is able to develop his/her ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).	
The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.	
The student writer is able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.	
The student writer has written a minimum of 1,000 words or <u>four typed pages</u> at 250 words per page (please estimate).	

Appendix B

Summary of Proposed Revisions to English 1020 English Department, Middle Tennessee State University 18 August 2015

For decades, the traditional course served as a bridge from ENGL 1010: Expository Writing to ENGL 2030: The Experience of Literature. All three of the required general education courses in English were thus connected despite the fact that the two writing courses fall under the “Communications” category and the literature class, under “Arts/Humanities.” Teachers typically explained to students: *By giving you practice writing focused paragraphs and themed essays, English 1010 prepares you for English 1020. By giving you practice using source material and writing about literature, English 1020 prepares you for English 2030.*

In 2010, the English department severed the connection between English 1020 and English 2030 by removing the literary component of the course. Since then, teachers have been encouraged to conceptualize the course as serving the entire academic community: in other words, English 1020 teaches skills necessary for research and writing across the curriculum. Typically, students receive instruction in how to summarize, paraphrase, and integrate direct quotes, completing short papers that demonstrate their ability to use source material responsibly. Students then research a problem or issue, ideally in their projected fields of study, producing an annotated bibliography and finally a research paper with a clear thesis, supporting evidence, and a properly formatted works cited page. A random sampling of these research papers is then used for the TBR-mandated assessment of student writing.

Although this reconceptualization of the course created more space for students to gain informational literacy, the expectation of two essays, an annotated bibliography, and a formal research paper—all produced in a 15-week period—too often led to, at best, cursory readings of texts, and at worst, plagiarized papers. (The random sampling of research papers for the 2014 assessment contained a whopping 10% of plagiarized papers as well as a significant number of annotated bibliographies instead of research papers, indicating that teachers may have run out of time for the research project.) Furthermore, the idea that one 15-week class can prepare students to write and conduct research suggests that students are being “inoculated” in their first-year writing courses and thus do not require further writing instruction. According to the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), *“a large body of research demonstrat[es] that the process of learning to write in any medium is complex: it is both individual and social and demands continued practice and informed guidance.”*

The revitalized course will serve students rather than disciplines and teachers. For the first half of the course, students will apply their knowledge of the rhetorical situation and of rhetorical/composing strategies (learned in English 1010) to the practice of reading increasingly difficult academic texts. In the traditional course, students may be asked to read as many as a dozen published essays in addition to the source material they are gathering for their research papers. The revitalized course will limit the number of assigned essays in order to encourage the practice of deep (re)reading and thorough rhetorical analysis. Students will thus exit the class with strategies for reading academic texts actively and critically. By emphasizing the process of reading rhetorically and by connecting this process to the choices students can make in their own writing, English 1020 responds to current composition theory and practice focusing on *transfer*: students will be sharpening skills they will use in other courses and writing contexts.

In the second half of the course, students will write their own academic essays. Although this writing project will require informational literacy, the aim will *not* be to produce a research paper. (Instruction in conducting research that results in a research paper should be the responsibility of each department as part of a gateway course for majors—the equivalent of MTSU’s English 3000: Introduction to Literary Studies.) Students will propose their own topics, locate the books/magazines/journals/websites where their topic is being discussed, determine the rhetorical situation for their written text (exigence, audience, and purpose), and engage in an extended, recursive writing process that culminates in an original essay that contributes to an ongoing conversation.

The revitalized course will shift the audience for students’ writing from the teacher to the academic community. In the traditional course, students’ arguments tend to have no utility beyond the classroom, and yet current research in composition studies shows that students are more likely to engage in meaningful ways with their writing when it has the potential to effect change. Just as MTSU celebrates and promotes undergraduate research, in all disciplines, during Scholars Week, students enrolled in the revitalized English 1020 will present their work at an English department Scholars Day (complete with judges and prizes), thus providing an audience and purpose for students’ writing. Students producing particularly strong projects will be encouraged to submit to an undergraduate journal such as *Young Scholars in Writing*.

In sum, the revitalized course will differ from the traditional course in three primary ways: (1) by giving students more practice (re)reading difficult texts, (2) by extending the amount of time students spend planning, drafting, researching, and revising an academic essay, and (3) by providing a public forum for the presentation and recognition of students’ work.

Timeline

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Fall 2014 | Dean Mark Byrnes identified English 1020 as a general education course in need of redesign |
| January 2015 | Department Chair Maria Bachman requested that Drs. Julie Barger and Laura Dubek redesign English 1020 |
| February 2015 | TBR Course Revitalization Grant submitted |
| April 2015 | TBR Course Revitalization Grant awarded |
| Summer 2015 | Dr. Laura Dubek pre-piloted two sections of the revitalized 1020 |
| August 2015 | Revitalized Course Proposal was presented to the English Department (August Dept. Mtg.) |
| Fall 2015 | Dr. Julie Barger is piloting two sections of the revitalized 1020 |
| Spring 2016 | Revitalized course assessment and Course Proposal Submission |
| Fall 2016 | Revitalized course launch (based on assessment results) |

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year: 2014-2015

Subject Area: Oral Communication

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.

The course Fundamentals of Communication, COMM 2200, was used in the assessment of Oral Communication. To evaluate student performance in constructing and delivering an oral presentation, Informative Speech Outlines and Persuasive Speech Oral Presentations were assessed.

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

The COMM 2200 procedure consisted of random stratified samples of representative populations of the COMM 2200 sections offered in Spring 2015. The total enrollment in COMM 2200 for Spring 2015 was 1582. The 66 sections of COMM 2200 were stratified into morning, afternoon and evening classes. From this list a representative sample of sections was then selected based on the stratification. (40 sections were used for the outline assessment and 40 sections were used for the oral presentation assessment.)

From the randomly selected sections of COMM 2200 Informative Speech Presentation Outlines and Oral Persuasive Speech Presentations were randomly selected for evaluation. The data were then collected from a total of 265 students (149 Presentation Outlines and 116 Oral Presentations). The outlines consisted of blind copies requested from the instructors. Selected student oral presentations were video recorded. No identifying elements were used for individual students or instructors. Assigned numbers for the study identified outlines, demographics instructions, videotapes, and sections. Assigned number listings were secured in a locked drawer in the principal investigator's office.

All random selections were generated using Research Randomizer (Urbaniak and Plous, 2008) from the Social Psychology Network.

Training for the faculty members serving as evaluators consisted of three hours of training per evaluator to familiarize each evaluator with the new rubrics and rating systems. Six full-time temporary faculty members served as evaluators in 2015.

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from the pilot assessment? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

The number of participants was increased from the number used in the pilot study to insure a valid representative sample (at least 10 percent of the total enrollment) as well as provide a baseline for future assessment (16.8% of the population was sampled).

For the pre-pilot and for the 2010 assessment, informative speech outlines from all students enrolled in 12 different sections of COMM 2200 were collected while 5 to 7 persuasive speeches were recorded in 40 different sections of COMM 2200.

To increase sampling representativeness, the number of randomly stratified sections from which outlines and speeches were collected was increased for the Spring 2015 to 40 sections for the outline assessment and 40 sections for the speech assessment.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Below is an example of a table for oral communication. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell. If you addressed additional outcomes not included in the TBR list, create rows for them at the bottom of the table.

TABLES (2015)

Oral Communication TBR Competencies to be Assessed <i>NOTE: Since we assess persuasive oral presentations AND informative speech outlines, more than one table may be included for each TBR Outcome.</i>	<i>Severely Deficient</i> <i>(1/A)</i>	<i>Inadequate</i> <i>(2/B)</i>	<i>Fair</i> <i>(3/C)</i>	<i>Good</i> <i>(4/D)</i>	<i>Excellent</i> <i>(5/E)</i>
TBR Outcome I Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement. <i>[Table A: This outcome was evaluated by using a revised rubric for the persuasive oral presentation. In the speech, we were looking for the following when rating this item: Within the opening segment of the speech the speaker communicates a) a thesis or purpose statement that is clear and concise, b) is appropriate for a persuasive presentation and, c) clearly relates to the members of the audience. Evaluated by looking at: Students are able to communicate the thesis/specific purpose in a manner appropriate for a persuasive presentation, the audience & occasion--students communicate within the opening few sentences of the speech a thesis/specific purpose that is clear, concise, is appropriate and one that the audience members should clearly understand.]</i> Persuasive speech competency #2 Average: $M = 3.26$ ($N=116$)	(3) 3%	(26) 22%	(37) 32%	(36) 31%	(34) 12%
<i>[Table B: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to: Student outlines contain a purpose statement that is appropriate for an informative speech, is clear and concise, and contains no deficiencies in expression. Outline competency #1]</i> Average: $M = 3.54$ ($N=149$)	(16) 11%	(15) 10%	(32) 21%	(44) 30%	(42) 28%
TBR Outcome II. Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose. <i>[Table C: This outcome was evaluated by using a revised rubric for the persuasive oral presentation.</i>	(13) 11%	(54) 47%	(20) 18%	(19) 16%	(9) 8%

<p><i>In the speech, we were looking for the following when rating this item: The speaker's use of support material is exceptional. (i.e., the speaker uses all three kinds of support material; source credibility is clearly established; the quality and variety of support clearly enhances credibility of the speech.)</i> <i>Evaluated by looking at: Students use persuasive appeals (ethos, logos pathos) appropriate to the purpose, topic, audience, & occasion---the speaker displays an ability to appropriately and effectively utilize all three types of persuasive appeals in the presentation and the speech is clearly persuasive throughout.]</i> <i>Persuasive speech competency #5</i></p> <p>Average: $M = 2.60$ ($N=116$)</p>					
<p>TBR Outcome III. Organizational Patterns. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).</p> <p><i>[Table D: This outcome was evaluated by using a revised rubric for <u>the persuasive oral presentation</u>. In the speech, we were looking for the following when rating this item: The speech is clearly persuasive and the speaker presents an exceptionally clear and compelling argument or case. The organizational pattern is complete and the speaker leaves the audience with an undeniable message or call to action. Evaluated by looking at: Students use an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation---students present an introduction that clearly engages the audience in an appropriate and creative manner; the body of the speech reflects clarity in organization, and the conclusion reflects clearly and accurately the content of the speech and leaves the audience with a compelling message or call to action.]</i> <i>Persuasive speech competency #4</i></p> <p>Average: $M = 3.06$ ($N=116$)</p>	(8) 7%	(29) 25%	(34) 29%	(37) 32%	(8) 7%
<p><i>[Table E: Revised on our rubric for the <u>informative speech outline</u> to: Student outlines contain 2 to 5 main points; each point is clear and wording is consistent; all main points and sub-points are well developed and an appropriate pattern is utilized throughout. Evaluated by looking at: Student outlines contain 2 to 5 main points; each point is clear and concise and consistently follows an organizational pattern (topical, chronological, etc.) that is appropriate for the topic and audience; all main points are fully developed.]</i> Outline competency # 6</p> <p>Average: $M = 3.09$($N=149$)</p>	(14) 10%	(36) 24%	(43) 29%	(33) 22%	(23) 15%

<p>TBR Outcome IV. Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.</p> <p><i>[Table F: This outcome was evaluated by using a revised rubric for the persuasive oral presentation. In the speech, we were looking for the following when rating this item: The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, and appropriate for a formal occasion and for the audience; the language is not sexist, racist, non-inclusive, etc. Evaluated by looking at: The speaker uses language that is clear, vivid and appropriate and is free of inappropriate jargon, slang, and is nonsexist, nonracist, etc.] Persuasive competency #6</i></p> <p>Average: $M = 3.09$ ($N=116$)</p>	(2) 1%	(21) 18%	(58) 50%	(32) 28%	(3) 2%
<p><i>[Table G: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to: Student outlines contain no major errors in spelling, syntax and/or grammar. Evaluated by looking at: Student outlines contain clear language that is concise and appropriate to the audience, the topic and the occasion; may contain elements of style (the use of metaphors, parallelisms, etc.), is void of language that is sexist, racist, etc.], and contains no major errors in spelling, syntax and/or grammar. Outline competency # 9</i></p> <p>Average: $M = 3.63$($N=149$)</p>	(4) 2%	(13) 9%	(45) 30%	(62) 42%	(26) 17%
<p>TBR Outcome V. Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.</p> <p><i>[Table h: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to: Bibliography/Works Cited page contains 6 or more sources; citations are formatted correctly utilizing MLA or APA format. Citations may have a few minor errors or omissions. Evaluated by looking at: A bibliography or works cited page is present and contains a minimum of 6 sources; sources are cited using an accepted citation style with no major errors or omissions.] Outline competency # 10</i></p> <p>Average: $M = 3.41$ ($N=149$)</p>	(4) 3%	(60) 40 %	(13) 9%	(14) 9%	(58) 39%

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

Outcome I: Articulation of a Purpose Statement [Tables A, B]. Results remain good, with 75% of students scoring from Fair to Excellent on the oral assessment (Fair 32%, Good 31%, and Excellent 12%). In 2014, 92% of students scored Fair to Excellent on the oral assessment. For the outline assessment, results were also good, with 79% of students scoring between Fair and Excellent (Fair 21%, Good 30%, and Excellent 28%). In 2014, 80% of students scored Fair to Excellent on the outline assessment.

The majority of students are articulating the purpose statement adequately. The data for 2015 more accurately reflects our students' learning, as the data for 2015 represent a normal bell curve.

The data for 2014 seem to be an anomaly in that 92% were fair to excellent on the oral assessment. We will monitor this in future assessments to ensure that a declining pattern is not developing.

Outcome II: the Ordering of Main Points in a reasonable and convincing manner [Table C]. Performance dropped from the previous year. In 2015, 42% of students scored between Fair and Excellent on ordering main points (Fair 18%, Good, 16%, Excellent 8%), and 58% of students scored Severely Deficient to Inadequate. This is a drop from the 2014 assessment report when 52.1% of students scored between Fair and Excellent (Fair 36.1%, Good 16%; Excellent 0%).

This decline in skills regarding ordering of main points is concerning. This could be due to the high DFW rate for the spring 2015 COMM 2200 sections. Students may not have been adequately prepared to organize their writing in an effective way, which could hamper teaching because instructors assume students have a basic level of knowledge regarding organization. To help with this issue, the COMM 2200 faculty are meeting several times this during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semester to discuss best teaching practices for this outcome.

Outcome III: use of appropriate rhetorical patterns [Tables D and E]. Performance on outline organization dropped from 2014, when 93.7% of students scored at the satisfactory level or higher (Fair 27.3%, Good 46.4%, Excellent 20%). For the 2015 outline organization, scores dropped to 66% scoring between Fair and Excellent (Fair 29%, Good 22%, Excellent 15%). Performance on the oral assessment also dropped. In 2015, 68% of students scored between Fair and Excellent (Fair 29%, Good 32%, Excellent 7%), while in 2014, 84.8 % of students scored between Fair and Excellent.

Again, this decline in skills is concerning, for there seems to be a significant decrease. This, once again, could be due to the high spring 2015 DFW rates in COMM 2200, or it could be due to ineffective teaching activities. Both of these will be discussed during instructor training and COMM 2200 committee meetings.

Outcome IV: diction, syntax, usage, grammar, mechanics [Tables F and G]. Performance remained good but dropped from 2014 to 2015. In 2015, 80% of students scored between Fair and Excellent (Fair 50%, Good 28%, Excellent 2%) when speaking. The Outline component was also lower than 2014 but still remained high, with 89% of students scoring between Fair and Excellent (Fair, 30%, Good 42%, Excellent 17%). Both of these scores are lower than 2014's score of 99% Fair to Excellent in both speaking and writing.

This drop in score can be accounted for due to a change in methodology. In 2014, students submitted several drafts to their instructors before submitting final versions for the assessment. Thus, students were able to correct most deficiencies. In 2015, students did not submit drafts to instructors before submitting them for assessment. From this point forward, we will be assessing only the first draft to get a more accurate reflection of student learning.

Outcome V: the gathering and use of multiple sources [Table H]. The outcome shows a decline from 2014. In 2014, 65.5% of students scored at the satisfactory level (Fair 8.2%; Good 30%; 27.3% Excellent); in 2015, 57% of students scored Fair to Excellent (Fair 9%, Good 9%, Excellent 39%). There is room for improvement, as 43% were inadequate or severely deficient.

Even though 57% is a majority, it is a small majority, so we will be working with faculty to promote ideas regarding effective teaching strategies for finding and incorporating sources into outlines and in speeches.

Overall Interpretation and Analysis

Overall, the data suggest that the skills in COMM 2200 are declining. However, there is not enough data to support this conclusion. First, since the rubric was changed in 2014, we only have one other set of data for comparison. Prior to 2014, items were evaluated on a three-point scale. However, in 2014, we changed the scale to a five-point scale. Thus, we only have one other set of data, 2014's results, with which to compare. Having only one other set of data does not necessarily indicate a pattern, and when we collect data for 2016, we will have a better indication of trends. We cannot compare this data to previous years because we used different rubrics.

Second, with the exception of Outcomes II and V, the data suggest a normal bell curve in most areas, where most of the data falls in the middle, which would be an accurate assessment of performance in college courses. There should only be a few "Excellent" and a few "Severely Deficient," and the rest should be in the middle. That would be a typical representation of any classroom, particularly in the General Education requirement.

Third, although most of the items declined from 2014, they were still relatively high, with the exception of Outcomes II and V. This indicates that still a majority of individuals taking this class are demonstrating adequate oral communication skills. Although it would be nice to have that number be higher, we cannot make any judgments about whether this is a concerning pattern until we get more data.

However, we are not taking any of this information lightly. We will be having more training sessions with instructors and will be talking more about the declining numbers.

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

Starting during the fall 2015 semester, COMM 2200 instructors will get together once a month to discuss teaching issues and strategies. In addition, the COMM 2200 instructors will meet before school starts in the spring 2016 semester. The COMM 2200 committee chair will present the assessment results during that time. We will discuss deficiencies and talk about ways to address them. We will then schedule workshops throughout the spring 2016 semester where instructors can present "best teaching practices" regarding how to help and correct those deficiencies. Since we specifically had problems with Outcome II, which addresses ordering major points in a reasonable and convincing manner, we will brainstorm ways to improve that outcome. We will ask for ideas regarding how to teach the concept as well as share activities. Similarly, since Outcome V, using multiple sources, was also low, we will also discuss how to improve that outcome.

We will continue to work closely with the MTSU Writing Center and with the MTSU library staff to create additional class materials to assist COMM 2200 students.

Overall, COMM 2200 is a successful class. However, we see several opportunities for improvement for the future of the course. These include the following:

- The curriculum in the class has not changed in several years, but the concept of public speaking has changed with the advent of different technologies. Thus, we would like to

create a curriculum that honors past public speaking practices but also addresses current trends in public speaking, such as TED Talks and Video Blogs. We would like to modernize the curriculum to be in line with the QEP Initiative MT Engage.

- Similarly, we would like to revisit the curriculum in terms of the required speeches. Currently, instructors are required to have students give one informative speech and one persuasive speech that are both 6-8 minutes long with at least six sources. We would like to adjust the requirement for the informative speech. Informative speeches are speeches that allow students to “get their feet wet” with public speaking, as they usually occur close to the beginning of the semester when students are just practicing their skills. We would like to see the informative be a speech that helps students build up to the bigger, major persuasive speeches. Thus, we would like to see the informative requirement cut down to 3-5 minutes with at least three sources used.
- In addition, we would like to see the development of a Speaking Center. We previously had a Speaking Center, where students could get help writing and practicing their speeches. However, due to location and lack of funding, we had to close it. We asked for funds to re-establish the center, but we were turned down. We would like to continue to ask for internal funding and perhaps look to external resources as well.
- Moreover, we would like to change the assessment process as a whole. First, we would like to change how the sample is taken for assessment. We would like to switch to a more random sample by having all instructors submit videos of their students and then randomly sampling from those, rather than sampling sections of the class. Second, we would like to focus more on the oral communication aspect in assessment. Currently, students are required to submit informative outlines and persuasive speech videos. We would like to take the focus off of written communication by eliminating the outlining component for assessment and focus more on oral communication. Third, we need to examine the current rubric for the oral communication assessment. Currently, it is lacking some items that should be measured, such as an evaluation of the conclusion of a speech, and some items should be eliminated, such as facial expressions, because they are often hard to see with the lighting in the room during filming.
- Similarly, the success of this assessment project depends on the utilization of well-trained and appropriately compensated evaluators. Faculty members involved in assessing the materials for this project should continue to receive financial compensation for the work they do during the summer. However, since we would like to eliminate the outline portion of the assessment, we would like to redistribute those funds to the evaluators of the speech videos. Those evaluators have to watch at least 115, 6-8 minutes speeches, and since they are looking for specific criteria, they often have to watch them several times. This takes up a lot of time. We would like to see the funds used for paying the evaluators of the outline component be given to the speaking evaluators. The person overseeing the assessment along with faculty responsible for tabulating the results of the assessment should also continue to receive financial compensation for the additional work that must be done during the summer.
- We would also like to start utilizing this class as a means to conduct Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) research. With the assessment data, there are myriad possibilities with this course to examine effective teaching strategies.

- Likewise, we would like to see technology be used more in the classroom to help students with their skills. One of the most valuable assignments students can complete is evaluating a video of the speech they delivered in class. We would like to learn what resources are available to have all students record their speeches to help them become more competent and confident speakers.
- Furthermore, we would like to see instructors of the course embrace Experiential Learning (EXL). Experiential Learning can be a very valuable tool for students, as it helps them apply the skills they have learned in the class to real-world situations. It can also increase learning by bringing in a reflective component to class.
- Finally, all of the suggested improvements of the course will require time and effort and need to have a point-person in charge of streamlining procedures, conducting the assessment, and mentoring faculty. Therefore, we would like to see the development of a Basic Course Director position. The person in this position would oversee the COMM 2200 courses in terms of orienting new instructors, providing on-going training, feedback, and mentoring of instructors, overseeing the assessment process, attending training and instructional development activities, conducting and helping with SOTL research to ensure effective teaching practices, dealing with student concerns about the course, and representing the course to internal and external entities.

7. Have you implemented any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments?

Since fall 2011, at least two workshops have been conducted for all COMM 2200 instructors each academic year. During these workshops instructors have an opportunity to discuss and develop specific strategies for improving instruction on all the competencies, with special focus on those areas where students continue to fall below the satisfactory level of competence. However, starting in the fall 2015 semester, we are going to bring together COMM 2200 instructors once a month to share best teaching practices and build community. This can help faculty with any issues that they are facing during the semester and can help establish mentoring relationships with successful instructors. We held our first meeting on Friday, October 23. The meeting was well attended, and we discussed several topics, including civil discourse initiatives, strategies to help with the current DFW rate, accessibility, and classroom management practices. Our next meeting is Friday, November 6, and we will discuss how to create accessible syllabi for courses.

Similarly, the department chair met with 2200 instructors who had high DFW rates for the spring 2015 semester. They discussed their teaching evaluations and strategies for teaching concepts effectively. Those instructors have begun to implement some of those strategies, such as providing more in-class work time to get feedback on speaking outlines from both peers and the instructor and providing adequate speech preparation time. We hope that these strategies will increase student performance in the class.

We have made some progress in modifying the rubric for the oral assessment. After the 2015 assessment, the chair of the COMM 2200 committee met with the instructors who evaluated the persuasive speech videos. The instructors provided feedback regarding changes to the current rubric. They noted that the rubric is lacking some items that should be measured, such as an evaluation of the conclusion of a speech, and some items should be eliminated, such as facial expressions, because they are often hard to see with the lighting in the room during filming. The chair of the COMM 2200 committee is using their feedback to adjust the current rubric.

The current chair of the COMM 2200 committee met with the Instructional Technologies division of MTSU and began to make plans for utilizing technology in the classroom for students to record and assess their own speeches. We hope to begin utilizing this in the spring 2016 semester.

We have also provided resources for faculty regarding utilizing experiential learning in their classrooms. Two instructors who used EXL activities in their classes have shared their ideas with faculty regarding how to turn their classes into EXL classes. Several instructors have shown interest in this and are embracing it for the spring 2016 semester.

We will continue to work closely with the library staff and the writing center staff. We will also continue to seek funding to reopen the speaking center.

The current chair of the COMM 2200 committee is working with Tom Brinthaupt, Professor of Psychology and Director of Faculty Development in the Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center on campus, on SOTL research. Their first study, which they plan to collect data on in the spring 2016 semester, will examine the effectiveness of the digital component of the current textbook on speaking performance.

Currently, COMM 2200 sections are being capped at a 26:1 student/faculty ratio, an increase from the previous semesters of 25:1.

Tutoring for students preparing oral presentations continues to be offered in the MTSU library tutoring center.

APPENDIX A - RUBRICS FOR 2015 ASSESSMENT
SPEECH OUTLINE RUBRIC

Department of Communication Studies and Organizational Communication / Middle Tennessee State University -
2015

Outline assessment	Severely Deficient 1/A	Inadequate 2/B	Fair 3/C	Good 4/D	Excellent 5/E
1) Specific Purpose Statement	Specific Purpose Statement is missing.	The specific purpose statement is significantly deficient – [is not concise, contains an incomplete thought, is unclear, contains errors in grammar and spelling].	The specific purpose statement is fair, but contains one or two deficiencies [is not concise, contains an incomplete thought, is unclear, contains errors in grammar and spelling].	The specific purpose statement is clear, contains no errors in grammar or spelling, but is not concise.	The specific purpose statement is clear, concise, contains no errors in grammar or spelling.
(Introduction) 2) Attention Segment	Attention segment is missing	Attention segment fails to gain the audience's attention and/or relate the topic to the audience. No attention gaining techniques are utilized.	Attention segment attempts to gain the audience's attention and/or relate the topic to the audience, but minor deficiencies are present. At least one attention gaining technique is utilized.	Attention segment is successful in gaining the audience's attention and relating the topic to the audience. At least one attention gaining technique is effectively utilized.	Attention segment is successful in gaining both the audience's attention and relating the topic to the audience. Two or more attention gaining techniques are effectively utilized.
(Introduction) 3) Credibility Segment	Credibility segment is missing	Credibility segment is present, but does not establish the speaker's credibility.	Credibility segment is present and addresses at least one aspect of the speaker's credibility [education or experience]. Credibility segment includes some deficiencies in expression [grammatical and spelling errors, lacks clarity and/or conciseness].	Credibility segment is present and addresses both aspects of speaker's credibility [education and experience]. Credibility segment includes no significant deficiencies in expression, but may include a few minor deficiencies [grammatical and/or spelling errors, clarity and conciseness].	Credibility segment is present and addresses both aspects of speaker's credibility, is clear, concise and contains no grammatical or spelling errors.
(Introduction) 4) Preview Statement	Preview Statement is missing.	Preview Statement is unclear and/or does not accurately reveal the main points (Roman Numerals) in the body of speech, and contains two or more major errors [points are out of order and/or phrasing is not consistent, and/or contains frequent grammatical and/or spelling errors].	Preview Statement is clear and accurately reveals the main points (Roman Numerals) in the speech. Contains no more than one major error [points are out of order and/or phrasing is not consistent] and/or contains a few grammatical and/or spelling errors.	Preview Statement is clear and accurately reveals the main points (Roman Numerals) in the speech; phrasing is consistent; may lack conciseness but contains no grammatical or spelling errors.	Preview Statement is clear and accurately reveals the main points (Roman Numerals) in the speech; the order and phrasing of main point is consistent in expression and order; contains no grammatical or spelling errors.

Outline assessment	Severely Deficient 1/A	Inadequate 2/B	Fair 3/C	Good 4/D	Excellent 5/E
(Outline) 5) Technical Form - only	Outline formatting is missing or severely deficient	Outline formatting contains multiple deficiencies and errors in notation, subordination, formatting, and/or indentation [the three parts of the speech are not labeled; transitions are missing].	Outline formatting contains some deficiencies and errors in notation, subordination, formatting, and/or indentation.	Outline formatting contains few minor deficiencies and errors in notation, subordination, formatting, and/or indentation.	Outline formatting contains no errors in notation, subordination. Formatting is consistent. There are no errors in indentation.
(Outline) 6) Main Points (Roman Numerals)	Outline contains one or more than five main points.	Outline contains two to five main points but points are unclear. Outline is significantly unbalanced and/or poorly developed [two or more points are inadequately developed and/or the organizational pattern is inconsistent].	Outline contains two to five main points; points are clear but contain flaws in expression. The organizational pattern is consistent throughout, but some sub-points may have minor deficiencies and/or one point may not be adequately developed.	Contains two to five main points. The main points are clear and consistent. An appropriate organizational pattern is utilized throughout, but some sub-points may contain minor deficiencies in expression.	Contains two to five main points. Main points are clear, consistent and an appropriate organizational pattern is utilized throughout. No deficiencies in expression.
(Conclusion) 7) Summary	A summary is missing	The summary is seriously deficient [some main points are missing, and/or are out of order and/or additional material is included in the summary statement]; and summary is deficient in expression [unclear or are not concise] and/or contains grammatical errors and spelling errors.	The main points are stated but points are out of order and/or additional material is included in the summary statement; and/or summary is deficient in expression [unclear, or not concise]; and/or contain grammatical errors and spelling errors.	The main points are clear and concise and in order, but may have a few deficiencies in expression [additional material is included and/or contains grammatical errors and spelling errors].	The main points are clearly and consistently stated and the summary contains no deficiencies and contains no grammatical or spelling errors.
(Conclusion) 8) The Close	Closing segment is missing	Closing segment is seriously deficient [Does not effectively signal the end of the speech and/or contains significant amount of new information and/or the speech does not end smoothly].	Closing segment clearly signals the end of the speech but no clear closing strategy is utilized and/or the strategy is ineffective and/or the close lacks development.	Closing segment clearly signals the end of the speech. The speaker effectively utilizes one closing strategy but close lacks adequate development and/or a smooth ending.	Closing segment clearly signals the end of speech. At least one closing strategy is effectively utilized. The close is adequately developed, and the speech ends smoothly.
9) Language	Overall, language used is inappropriate [Contains inappropriate jargon or slang and/or includes language that is sexist, racist, etc.], and/or outline contains major errors in spelling, syntax and/or grammar.	Overall language is clear and appropriate, but is deficient in clarity and/or conciseness and/or contains frequent errors in spelling, syntax, and/or grammar	Overall language used is clear and appropriate, but contains some errors in spelling, syntax, and/or grammar.	Overall, language used is clear and appropriate, may contain few minor errors in spelling, syntax, and/or grammar.	Overall language is clear and appropriate; contains no deficiencies in expression and contains a measure of creativity [metaphors, parallel structure, etc.].

Outline assessment	Severely Deficient 1/A	Inadequate 2/B	Fair 3/C	Good 4/D	Excellent 5/E
10) Research / Source Citations	Works Cited page is missing.	Works Cited page contains fewer than six sources and/or citations are deficient in form and content [citations contain multiple errors or omissions, indentation errors, sources not alphabetized].	Works Cited page contains six sources and citations are formatted utilizing a consistent pattern but the form and/or content contain some deficiencies [Some errors or omissions, a few indentation errors]. Sources are correctly alphabetized.	Works Cited page contains six sources and citations are formatted utilizing a consistent pattern and citations contain very few errors or omissions. Indentation and alphabetization is correct.	Works Cited page contains more than six sources and citations are formatted correctly utilizing MLA or APA format. May have a few minor errors or omissions in citations. Indentation and alphabetization is correct.

APPENDIX B
PRESENTATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Rubrics for the 2015 assessment

Department of Communication Studies and Organizational Communication / Middle Tennessee State University -
 2015

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)
<u>Competency One:</u> chooses a topic that is appropriate for 1. the persuasive purpose, 2. the time constraints, and 3. the audience and occasion.	The speaker's topic fails to meet all three criteria.	The speaker's topic only meets one of the three criteria	The speaker's topic meets two of the three criteria.	The speaker's topic meets all three criteria.	The speaker meets all three criteria / the topic selected is timely and/or unique.
<u>Competency Two:</u> Within the opening segment of the speech the speaker meets the four criteria for an effective opening [1. the introduction gains the audience's attention; 2. the thesis / purpose statement is clear and concise, 3. the purpose is appropriate for a persuasive presentation, and 4. the speaker clearly relates the topic to the members of the audience]; and the opening segment is adequately developed.	Within the opening segment the speaker fails to meet all four criteria and/or the opening segment is missing.	Within the opening segment the speaker only meets two of the four criteria and/or the opening segment is severely under developed.	Within the opening segment the speaker meets three of the four criteria; and the opening segment lacks some development.	Within the opening segment the speaker meets all four criteria; the opening section may contain minor flaws in development.	Within the opening segment the speaker meets all four criteria; the opening segment is fully developed.
<u>Competency Three:</u> The speaker provides supporting material (examples, statistics and testimony) appropriate for a persuasive presentation; the quality and variety of support clearly enhances the credibility of the speech and source credibility is clearly established.	The speaker uses no supporting material	The speaker's use of support material is lacking in variety, and/or is lacking in quality and/or quantity; source credibility is not established.	The speaker's use of support material is adequate but is somewhat deficient [may be lacking in quality and/or quantity; source credibility is not established].	The speaker uses supporting material that is appropriate in quality, quantity and variety; source credibility may not always be established.	The speaker's use of support material is exceptional; utilizes all three kinds of support material, the quality and variety of support clearly enhances credibility of the speech and source credibility is clearly established.

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)
<p><u>Competency Four:</u> The speaker uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation.</p>	<p>The speech is clearly not persuasive and/or fails to effectively use a persuasive organizational pattern that is appropriate for the topic, and audience.</p>	<p>The speech is somewhat persuasive and/or the organizational pattern and expression of arguments are severely deficient [the organizational pattern is unclear and/or incomplete].</p>	<p>The speech is persuasive; the speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern with some errors or omissions, and some arguments may be deficient</p>	<p>The speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern. The organizational pattern is complete, and the speaker leaves the audience with a clear persuasive message or call to action.</p>	<p>The speech is clearly persuasive and the speaker presents an exceptionally clear and compelling argument or case. The organizational pattern is complete and the speaker leaves the audience with an undeniable message or call to action.</p>
<p><u>Competency Five:</u> The speaker demonstrates the ability to effectively utilize material gathered from multiple sources.</p>	<p>The speaker fails to include any source documentation in the presentation.</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates a few sources in the presentation but the documentation is deficient [five or fewer sources cited and/or a variety of sources are not used and/or some sources do not appear to be credible].</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates a minimum of six sources in the presentation and the sources appear to be credible, but the documentation is deficient [a variety of sources is not used and/or source credibility is not always established].</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates a minimum of six sources in the presentation; the sources appear to be credible, and the source documentation is <u>not</u> deficient [a variety of sources is utilized].</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates more than six sources in the presentation; the sources are clearly credible, and the source documentation is <u>not</u> deficient.</p>
<p><u>Competency Six:</u> The speaker uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion.</p>	<p>The speaker uses unclear language and/or uses jargon and/or slang that is inappropriate for a formal occasion and for the audience; the language is sexist, racist, non-inclusive, etc.</p>	<p>The speaker uses unclear language and/or uses jargon and/or slang that is inappropriate for a formal occasion and/or distracts from the presentation.</p>	<p>The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear and appropriate for a formal occasion. The speaker uses an occasional slang expression or jargon, but such language is not distracting.</p>	<p>The speaker uses language that is clear, vivid, and appropriate. The presentation is devoid of inappropriate slang or jargon.</p>	<p>The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, appropriate, and the speaker uses parallel sentence structure and/or repetition etc.</p>
<p><u>Competency Seven:</u> The speaker: 1. speaks in a conversational manner, 2. utilizes intensity to heighten and maintain interest appropriate to the audience and occasion, 3. speaks loud enough to be easily heard at all times, and 4. speaks with energy appropriate for the audience and occasion.</p>	<p>The speaker fails to meet all four factors [does not speak in a conversational manner, fails to use vocal variety; fails to speak loud enough to be easily heard at all times, and speaks with little energy].</p>	<p>The speaker fails to meet three of the four factors [does not speak in a conversational manner, and/or fails to use vocal variety; and/or fails to speak loud enough to be easily heard at all times, and/or speaks with little energy].</p>	<p>The speaker meets all but one of the four factors [speaks in a conversational manner, and/or uses vocal variety; and/or speaks loud enough to be easily heard at all times, and/or speaks with some energy].</p>	<p>The speaker meets all four factors [speaks in a conversational manner, does use vocal variety; speaks loud enough to be easily heard at all times, and/or speaks with some energy].</p>	<p>The speaker utilizes an effective conversational style, and makes exceptional use of vocal variety, utilizes the proper volume throughout the presentation and speaks with energy throughout the speech.</p>

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)
<p><u>Competency Eight:</u> The speaker maintains appropriate eye contact with the entire audience throughout the presentation.</p>	<p>The speaker fails to establish any eye contact with the audience.</p>	<p>The speaker establishes minimal eye contact with the audience, and eye contact is limited to one focal point.</p>	<p>The speaker establishes some eye contact with the audience and the eye contact is limited to more than one focal points.</p>	<p>The speaker establishes an appropriate amount of eye contact with the audience and the focal points are varied.</p>	<p>The speaker establishes an appropriate amount of eye contact with the audience, the focal points are varied and the speaker is intentional in establishing eye contact with the entire audience.</p>
<p><u>Competency Nine:</u> The speaker uses appropriate facial expressions that enhance the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker fails to vary his/her facial expression throughout the presentation and/or the expression is inappropriate and/ or it does not correspond to the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker utilizes very few facial expressions during the presentation and/or some of expressions are inappropriate and/ or they do not correspond to the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses a variety of facial expressions throughout the presentation, but some of the expressions are inappropriate and/or fail to correspond to the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses a variety of facial expressions throughout the presentation and all expressions are appropriate and correspond to the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses a variety of facial expressions and all the expressions are appropriate and correspond to the verbal message. In addition the speaker's facial expressions clearly enhance the verbal message.</p>
<p><u>Competency Ten:</u> The speaker uses physical behaviors (body movement and gestures) that support the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses almost no body movement or gestures during the presentation to support the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses very limited body movements and/or gestures during the presentation and/or the body movement and gestures do not support the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses very little body movement during the presentation but he/she utilizes gestures to support the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses <u>both</u> body movement and gestures during the presentation to enhance the verbal message.</p>	<p>The speaker uses <u>both</u> body movement and gestures during the presentation. The movement and gesture add significantly to the clarity and impact to the message and enhances the verbal message.</p>
<p><u>Competency Eleven:</u> The speaker uses posture that supports the verbal message and enhances the speaker's appearance of confidence and competence.</p>	<p>The speaker's posture significantly detracts from his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker.</p>	<p>The speaker's posture detracts somewhat from his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker.</p>	<p>The speaker's posture supports his/her appearance as a somewhat confident and competent speaker.</p>	<p>The speaker's posture supports his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker.</p>	<p>The speaker uses posture that supports the verbal message and the speaker appears to be a strong, confident and competent speaker.</p>

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year: 2014-2015

Subject Area: Critical Thinking

1. **Identify the Performance-Funding test of general education used by your institution.**

California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)

2. **If you used sampling as permitted by THEC, describe the method used.**

Sampling was not used.

3. **Present the institutional mean scores or sub-scores on the Performance Funding instrument that your institution reviewed to assess students' comprehension and evaluation of arguments. If comparable scores for a peer group are available, also present them.**

MTSU = 16.7

National = 17.1

4. **Summarize your impressions of the results yielded by the THEC test regarding critical thinking. Based upon your interpretations of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of critical thinking skills?**

The CCTST requires students to draw inferences, make interpretations, analyze information, draw warranted inferences, identify claims and reasons, and evaluate the quality of arguments using brief passages, diagrams, and charts. The 2014-15 score for MTSU students (16.7) is slightly below the MTSU score in 2013-14 (16.9) and is below the 2014-15 national average (17.1). In four of the past six years, MTSU students' scores have been above the national average. However, scores have dipped below the national average in each of the past two years.

5. **Do you plan any strategies to correct deficiencies or opportunities for improvement that emerged with respect to critical thinking? If so, describe them below.**

Critical thinking is addressed across the curriculum and in a number of university initiatives, including the following:

- MTSU's new Quality Enhancement Plan (MT Engage) will emphasize the development of critical thinking skills, specifically integrative thinking and critical reflection.

- Faculty across the university have been involved in course redesign in General Education for the past two years, and all redesign models emphasize the adoption of high impact practices that encourage active learning and critical thinking. To date, approximately 40 percent of General Education courses have undergone redesign, including the following:

ENGL 1010 (Expository Writing)
 GEOL 1030 (Introduction to Earth Science)
 HIST 2010 (Survey of US History I)
 COMM 2200 (Fundamentals of Communication)
 BIOL 1110 (General Biology)
 CHEM 1110 (General Chemistry I)
 MATH 1730 (Pre-Calculus)
 ART 1030 (Art Appreciation)
 MUS 1030 (Introduction to Music)
 PS 1010 (Introduction to Global Politics)
 THEA 1030 (Theatre Appreciation)
 HIST 2020 (Survey of US History II)
 ECON 2410 (Principles of Macroeconomics)
 GEOG 2000 (Introduction to Regional Geography)
 GS 2000 (Introduction to Cross-Cultural Experiences)
 MATH 1810 (Applied Calculus I)
 ANTH 2210 (Introduction to World Prehistory)
 MATH 1530 (Applied Statistics)
 MATH 1730 (Pre-Calculus)
 PS 1005 (Introduction to American Politics)
 BIOL 1030/31 (Exploring Life)
 ENGL 1020 (Research and Argumentative Writing)
 MATH 1710 (College Algebra)

- The Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) continues to offer workshops that help faculty incorporate strategies for improving critical thinking. For example, in 2015-16, the LT&ITC will offer workshops on topics such as course redesign for increased student engagement, active learning, experiential learning, Reacting to the Past pedagogy (elaborate role-playing games), etc.
- All General Education courses emphasize the development of critical thinking skills. The three required courses in the Communication category, in particular, provide incoming students with an introduction to the critical and analytical skills necessary for success in college. Small class size in these courses is essential to insure that students receive the individual attention they need to develop these skills. The General Education Committee has recommended to the Provost that class size in the courses in the Communication category not exceed the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of English and the National

Communication Association. The General Education Committee continues to recommend that class size not exceed the guidelines endorsed by professional organizations.

- Critical thinking skills will continue to be emphasized in General Education and in each degree program (see Institutional Effectiveness Reports for the various majors).
- Instructors of UNIV 1010 will continue to assign textbooks that contain a critical thinking component in each chapter.
- Tutoring in the University Writing Center emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills in the writing process. Instructors will continue to encourage students to work with the Center's trained tutors.
- The University Library Research Coach service (which offers students in-depth, one-on-one sessions with a librarian) emphasizes critical thinking in finding and selecting the best books, articles, and database resources for projects, papers, and presentations. Instructors will continue to advise students to use this service.