

MT Engage: MTSU's Quality Enhancement Plan
Report on Years 1 and 2, AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018

MT Engage Executive Summary

Initial Goals and Intended Outcomes

Changes to the QEP and Reasons for Those Changes

QEP Impact on Student Learning and the Learning Environment:

Achievement of Identified Goals and Outcomes

Unanticipated Outcomes

Reflection: Learning from the QEP Experience in Years and 2

NOTE: This report follows the guidelines for the QEP Impact Report that is required as part of MTSU's fifth-year interim reaccreditation report. MT Engage Leadership Team and staff update it annually in preparation for our Impact Report and share it with university colleagues and the public on our MT Engage website and ePortfolio presentation.

Executive Summary
Quality Enhancement Plan
Middle Tennessee State University

MT Engage, Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) Quality Enhancement Plan, seeks to create a culture in which students become actively engaged in their learning. MT Engage will build a campus climate that encourages and supports faculty to teach with high-impact educational practices and create opportunities for students to reflect on and document their own learning.

Student engagement is a priority at MTSU. The University's mission statement stresses the importance of fostering "a student-centered environment conducive to lifelong learning, personal development, and success," and challenging students "through diverse teaching methods and media including educational technology, experiential learning, undergraduate and graduate research, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities." This emphasis is supported by the University's 2015–2025 Academic Master Plan Strategic Direction 1, which aims to "promote engagement that supports learning, scholarship, and student success." The University's *Quest for Student Success* strategic planning document also emphasizes the importance of pedagogies that enhance learning through hands-on learning and strategic use of technology that allows for more classroom interaction. Yet MTSU scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement and the results from student focus groups and faculty surveys demonstrate the need for a renewed, deliberate, and sustained plan to address student engagement on our campus.

In order for students to become more engaged in their learning, faculty must first create opportunities for them to become physically and psychologically involved in productive learning activities. MT Engage will create a support network to help faculty integrate high-impact educational practices into their classroom teaching and supplement student learning with relevant co-curricular activities. These high-impact practices, based on research by George Kuh (2008) and the Association for Colleges and Universities, include learning communities, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, project-based learning, and research, as well as co-curricular activities like attending cultural events, participating in Scholars Week, and community involvement. Faculty who choose to learn about and implement such practices can earn an MT Engage designation for their classes, and students can seek out these engaging learning environments throughout their educational careers at MTSU.

The second key piece of MT Engage is getting students to reflect on and think about their learning. Each MT Engage-designated course will require students to complete at least one assignment that fosters integrative thinking and reflection. This metacognitive process will result in students demonstrating their ability to make connections across multiple contexts and educational experiences and developing a sense of themselves as learners. Examples of this work will be collected in personalized ePortfolios, which will become showcases for students' integration of the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained during their time at MTSU.

MT Engage: MTSU's Quality Enhancement Plan Report on Years 1 and 2, AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018

Initial Goals and Intended Outcomes

MT Engage has two goals. Goal 1 is to foster a culture of engaged learning. This QEP goal aligns with the commitment to engaged teaching and learning embodied in the 2015-2025 Reach to Distinction Academic Master Plan. Goal 2 is to improve student retention, progression, and graduation, which builds on the 2013-2016 Quest for Student Success initiative. The student learning outcome for MT Engage is: students will use integrative thinking and reflection to demonstrate the ability to make connections across multiple contexts and educational experiences. MT Engage courses and the program will achieve this outcome by:

1. Incorporating high-impact pedagogies within courses and through beyond-the-classroom engagement activities and strategies;
2. Challenging students to use integrative thinking and reflection across multiple contexts and educational experiences, and develop an ePortfolio presentation that showcases the integration of knowledge, skills, and abilities gained during their time at MTSU.

Faculty and program staff assess student learning using five indicators drawn from the AAC&U VALUE integrative thinking rubric: connections to experience, connections to discipline, transfer, effective and integrated communication, and self-assessment and reflection. Faculty who teach MT Engage courses have certified that they employ one or more high-impact educational practices, incorporate a beyond-the-classroom experience, and include a signature assignment that requires integrative thinking and reflection and which students place in their ePortfolios on the learning management system, Desire to Learn (D2L). Students use the MT Engage ePortfolio template to compete for scholarships in their sophomore year and cash awards in their senior year.

In addition to the modified AAC&U rubrics that faculty use for signature assignments and the Scholarship Review Committee uses to assess MT Engage ePortfolios, our assessment plan includes data from surveys of students and faculty and on student participation, achievement, retention, and progression.

Changes to the QEP and Reasons for Those Changes

In response to SACSCOC review committee suggestions, the QEP Leadership Team decided on a minimum of two courses for sophomore and two more for senior ePortfolio submissions to increase student access while ensuring assessment of the program rather than individual courses. SACSCOC reviewers also suggested more intentional partnerships with academic advisors, strategic links to other campus programs, and an ePortfolio capstone course. The MT Engage Oversight Committee now includes a college advising staff member, one of several additions to the committee roster for wider representation of campus stakeholders). Rather than creating a separate ePortfolio course at this time, the Major Pathway structure includes adaptation of the MT Engage ePortfolio in departmental capstone courses or other summative assessment practices and accreditation reports to integrate ePortfolio development into students' academic preparation.

Suggestions from faculty guided revisions to the VALUE Integrative Thinking and Reflection Rubric in Fall 2016. AAC&U descriptors (Capstone, Advancing, Milestone, Benchmark, and Developing) replaced numerical scores and faculty revised unclear and negative phrasing in level descriptors. In response to both faculty assessors and the SACSCOC review committee, the Leadership Team endorsed Assessment Coordinator Dr. Scott McDaniel's recommendation to remove the 80% benchmark for all signature assignments and he reported the change to the Oversight Committee in November 2017. The 80% benchmark on the senior e-portfolio evaluation remains for now.

The Pre-Program Survey administered to incoming freshmen in Fall 2016 and 2017 yielded the same result: overconfidence. Instead of establishing a baseline from which to track student growth, approximately 90% of first-time students reported they already can reflect and integrate across all disciplines. The Leadership Team endorsed the Assessment Coordinator's recommendation to discontinue these surveys and he reported the change to the Oversight Committee in November 2017. We will continue to assess student growth with rubric data, end of course surveys, and the sophomore and senior MTSU Survey of Student Engagement.

QEP Impact on Student Learning and the Learning Environment: Achievement of Identified Goals and Outcomes and Unanticipated Outcomes

Initiative 1. MT Engage Foundation Pathway

The MT Engage Foundation Pathway comprises certified lower-division (1000- and 2000-level) courses. MT Engage UNIV 1010 sections expose students to integrative thinking and reflection at the very beginning of their academic careers. In Fall 2016, we exceeded our Year 1 benchmark with 40 percent (17 of 42) of UNIV 1010 sections designated as MT Engage and two MT Engage sections of UNIV 2020 Successful Transitions for transfer students. Year 2 courses remained at the same level. MT Engage added trainings with stipends to reach more UNIV1010 faculty and recognize efforts to incorporate ePortfolio more extensively in the future. Growth in general education and other lower-division courses met or exceeded our lower-division goals for Years 1 and 2, reflecting robust faculty support for engaged learning. We anticipate that MT Engage's Foundation Pathway will be represented in the university's new Quest for Student Success and general education revision.

Initiative 2 MT Engage Major Pathway

Major Pathways provide students with opportunities to practice and apply integrative thinking and reflection skills across multiple courses in their majors. Four programs ran Major Pathway Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in AY 2017-2018: English, Geosciences, Health and Human Performance (Community and Public Health), and Human Sciences (Textiles, Merchandising, and Design; Nutrition). Communication Studies, Marketing (Marketing; Business Education), Psychology, and Social Work submitted successful applications for pathway PLCs in AY 2018-2019.

Initial PLC results indicate that our Major Pathways must accommodate the variety of departmental and program structures. Pathway developers' concern about a lower-division requirement for programs that do not offer such courses led MT Engage staff to

develop proposals for updated program requirements. Staff also recognize the need for continued communication with department leadership and college advisors.

Initiative 3 MT Engage Faculty Development

Faculty development efforts include Summer Institutes, faculty learning communities (FLCs) and workshops in cooperation with the Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC), faculty roundtables, small group trainings, and guest speakers. These are open to all tenured/tenure-track and contingent faculty.

Staff and the Leadership Team annually revise the summer institute agenda in response to faculty evaluations and program development; for example, the 2017 institute revamped the rubric and assessment session and the 2018 institute added time for the course certification workshop. Faculty Learning Communities funded by MT Engage incorporate discussion of MT Engage and encourage participants to certify their courses in the program. FLCs in Year 1 focused on MT Engage and on Interdisciplinary Learning Communities; Year 2 FLCs addressed problem-based learning and teaching in STEM disciplines. MT Engage also funded an LT&ITC Teaching Fellow in Year 2.

The LT&ITC's annual faculty development offerings include MT Engage workshops (MTE Overview, ePortfolio Pedagogy and Practice, and an MTE Faculty Showcase) and additional opportunities such as a workshop on MakerSpace pedagogy and book group on Bret Eynon and Laura Gambino's *High Impact ePortfolio Practice*. Faculty also met for informal roundtable discussions at the LT&ITC and MT Engage office in Years 1 and 2. Response to our guest speakers was excellent: Dr. Melissa Peet, Director of Integrative Learning and Knowledge Management at the University of Michigan's Ross College of Business in 2017 and Dr. Candyce Reynolds, chair of the Educational Leadership and Policy Department at Portland State University, in 2018.

Initiative 4 MT Engage Experiences

Development of the MT Engage Experiences database began in October 2016 in conjunction with the office of Academic and Instructional Technology. The database opened in Summer 2018 with 29 departments and student resources centers represented.

MT Engage Week, which highlights student engagement opportunities on MTSU's campus, took place September 15-23, 2016 and September 25-29, 2017. Based on feedback from colleges and the decreased utilization of the MT Engage Week funds in Year 2, we decided to create a grant support structure in which individual members of colleges or departments apply directly to MT Engage for funding of up to \$1,000.

Year 1 ePortfolio support services focused on creating faculty and student trainings and the formation of an ePortfolio Partners working group. In Year 2, Assistant Director Lexy Denton offered group and individual training at the MT Engage office. Walker Library reallocated its MT Engage funding to an ePortfolio graduate assistant who trains classes and follows up with individual students and continued Tech Coach services. The University Writing Center continued its ePortfolio coordinator graduate assistantship. MT Engage and the Office of Student Success received a Tennessee Board of Regents grant to pilot ePortfolio peer tutoring in AY 2018-2019.

Initiative 5 MT Engage Recognition Program

In Year 2, we saw the first cohort of students eligible to submit sophomore ePortfolios for the MT Engage Scholarship. We identified those students through EAB and ARGOS, clarified the 2.75 GPA requirement as overall combined GPA, and decided to exclude credit earned in high school when calculating eligibility. We received 37 applications, of which 20 were qualified in all areas. The Scholarship Review Committee assessed all 20 ePortfolios and selected the overall winner. Up to five top selections went to colleges to make final selections: 2 awarded in Jones College of Business; 2 awarded in College of Basic and Applied Sciences; 2 awarded in College of Liberal Arts; 2 awarded in College of Media and Entertainment.

The first annual MT Engage Recognition Reception was held in April 2017 for students who had successfully completed one or more MT Engage classes. They received t-shirts and were eligible for door prizes. At the second annual Reception in April 2018 we also recognized scholarship recipients in a formal ceremony featuring University Provost Mark Byrnes, Faye Johnson, and special guest Dr. Candyce Reynolds. The reception also showcased student work from MT Engage classes in the Reading and History Initiative.

The QEP proposal to grant priority registration privileges to a student who has taken any MT Engage course was approved after revisions to require sophomore scholarship eligibility and ePortfolio submission. MT Engage and Records staff coded students for priority registration for the first time in Spring 2018.

Assessment

Assessments of our effectiveness in reaching the program goals come from analysis of information collected by program staff and the offices of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research (IEPR) and Academic and Instructional Technology (see Figure 1). MT Engage staff conduct an electronic survey of incoming freshmen and track students who enroll in MT Engage-designated courses across their academic careers using the IEPR survey software and the University's student information systems (RaiderNet, Student Success Campus, and ARGOS). The Registrar's Office codes MT Engage courses on RaiderNet with the attribute AMTE. MT Engage has provided paid internships for graduate students to create dashboards and other visualizations of our assessment data. IEPR staff have develop other dashboards that compare students who have taken MT Engage courses with a sample of comparable students who have not taken MT Engage courses. In 2018, MT Engage and IEPR staff collaborated on the university's Quality Assurance plan, set up an MT Engage report in the university's program assessment software (Compliance Assist), and experimented with conducting surveys using other Campus Labs software (Course Evaluations and Baseline).

Indirect Measures

20-item Pre-Program Survey and Student Engagement Surveys

The QEP specified that each cohort of students would complete pre-program surveys to establish baselines: a Pre-Program Freshman Survey on Integrative and Reflective Thinking and the freshman version of the MTSU Student Engagement Survey (QEP Appendices G and K). All incoming students at CUSTOMS orientations complete the

Freshman SES survey for the university, to which MT Engage added seven questions from the pre-program survey in the summers of 2016 and 2017. MT Engage then sent the MT Engage Pre-Program Survey to incoming Freshmen before they began classes. As mentioned above, an overwhelming majority responded that they can apply, reflect, and integrate their knowledge. Excited students who were just accepted into college are not likely to say they are “bad” at anything. Administering the surveys cost a significant amount of money to incentivize student participation only to generate unrealistic data and thus we have discontinued both pre-program surveys.

To address Program Goal 1 (foster a culture of engaged learning), the QEP had an annual benchmark that at least 80% of students completing end of course surveys would agree or strongly agree to the statement: *I was more engaged in this course than in other courses I took this semester*. Based on data collected for Fall 2016-Spring 2018 (n = 4860), 69% of students marked agree or strongly agree. We have recommended a slight change to the wording of this indicator: “More engaged in this course than other non-MT Engage courses.” Staff also plan to add a question about how many MT Engage courses a student is taking that semester.

Figure 1. QEP Benchmarks: Projected/Actual in Years 1 and 2

Program Goal 1: University Data Measures F-Q	Year 0: 2015– 2016	Year 1: 2016– 2017	Year 2: 2017– 2018	Year 3: 2018– 2019	Year 4: 2019– 2020	Year 5: 2020– 2021
F: Number of faculty participating in learning communities and summer institutes for MT Engage (assessed annually) (5% increase/year)	40	42/62*	44/79^	46	48	50
F: Number of faculty attending MT Engage one-hour workshops (assessed annually)	20	25/79+	30/78+	35	40	45
G: Number of faculty offering approved MT Engage courses each year (assessed annually) (30 faculty increase/year)		40/79	70/116	100	130	160
H: Number of students enrolled in MT Engage courses each year (assessed annually) (450 student increase/year)		1140/ 4098	1590/ 7495	2040	2490	2490
I: Number of students submitting MT Engage ePortfolios at 2-year mark (assessed at Years 2, 3, 4, and 5) (10% increase/year)			100/20	110	121	133
J: Number of students graduating from MT Engage program (assessed at years 4 & 5) (10% increase/year)					70	77
K: Number of colleges offering courses (assessed annually)		3/8	4/8	4	5	5
L: Number of departments offering lower- division courses (assessed annually)		6/13	8/18	10	12	14
M: Number of departments offering upper-division courses (assessed at years 3, 4, & 5)		0/10	0/14	10	11	12
N: Number of MT Engage Major Pathways (assessed at years 3, 4, & 5)				5	6	7
O: Number of different MT Engage general- education courses offered (assessed annually)		5/13	7/14	9	11	13
P: Number of sections of MT Engage courses offered (assessed annually)		63/204	88/361	113	138	1633
Q: Number of different MT Engage courses offered (assessed annually)		9/45	14/94	21	24	27

*Includes all FLCs completed in AY 2016-2017, including those for Spring and Fall 2016.

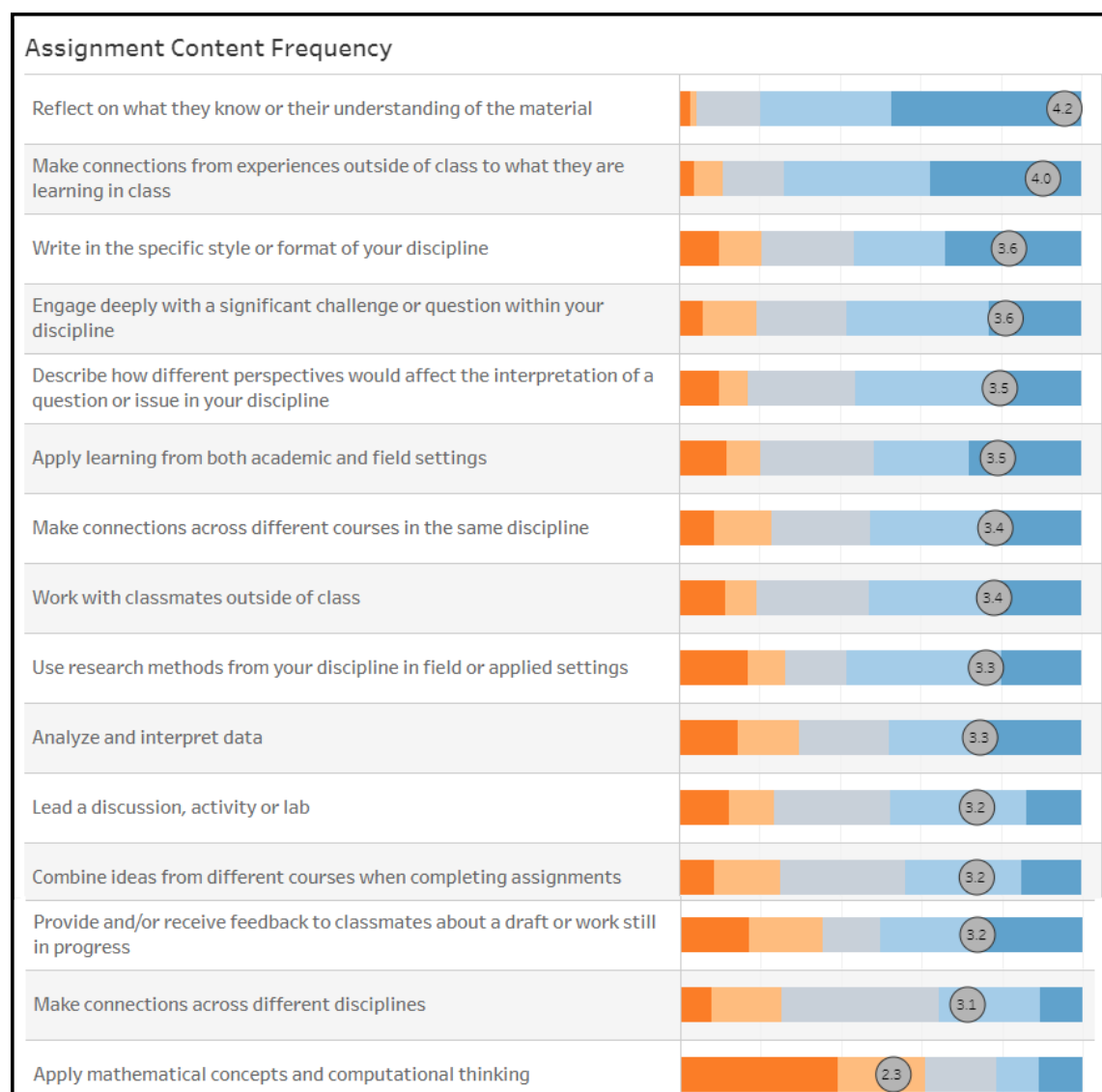
+Number includes LT&ITC/ITD ePortfolio hands-on workshops but does not include Melissa Peet's faculty workshop attendance (27 + MTE staff 4) in Year 1 or Candyce Reynolds's workshops (34 + MTE staff 4) in Year 2.

^Includes Major Pathway Professional Learning Communities (30).

Faculty Activity Survey

In a survey of faculty activities prior to their involvement in MT Engage, faculty were asked to rate the assignment content frequency within their classes (Figure 2). The top 3 were reflect on what they know or their understanding of the material (4.2/5), make connections from experiences outside of class to what they are learning in class (4.0/5), and write in the specific style or format of your discipline (3.6/5). Most of the remaining assignments are roughly equal in weight, with the exception of apply mathematical concept and computational thinking (2.3/5). Since many MT Engage courses do not have quantitative elements to them (e.g. English 1010), it is not surprising that this item has low frequency. While the mathematical concepts is an outlier for good reason, other indicators that tend toward the bottom are more interesting: making connections across disciplines (3.1), provide and receive feedback about draft work still in progress (3.2), combining ideas from different courses when completing assignments (3.2), and lead a discussion, activity or a lab (3.2). MT Engage recognizes these indicators as components of integrative learning and seeks to help faculty develop integrative learning in their courses. This survey data shows the need for MT Engage to assist faculty in developing practical strategies for integrative learning.

Figure 2. Faculty Activity Survey: Assignment Content Frequency

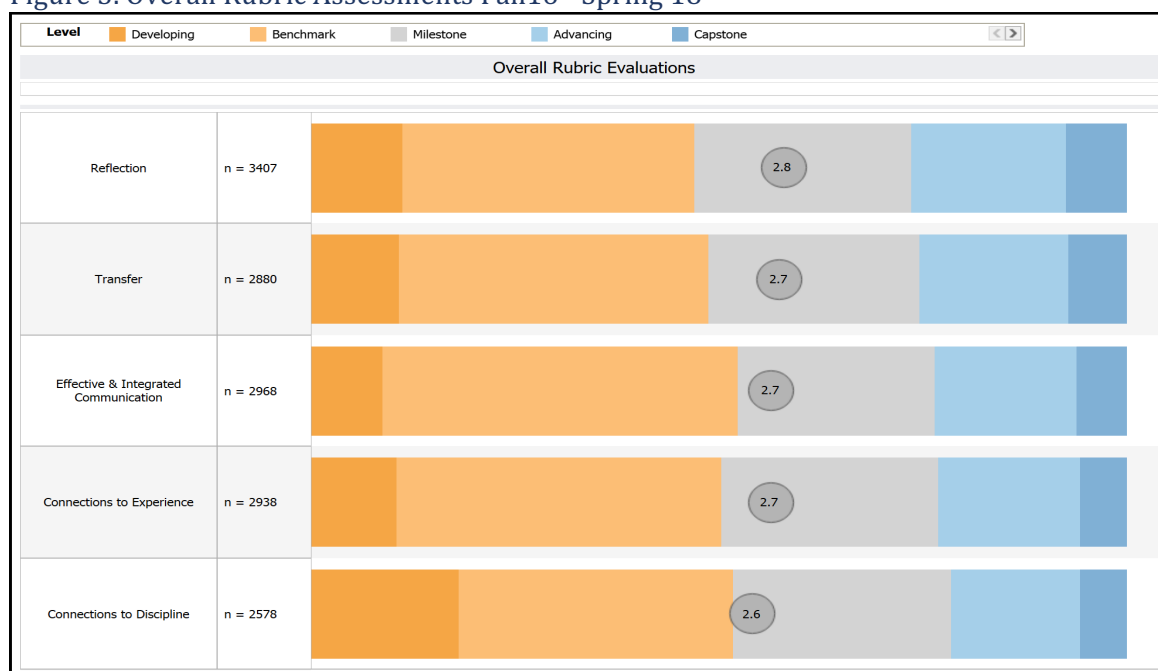


Direct Measures

Integrative Thinking and Reflection Rubric

This rubric was adapted from the AAC&U Value Rubric on integrative learning. Faculty use it to assess the course's signature assignment on the five indicators of integrative thinking and reflection. All faculty assess the reflection indicator (n = 3407); faculty choose at least two of the other four indicators for assessment, hence the different n's on each indicator. Although a paper version of the rubric is available, it is intended for faculty to use the online rubric grading capabilities of D2L. The ITD office runs a report to capture the data from D2L. The results are summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Overall Rubric Assessments Fall16 - Spring 18



As expected, students in lower division courses (1000 and 2000-level) have noticeably lower scores for each indicator than those in upper-division courses (3000 and 4000-level). The graph in Figure 4 shows the rubric data when the reflection indicator is selected. We can see how the levels appear when split by grade earned in the course, classification, and course level. As expected, the higher the grade earned, the higher the average reflection score (A [2.9], B [2.7], C [2.3], D [2.1] and F [2.0]). Similarly, as one would expect, as students' classification goes up from Freshman to Senior, so does the average reflection score, from 2.3 to 3.4. Upper-division courses also see a marked increase in the average reflection score, 1000-level courses getting an average of 2.3, while 4000-level courses have an average reflection score of 3.6.

We have also been running some preliminary statistical tests to look for correlations and statistical differences between groups (Figure 5). For example, we were interested in how strong an association existed between the grade earned in a course and the score on different rubric indicators. There was a negative correlation ($r \approx -0.2$) for each indicator.

Figure 4. Overall “Reflection” Rubric Grade Earned Fall 16 – Spring 18



Figure 5. Grade/Indicator Correlations

Correlation values between grade and criterion level	
Connections to Discipline - .20791	Reflection - .21595
Connections to Experience - .19726	Transfer -.18156
Effective & Integrated Communication - .21189	Overall - .20425

Reflection: Learning from the QEP Experience in Years 1 and 2.

Courses and enrollments have enjoyed a steep increase over projections, demonstrating that faculty are already invested in high-impact practices and thus validating a strength identified in the QEP. Similarly, both Summer Institutes attracted many more faculty than anticipated. These welcome experiences suggest that course offerings may hit a plateau in the QEP's middle years, which invites us to carefully think about how to maintain faculty and student interest. The relatively flat participation in faculty development workshops suggests the need for revamping our offerings and providing even more opportunities for faculty to interact with each other on course and assignment development. Given that highly engaged faculty are those most likely to revise and adapt courses in their own process of reflection and assessment, MT Engage might consider inviting faculty to update their course certifications and return to the summer institute for short training updates as done in 2018.

Major Pathway recruitment in Year 3 may draw upon faculty interest in offering upper-division MT Engage courses: 68 upper-division course certifications from fourteen departments have been filed as of the end of the Spring 2018 semester. Clustering of Major Pathways in the College of Behavioral and Health Studies (four of eight) compared to the clustering of MT Engage course offerings in the College of Liberal Arts and the Jones College of Business suggests that future pathway recruitment might focus on departments in the latter colleges.

Launching a QEP that includes ePortfolio in the same semester that the D2L ePortfolio launched university-wide meant that staff, faculty, and students faced a steep learning curve. One result was that we had fewer than expected submissions for the inaugural sophomore scholarship. To improve communication and collaboration about ePortfolio support for faculty and students, we created an ePortfolio Partners working group comprised of representatives of Walker Library, the University Writing Center, the LT&ITC, and our program and successfully competed for a grant to pilot ePortfolio peer tutoring in Year 3. Conversations with students who did and did not submit ePortfolios this year will inform our scholarship campaign in Year 3. For example, we can increase class visits and direct marketing to students and work more closely with faculty and college advisors who can personally invite eligible individuals to submit applications.

Our experiences with the scholarship, faculty development workshops and roundtables, the Summer Institute, and data from the Faculty Activity Survey and Quality Assurance planning documents all demonstrate the need for increasing our advocacy of integrative learning and reflection and ePortfolio. As in previous years, we will review and revise our faculty development programs, including the Summer Institute, to create significant opportunities for signature assignment design, course certification workshops, and multi-track (beginner, advanced) ePortfolio trainings for both faculty and students.