Middle Tennessee State University General Education Competencies Assessment Report 2016 -2017

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes
Subject Area: Mathematics
Academic Year: 2016-2017

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 1,586 students were assessed in the academic year (1,124 in fall 2016 and 462 in spring 2017). Results of all 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 2012 – 2016 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% is deemed superior,
   - Between 60% and 84%, inclusive, is deemed satisfactory, and
   - Less than 60% is deemed 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 (total = 16) 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 (total = 16) 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 (total = 16) 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 (total = 12) 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 Outcome to be Assessed		Superior	Satisfactory	Superior or Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
		# and %	# and %	# and %	# and %
1. Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.		n=259 (16.3%)	n=906 (57.1%)	n=1165 (73.4%)	n=421 (26.5%)
2. Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.		n=226 (14.2%)	n=851 (53.7%)	n=1077 (67.9%)	n=563 (35.4%)
3. Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.		n=226 (14.2%)	n=851 (53.7%)	n=1077 (66.9%)	n=563 (35.4%)
4. Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.		n=244 (15.4%)	n=914 (57.6%)	n=1158 (73.1%)	n=423(26.7%)
5. Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.		n=438 (27.6%)	n=876 (55.2%)	n=1314 (82.8%)	n=278 (17.5%)

Table caption (top of table): *Mathematics Learning Outcomes, Academic Year 2016-17*
N = 1,586

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 table below shows results of AY 2016-2017 for percentages of unsatisfactory responses on each of the five TBR mathematics learning outcomes compared to data from three previous academic years:

TBR Mathematics Learning Outcomes	% Unsatisfactory AY 2013-2014	% Unsatisfactory AY 2014-2015	% Unsatisfactory AY 2015-2016	% Unsatisfactory AY 2016-2017
Outcome 1	25.5	25.7	28.9%	26.5
Outcome 2	35.1	35.5	34.6%	35.4
Outcome 3	35.1	35.5	34.6%	35.4
Outcome 4	26.6	26.6	31.3%	26.7
Outcome 5	16.8	17.9	18.6%	17.5

For all learning outcomes 1-5, there were no significant changes from the previous academic year in the percentages of students whose exam score ranked Unsatisfactory. The assessment indicates that results for student learning outcomes show slight improvement in Learning Outcomes 1, 4 and 5 for AY 2016- 217 in comparison to the AY 2015-2016 and AY 2014-2015 results.

Analyzing the data in more detail, we found particularly low percentages of correct responses for questions 4 (29.9%), 16 (33.3%), and 18 (42.0%). All three of these questions are assessed for Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4. Learning Outcome 5 does not include these three questions in its assessment which could account for the lower percentages of Unsatisfactory responses for Outcome 5 compared to the other four learning outcomes. The committee will be developing a new departmental final examination and will pay particular attention to Questions 4, 16, and 18. The new final exam will be used starting Fall 2017.

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). Less 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.

Several strategies have been taken to provide a more consistent program for general education courses—

- 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 documents have been updated to reflect the MTSU Accessibility Plan.

- 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. Syllabus includes link to Tutoring Center in James Walker Library.

- The department's MS GTAs are currently supervised by Dr. Rebecca Calahan. Supervision of GTAs in the Ph.D. program and the COMS 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 the programs of the graduate students.

- 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.

  - ❖ In F2016, 48 on-campus sections were taught (25-K sections & 23-non K sections) by 22 different faculty members. For the 23 non-K sections, no section was taught by a tenured faculty member; for the 25 K sections, 4 were taught by tenured faculty.

  - ❖ In S2017, 27 on-campus sections were taught (17-K sections & 10-non K sections) by 14 different faculty members. The non-K sections no section was taught by a tenured faculty member; for the 17 K sections, 2 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.

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, MATH 1810 and MATH 1730 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. The development of a course community for MATH 1710 remains a goal of the department.

- 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 addition, tutoring for MATH 1010, 1530, 1630, and 1710 is provided in the Walker Library, extending tutoring services into the evening and weekend hours. The Mathematics Department continues to offer tutoring in Calculus and Pre-calculus in KOM. In addition to the tutoring labs, 11 of 20 sections of MATH 1730, 11 of 17 sections of MATH 1910, and all of the sections of MATH 1410 and 1420 are utilizing Supplemental Instructors this fall. The University Studies Department offers tutoring for MATH 1010-K, 1710-K, and 1530-K in the KOM 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 2016-2017

Subject Area: Oral Communication

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

The course that was used for the assessment of oral communication is COMM 2200. It is a class designed to examine the processes that underlie human communication. Students are required to give individual speeches to fulfill the core requirements of this particular academic offering.

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 345 students ($N = 345$) were assessed in the current analysis. The majority of the students who were assessed identified as females (54.8%) while males accounted for a minority portion of the sample (45.2%). The mean age for the students who were assessed was 20.3 years of age.

A stratified sampling procedure that was comprised of four steps was used to assess oral communication. First, the 57 on-ground sections of COMM 2200 that were offered during the Spring of 2017 semester were divided by the strata of "time of day" (i.e., morning classes which run from 8:00AM-12:25PM, afternoon classes which run from 12:40PM-5:35PM, and evening classes which run from 6:00PM-9:00PM). Second, a random selection of 50% of the classes from the first strata (e.g., morning classes which run from 8:00AM-12:25PM) were selected. Third, a random selection of 50% of the classes from the second strata (e.g., afternoon classes which run from 12:40PM-5:35PM) were then selected. Fourth, a random selection of 50% of the classes were then selected from the third strata (e.g., evening classes which run from 6:00PM-9:00PM). This process resulted in 29 different sections of COMM 2200 being included in the present sample.

The method of selecting student work involved two evaluators reporting to the 29 selected sections to complete a discrete on-ground assessment of student speeches during actual class sessions in which persuasive speeches were taking place. The two trained evaluators were full-time temporary instructors of COMM 2200 who previously served as evaluators in the 2015 and the 2016 general education oral communication competency assessment. The evaluators were re-trained in February of 2017. The re-training involved rating sample speeches from a departmental dropbox, discussing the utilized rubric, witnessing the sampling procedure, and assigning these evaluators to the 29 selected sections that were incorporated into the present analysis.

The percentage of student work that was assessed was 100% of the 29 selected sections that were included in this analysis. Put differently, all of the persuasive speeches that occurred in the 29 selected sections were assessed.

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 answer to this question is yes. Significant changes were made with regard to the sampling procedure. Moderate changes were made in terms of how the data was collected.

The sampling procedure that was used in the 2015-2016 assessment was a purposive sampling method that was used to accommodate the previous coordinator of COMM 2200. The sampling

method that was used in the 2016-2017 was stratified sampling. The rationale for changing from purposive sampling to stratified sampling was that stratified sampling is typically designed to secure data that is more representative than purposive sampling (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000).

Moderate changes were also made with regard to the procedures that were used for data collection. More specifically, the process of videotaping speeches was eliminated in the current assessment. Video cameras were an integral portion of previous oral communication assessments because persuasive speeches used to be recorded in class and were then independently rated by the evaluators during the summer months. The rationale for eliminating the process of video recording student speeches (in lieu of evaluators completing a live-in class evaluation) was due to a lack of resources. Put simply, the majority of the video cameras for our department are not functional. The two functional cameras that are currently possessed by our department are not enough to disperse amongst the 14 full-time temporary instructors of COMM 2200 in the Spring of 2017 who typically have persuasive speeches during concurrent calendar dates.

In summation, changes were made from the previous assessment in order to facilitate the collection of more representative data and because of a lack of available resources.

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.

(See Table 1 on the Following Page)

Table 1. Oral Communication Competencies for 2017

PRESENTATIONAL COMPETENCIES
2017 Department of Communication Studies and Organizational Communication

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)
TBR Outcome I: *Competency One:* 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.
Average score: *M* = 3.59 (*N*=345)	**4 (1.16%)**	**65 (18.83%)**	**101 (29.28%)**	**74 (21.45%)**	**101 (29.28%)**
TBR Outcome II: Competency Two: The speaker uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation.	The speech is clearly not persuasive and/or fails to effectively use a persuasive organizational pattern that is appropriate for the topic, and audience.	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].	The speech is persuasive; the speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern with some errors or omissions, and some arguments may be deficient	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.	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.
Average score: *M* = 3.52 (*N*=345)	**9 (2.61%)**	**54 (15.65%)**	**100 (28.99%)**	**114 (33.04%)**	**68 (19.71%)**
TBR Outcome III. Competency Three: 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.
Average score: M = 3.70 (*N*=345)	**0 (0%)**	**49 (14.20%)**	**89 (25.80%)**	**126 (36.52%)**	**81 (23.48%)**

TBR Outcome IV: Competency Four: The speaker uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion. Language is persuasive. Correct grammar, diction, and syntax are used.	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. Grammar and pronunciation are incorrect and/or distracting.	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. The language attempts to be persuasive but sounds more informative. Grammar, syntax, and diction are not effective.	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. The language is persuasive to an extent but borders on informative. Grammar, syntax, and diction are effective.	The speaker uses language that is clear, vivid, and appropriate. The presentation is devoid of inappropriate slang or jargon. Language is persuasive throughout the entire speech. Grammar, syntax, and diction are used to emphasize points.	The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, appropriate, and the speaker uses parallel sentence structure and/or repetition etc. Language is persuasive, compelling, and clear throughout the entire speech. Grammar, syntax, and diction are used to emphasize points.
Average score: M = 3.95 (N=345)	**4 (1.16%)**	**17 (4.93%)**	**85 (24.64%)**	**124 (35.94%)**	**115 (33.33%)**
TBR Outcome V: Competency Five: The speaker demonstrates the ability to effectively utilize material gathered from multiple sources. .	The speaker fails to include any source documentation in the presentation.	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].	The speaker incorporates a minimum of four 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]	The speaker incorporates a minimum of four sources in the presentation; the sources appear to be credible, and the source documentation is not deficient [a variety of sources is utilized].	The speaker incorporates more than four sources in the presentation; the sources are clearly credible, and the source documentation is not deficient.
Average score: M = 3.49 (N=345)	**17 (4.93%)**	**103 (29.86%)**	**47 (13.62%)**	**50 (14.49%)**	**128 (37.10%)**

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 emergent data that was reported in item 4 has led to a number of different interpretations and conclusions. It is in the following sections that a breakdown of each outcome is provided along with a section that highlights overall interpretations and conclusions.

- **Outcome I**: The first outcome concentrated on the opening segment of a speech. Findings indicated that 80.01% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher for the first outcome. More specifically, the results revealed that 29.28% of students ($N = 101$) were evaluated as fair, 21.45% of students ($N = 74$) were evaluated as good, and 29.28% of students ($N = 101$) were evaluated as excellent. It was at the other end of the spectrum that 19.99% of students were evaluated as inadequate or severely deficient. An inadequate assessment was applied by evaluators to 18.83% of the student ($N = 65$) speeches and an assessment of severely deficient was applied by evaluators to 1.16% of the student ($N = 4$) speeches.

  - The results from Outcome I are very positive. Comparatively speaking, an upward trend was observed for Outcome I from the previous assessment. For example, it was in the 2016 assessment that 73.4% of the assessed speeches were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher whereas it was in the 2017 assessment that 80.01% of the assessed speeches were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. Indeed, these results are quite positive yet they need to be appropriately tempered. The increase that occurred on this outcome is likely a byproduct of using a larger and more representative sample size from the previous year. No additional training or emphasis on improving the opening segment of a speech was communicated to the instructors of COMM 2200 during the most recent academic year. Put differently, the increase that was observed for Outcome I was probably a function of using a larger data set that paints a more accurate picture of what has actually been occurring in the opening segment of student speeches in recent years.

- **Outcome II:** The second outcome concentrated on using an organizational pattern that was persuasive in nature. Results indicated that 81.74% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher for the second outcome. That is, the findings from this analysis illustrated that 28.99% of students ($N = 100$) were evaluated as fair, while 33.04% of students ($N = 114$) were evaluated as good, and 19.71% of students ($N = 68$) were evaluated as excellent. In contrast, a total of 18.26% of students were evaluated as inadequate or severely deficient. The breakdown reveals that evaluators assigned the label of inadequate for Outcome II to 15.65% of the student ($N = 54$) speeches and an assessment of severely deficient was assigned by evaluators to 2.61% of the student ($N = 9$) speeches.

  - The results from Outcome II are outstanding. A comparison to data from the previous assessment for Outcome II demonstrated that 67.4% of students were evaluated as fair or higher in 2016 while data from the current assessment for Outcome II demonstrated that 81.74% of students were evaluated as fair or higher in 2017. The observed increase that occurred on Outcome II (as well as an Outcome IV) are likely to have occurred because of the re-training session that occurred with the evaluators who participated in this assessment. It was during this re-training session that the evaluators were instructed to make a concentrated effort to listen for (and award) key buzzwords that are typically consistent with students using an organizational speech pattern that is persuasive. For instance, the words "problem(s)" and "solution(s)" are staples in a healthy amount of good persuasive presentations at the undergraduate level. All things considered, the concentrated effort of evaluators to listen for and appropriately award students on the rubric for using language choices that are typically found in good persuasive speech patterns is a likely reason why there was an observed increase on this particular outcome.

- **Outcome III:** The third outcome for this study looked at the use of appropriate supporting materials. The findings for the third outcome indicated that 85.8% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. A further breakdown revealed that 25.80% of students ($N =89$) were evaluated as fair, while 36.52% of the students ($N = 126$) were evaluated as good, and 23.48% of students ($N = 81$) were evaluated as excellent. Additional data for the third outcome found that 14.20% of students ($N = 49$) were evaluated as inadequate. No students ($N = 0$) were evaluated as severely deficient.

  - The findings from Outcome III are also good. The 2016 data for the third outcome found that 72.6% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher whereas the 2017 data for the third outcome found that 85.8% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. This pronounced increased can be partially attributed to an information literacy librarian (Mr. Jason Vance) giving a presentation on library resources at the Spring of 2017 meeting for the instructors of COMM 2200. It was during this presentation that Mr. Vance illustrated new library resources for accessing supporting materials for the speeches of students. No library personnel addressed the COMM 2200 instructors in meetings concentrated on supporting material resources in the previous academic year. In short, the 30-minute presentation on the supporting materials by Mr. Jason Vance of the James Walker Library helped move the performance on Outcome III in a positive direction.

- **Outcome IV:** The fourth outcome for this study looked at language criteria such as appropriate grammar, diction, and syntax. It was for the fourth outcome that the emergent data indicated that 93.91% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair for higher. The specifics for the fourth outcome illustrated that 24.64% of students ($N =85$) were evaluated as fair, while 35.94% of the students ($N = 124$) were evaluated as good, and 33.33% of students ($N = 115$) were evaluated as excellent. The findings also revealed that 6.09% of students were evaluated as inadequate or lower. Specifically, 4.93% of students ($N = 17$) were evaluated as inadequate and 1.16% of students ($N = 4$) were evaluated as severely deficient.

  - The results from Outcome IV are not surprising. Direct comparisons between the 2016 assessment data and the 2017 assessment data highlight an increase in that 87.4% of students were evaluated as fair or higher during the 2016 assessment whereas 93.91% of students were evaluated as fair or higher during the 2017 assessment. It is the opinion of the author that high scores were procured on this outcome because it is the least rigorous of the five outcomes being assessed. A review of the content within each rating reveals that speaking in a clear manner with appropriate language are enough to secure a score of fair or higher. On the other hand, students would need to utilize inappropriate or offensive language to be rated as severely deficient. While this criterion is arguably the most subjective of the assessment outcomes, students would need to be socially oblivious or make a calculated effort to be inappropriate in order to obtain a low score on this outcome based on how it currently reads. All things considered, the evaluated students did very well on Outcome IV.

- **Outcome V:** The fifth outcome for the oral communication assessment focused on gathering and using multiple sources. Results indicated that 65.21% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher. A further rundown for the fifth outcome revealed that 13.62% of students ($N = 47$) were evaluated as fair, while 14.49% of students ($N = 50$) were evaluated as good, and 37.10% of students ($N = 128$) were evaluated as excellent. At the same time, the evaluators found that 34.79% of students were inadequate or lower. That is, evaluators rated 29.86% of students ($N= 103$) as inadequate and evaluated 4.93% of students ($N = 17$) as severely deficient.

- o The findings from Outcome V illustrate a positive trend in the data. The 2016 data for the fifth outcome found that only 39% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher whereas the 2017 data for the fifth outcome found that 65.21% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. Outcome V was a major point of emphasis during the Spring of 2017 semester. It was adamantly stated in a January of 2017 meeting that COMM 2200 instructors should emphasize making sure their students use at least six sources in her or his speech. As alluded to previously, having Mr. Jason Vance discuss the fifth outcome at this January meeting was also beneficial. It should also be noted that the January of 2017 meeting with COMM 2200 instructors ended with the coordinator of COMM 2200 stating: "the main takeaway from this meeting is to have your students verbally state at least six sources in her or his speech." The importance of having at least six sources in a speech was also reiterated in a March of 2017 meeting and reminders were embedded in group e-mails that were sent by the COMM 2200 coordinator. In short, belaboring the point that students should use at least six sources in her or his speech to the instructors of COMM 2200 was the most likely reason why a pronounced increase occurred for Outcome V.

Overall Interpretation and Analysis

The overall analysis of the emergent data for the 2017 oral communication competency assessment is very good. Increases from the previous year were observed on all five of the assessment outcomes. The increases on the five aforementioned outcomes varied from small to large. Please find that the following paragraphs appropriately discuss overall and broader interpretations of the emergent data.

There are three overall interpretations as to why the data improved and they should all be noted in context. First, it is noteworthy to mention that a conversion process began within the Department of Communication Studies and Organizational Communication during the 2016-2017 academic year. Technically speaking, the ongoing conversion process that is unfolding within the department is resulting in full-time temporary job lines (e.g., current COMM 2200 instructors with master's degrees) being converted to tenure track job lines (e.g., newly employed assistant professors with a PhD) in order to fulfill accreditation guidelines. Non-technically speaking, the employment of a healthy number of our COMM 2200 instructors is coming to an end because they do not possess a terminal degree. The fear of not being retained has likely inspired some of the COMM 2200 instructors to alter their teaching efforts as it pertains to student learning outcomes. While student learning outcomes were not used by the department to determine which COMM 2200 instructors were retained or not retained in the most recent year, the perception and prevailing thought that student learning outcomes on this assessment would be incorporated into employment retention decisions was a likely catalyst that resulted in some of instructors of COMM 2200 pushing their students to perform better in her or his speeches. Along a related line, it could also be argued that a desire to impress the new department chair who began in August of 2016 was another driving factor which caused some COMM 2200 instructors to focus more on teaching efforts as it pertains to assessment outcomes. Collectively speaking, it would seem that employment motivations and social desirability factors led some COMM 2200 instructors to alter their teachings in the hopes of inducing higher scores for their students on this assessment.

A second reason why the data improved in the 2017 general education assessment improved is because the same rubric was utilized. The oral communication rubric for assessment has undergone a number of different changes during the past 6 years. Some of the changes in recent years include switching from a 3-point Likert scale to a 5-point Likert scale, altering the evaluative content for each criterion, as well as turnover with regards to the individual evaluators

who are/were administering the rubric for the oral communication competency assessment. The fact that instructors of COMM 2200 did not have to familiarize themselves with a new rubric during the 2016-2017 academic year likely produced a positive skew in the data for all of the five outcomes of interest. Moreover, employing the same evaluators for the past two years was also beneficial in terms of the observed results because it allowed the evaluators to develop an increased familiarity with the same oral communication competency rubric.

A third reason why the general education assessment data increased as a collective whole is because more of an emphasis was placed on assessment during the 2016-2017 in comparison to the 2015-2016 year. As hinted at previously, assessment was a recurring and highly developed discussion point in meetings with instructors who teach COMM 2200 during the 2016-2017 academic year. The reimplementation of having an MTSU literacy librarian speak in a meeting also benefitted the data. The ongoing assessment dialogue in meetings and over e-mail served the purpose of keeping oral communication competency assessment at the fore of the thought processes for instructors who taught COMM 2200 during the Spring of 2017 semester. When taken together, the perceived fear of individual employment not being retained because of poor assessment data from her or his students' speeches, the utilization of the same rubric and evaluators, and an ongoing dialogue about assessment were the three main reasons why increases were observed on the five assessment outcomes.

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

The best strategy to improve deficient data from Outcome V which illustrated that 34.79% of students were inadequate or severely deficient in terms of utilizing multiple sources is to establish a speaking center on campus. A speaking center is an on-ground tutoring center in which students meet with trained tutors on methods for improving her or his speech. This type of tutoring offers more individualized attention and one-on-one time for students who are having a difficult time locating a sufficient number of sources for her or his speech. Establishing a speaking center on campus in which students are offered incentives for receiving tutoring is likely to improve all of the assessment data that could be interpreted as deficient.

A second strategy that could be used to improve deficient data from Outcome I which found that the introduction of almost 20% of student speeches were inadequate or severely deficient would be to encourage instructors of COMM 2200 to teach the introduction of a persuasive speech in a different manner. The textbook that is currently used for COMM 2200 is The Art of Public Speaking by Stephen E. Lucas. While this textbook is the industry standard for public speaking, it breaks a single chapter into beginning and ending a speech. This fragmentation from the chapter on organizing the body of a speech is a bit choppy and potentially problematic when considering how public speaking is taught within the context of a classroom lecture. That is, discussing introductions in one week, lecturing on the body of a speech in a separate week, and then focusing on conclusions in a separate week might result in disorganized notes for less attentive students. It would perhaps benefit Outcome I if instructors of COMM 2200 lectured on what to do in the introduction, body, and conclusion of a speech within a single class session. In other words, it would be through a consolidated lecture in which a student speaker learns what to do in the introduction, body, and conclusion of her or his speech (in a single class session) that students could get a clearer picture of the bigger public speaking puzzle.

A third strategy that could be implemented to improve deficiencies in how the data emerged would be to incorporate another evaluator into the assessment process. This is vital. It was in previous years that three trained evaluators were used to assess student speeches but it was in the most recent year that only two trained evaluators were used to assess student speeches. While a

lessened amount of resources caused the decrease in evaluators, this reduction in evaluators resulted in a number of logistical issues in terms of conflicting times and dates in which the evaluations could take place. Having only two evaluators (who were full-time temporary instructors of COMM 2200) was also quite demanding on the time demands of these evaluators. Along a similar line, the compensation that was awarded to the 2017 evaluators was not proportionate to the increased amount of time demands that were placed on these individuals. All things considered, establishing a speaking center on campus, encouraging COMM 2200 instructors to teach the opening segment of speeches differently, and having three evaluators are different strategies that could help eliminate some of the deficiencies in the data.

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

The answer to this question is yes. We eliminated the use of video cameras which was highlighted as a deficiency in the 2016 oral communication competency assessment report. In addition, we changed the sampling method which was deficient in the 2016 assessment. We also proactively stressed the importance of having a minimum of six sources in student speeches to improve data for outcome V which was our lowest rated outcome in the 2016 assessment. In summation, it was through the implementation of these plans that the oral communication assessment data increased on all five outcomes for the 2016-2017 academic year.

References

Frey, L., Botan, C., & Kreps, G. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Results of Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes
Academic Year 2016-2017
Subject Area: Writing
English Department
Middle Tennessee State University
Report Drafted by Dr. Aleka A. Blackwell, English

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.**
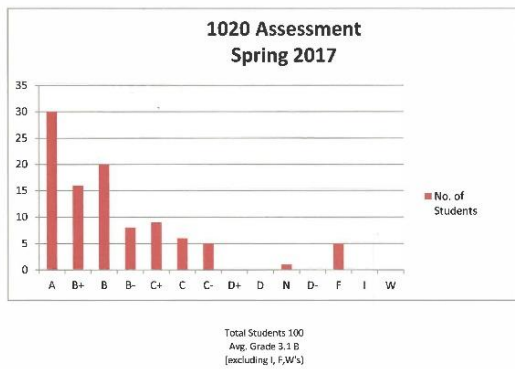
Sampling process
A random sample of 150 students was drawn from the population of 2,172 students enrolled in ENGL 1020 in spring 2017. These students' 1020 instructors were instructed to submit the most researched essay written by these students. The sample included essays from sections of 1020 taught by 44 different faculty. Of the 150 students in the sample, 128 completed the course and submitted their final essays to the department. The 128 essays were numbered and anonymized for both student-author and instructor. Of those, 100 essays were randomly selected to be scored by two scorers each.
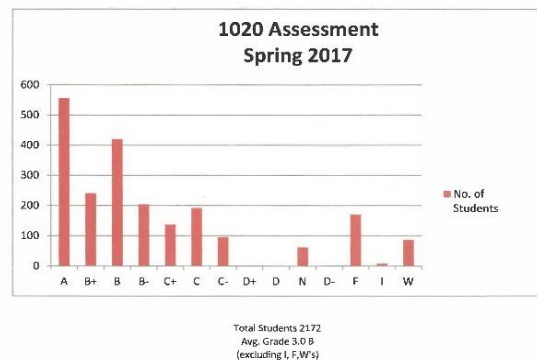
Comparison of sample to population
To ensure that the sample was representative of the population, we conducted a chi-square analysis of the 1020 final course grade distributions of the sample in comparison to the population. The course grade distributions of the sample and of the population were statistically comparable (i.e., not statistically significantly different) (χ^2 = 7.99, *p* = .4345).

SAMPLE

POPULATION

1020 Assessment
Spring 2017

Total Students 100
Avg. Grade 3.1 B
[excluding I, F,W's]

1020 Assessment
Spring 2017

Total Students 2172
Avg. Grade 3.0 B
(excluding I, F,W's)

Scoring
Eleven English faculty representing the six faculty ranks in the department (GTA, adjunct instructor, full-time temporary lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor)[1] were recruited to score the essays. They were (in alphabetical order) Deborah Barnard, James Comas, Eric Detweiler, Megan Donelson, Ellen Donovan, Morgan Hanson, Marion Hollings, Jennifer Kates, Rebecca King, Aaron Shapiro, and Kathleen Therrien. Following a three-hour grade norming session led by the department's Assessment Coordinator on June 21, 2017, the scorers received 18-19 essays each to score independently over a period of six weeks. Each essay in the sample received two separate scores from two different readers on each of six outcomes (see Appendix A). Each reader received a $150 stipend at the conclusion of the scoring.

Cut off scores
The following mean cut-off scores were used in this assessment (see Table 1).[2]

	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 2 points (i.e., the score representing a D in our scoring rubric). Moreover, 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 outcome. These cut off points were adopted by the department in 2015.

Interrater reliability
Given multiple scorers, we evaluated interrater reliability by a two-way mixed effects intraclass correlation model based on absolute agreement (i.e., different raters assigning the same score for a given essay for a given outcome). Results of this analysis appear in Table 2.

	ICC
Outcome A	.338
Outcome B	.510
Outcome C	.557
Outcome D	.525
Outcome E	.561
Outcome F	.587

Table 2. Interrater reliability (ICC coefficients)

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[1] Note: Because in AY 2016-2017 the English department had only two faculty at the rank of Assistant Professor, with only one available over the summer to serve as a scorer, this rank was under-represented in this year's assessment.

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

The 2016-2017 assessment followed largely the procedures established in the 2015-2016 assessment with one significant change.

Change 1: During the grade norming session, this year's Assessment Committee deliberated and concluded that in the case of Outcome E (*The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.*)*,* the score for each essay in terms of this outcome should be determined in light of the specific essay assignment's expectations.[3] We believe that this change resulted in a more accurate assessment of this outcome based on the rationale that students perform to the standard assigned, and variation in performance should not reflect variation in standards set by faculty.

Change 2: The Assessment Coordinator instructed scorers to choose a score of 2 over a score of 3 in cases of borderline performance. We believe that this change decreases possible score inflation (given that scorers tend to naturally gravitate to the middle of a scale).

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.**

	Writing Outcomes	**Year**	**Superior** Score *M* = 5, 4.5, 4	**Satisfactory** Score *M* = 3.5, 3, 2.5	**Unsatisfactory** Score *M* = 2, 1.5, 1
A	*The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.*	2014	6.1%	53.5%	40.5%
		2015	6%	66%	28%
		2016	24%	64%	12%
		2017	23%	65%	12%

B	*The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.*	2014	3.9%	44.4%	51.7%
		2015	8%	68%	24%
		2016	16.5%	72.8%	10.7%
		2017	19%	67%	14%

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[3] There is a variety in terms of both number and type of primary and secondary sources required of students in different sections of 1020. We, therefore, collected the assignment descriptions for each essay in the sample, and scorers scored this outcome based on the expectations of the assignment associated with the essay being scored.

C	The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.	2014	3.3%	44.4%	52.2%
		2015	3%	68%	29%
		2016	19%	65%	16%
		2017	20%	65%	15%

D	Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison, contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).	2014	6.7%	55%	38.3%
		2015	5%	79%	16%
		2016	17.5%	68%	14.5%
		2017	22%	60%	18%

E	The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.	2014	2.8%	54.4%	42.8%
		2015	5%	69%	26%
		2016	13.6%	68%	18.4%
		2017	20%	68%	12%

F	Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.	2014	2.8%	46.1%	51.1%
		2015	0%	66%	34%
		2016	19.4%	53.4%	27.2%
		2017	19%	63%	18%

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 2017 writing assessment results show continued improvements in student attainment of all learning outcomes compared to 2015 and 2016 (see Figure 1). These improvements are reflected in the following two trends observed in these data: (i) A decrease in the proportion of students performing at the unsatisfactory level, and (ii) increases in the proportion of students performing at the superior level. In addition, we note a significant improvement in Outcome F (*Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.*). The department has focused on improving student performance in outcome F, and this year's assessment suggests that this effort has been successful in decreasing the proportion of students performing in the unsatisfactory range (from 27.2% to 18%). This change brings student performance on this outcome more in line with their performance on the other outcomes.

Fig. 1 Gen Ed Writing Assessment by Outcome, Performance Level, and Year (2015-2017)
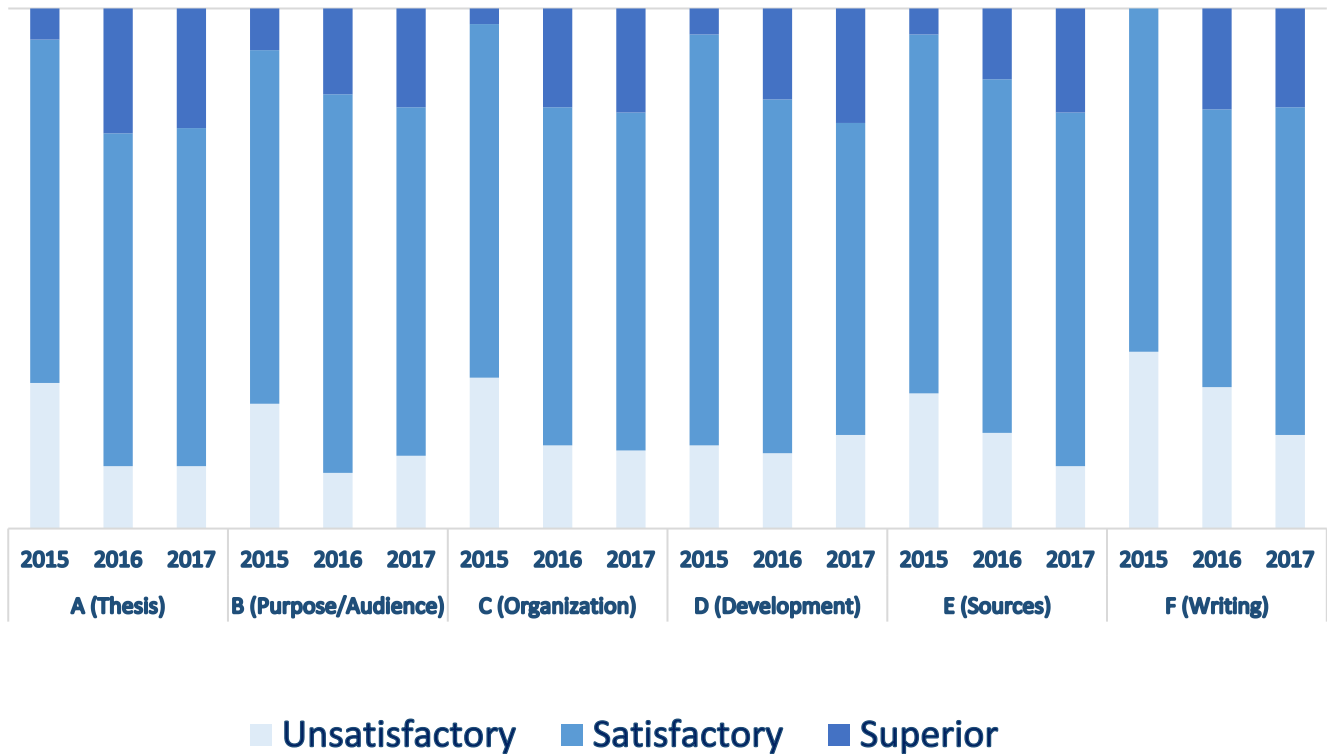
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
	A (Thesis)			B (Purpose/Audience)			C (Organization)			D (Development)			E (Sources)			F (Writing)		

■ Unsatisfactory ■ Satisfactory ■ Superior

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

The MTSU English department has implemented a number of successful initiatives (see Item 7). Most importantly, the department is deeply committed to excellence in its writing program, and this year's assessment results reflect that commitment. We believe a number of factors have contributed to the observed improvements in outcomes:

a. Thanks to the continued support of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the University Provost, the department has been able to limit enrollment in its General Education writing courses to 20 students in line with the *Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing* advocated by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting). Enrollment caps are a significant variable in writing achievement because enrollment caps in writing intensive courses create opportunities for more individualized feedback during the writing process and ensure more rapid and detailed evaluation of students' writing.

b. Thanks to support from the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the Provost, the department has been able to fill two tenure-track positions in Writing and Rhetoric in the

last three years: Drs. Kate Pantelides and Eric Detweiler have both contributed significantly to the improvement of General Education English at MTSU.

c. The department experimented with a new administrative model for its Lower Division English courses for AY 16-17 with two co-directors of Lower Division (in contrast to the prior model which consisted of one faculty member serving as the Lower Division director and one faculty member serving as the GTA coordinator). This new administrative model has been adopted given, among other things, the continued improvements in student performance illustrated by this assessment.

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 are surely responsible for the significant improvement in scores we observed in this most recent assessment cycles.

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** was redesigned in AY 2015-2016 and the redesigned course is currently under review for possible adoption across all sections of ENGL 1020.

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 General Education English.
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.
8. The department has adopted a new administrative model for its Lower Division English courses for AY 16-17 with two co-directors of Lower Division (in contrast to the prior model which consisted of one faculty member serving as the Lower Division director and one faculty member serving as the GTA coordinator).

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. In 2017, this information was shared with the department faculty at its Department Meeting on September 8, 2017.
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. In 2017, the committee provided feedback to the department's Assessment Coordinator on October 6, 2017, and their suggestions were incorporated in the final report. (PENDING)
4. The report is shared and discussed with Dr. Maria Bachman, English Department Chair, and Drs. Julie Barger and Kate Pantelides, Co-Directors of Lower Division English, as well as the English Department's General Education English Committee.
5. The assessment report is shared with the Dean of Liberal Arts and the Provost.

Concluding Remarks

This year's assessment results have the following implications regarding decisions related to assessment and instruction:

1. **Perform future assessments of 1020 on an every-other-year cycle, while implementing an assessment of 1010 English starting with the AY 2017-2018.**
2. **Continue implementing enrollment caps in General Education writing courses.**
   Rationale: The department has been advocating for limiting enrollment in its General Education writing courses to 20 students in line with the *Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing* advocated by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting). Enrollment caps are a significant variable in writing achievement because enrollment caps in writing intensive courses create opportunities for more individualized feedback during the writing process and ensure more rapid and detailed evaluation of students' writing. Thanks to the continued support of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the University Provost, the department has been able to limit enrollment accordingly. The improvement in student performance is certainly largely due to the individualized attention students in ENGL 1010 and 1020 are, therefore, receiving from their ENGL instructors.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT
WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC[i]
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
June 15, 2016

OUTCOME A: The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.

5	The paper foregrounds a succinct, unambiguous, & focused thesis, that is, a *central, controlling claim* that is • *arguable* (rather than a fact, a recognized truth, or a matter of personal taste), • *reasoned* (e.g., "E-cigarettes should be regulated *because* …"), and • functions as the main *result* of the research.
4	The paper foregrounds a thesis that is a *central, controlling claim* but is a bit less compelling, focused, succinct or unambiguous.
3	The paper contains a thesis but, in meeting the stated purpose of the paper, is too broad, too narrow, or lacks adequate focus.
2	The paper contains elements of a thesis (e.g., a central claim, reasons) but fails to bring together these elements in a statement that most readers would recognize as a "thesis."
1	The paper lacks any sense of a central claim related to the paper's stated purpose.

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

5	The paper establishes a clear, specific purpose in relation to *impressive* knowledge of pertinent research and, in doing so, establishes a strong sense of audience (viz., the paper demonstrates knowledge of an "academic conversation" and is tailored to take part in that conversation).
4	The paper establishes its purpose in relation to *ample* knowledge of pertinent research and, in doing so, establishes a clear sense of audience.
3	The paper defines a purpose and establishes a sense of audience based on *rudimentary* knowledge of pertinent research (viz., the paper demonstrates some awareness that it needs to contribute to an existing academic conversation).
2	The paper maintains a purpose and sense of audience, though not formulated in response to pertinent research (i.e., the purpose is not situated in a conversation).
1	The paper does not exhibit a *controlling* sense of purpose and audience. The paper exhibits shifts in audience or lacks a clear sense of audience altogether.

OUTCOME C: The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.

5	From the beginning, the paper provides readers with a clear sense of direction (organization). The paper maintains that sense of direction by using cues (e.g., transitions) to guide readers from one step to the next. The conclusion of the paper carries the sense that the paper's stated purpose has been achieved.
4	The paper provides readers with a clear sense of direction though that sense of direction is not always maintained clearly through the use of discursive cues.
3	The paper contains some but minimal effort to give readers a sense of its direction.
2	The paper seems to have some sense of direction but does nothing to make that direction clear to readers.
1	The paper lacks a sense of direction and, thus, lacks global organization.

OUTCOME 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).

5	The paper is *impressive* in its development of arguments, e.g., by defining key words, by clarifying ideas through the use of examples or the use of comparison, by clarification through use of narration or classification.
4	The paper develops several of its arguments, e.g., by defining key words, by clarifying ideas through the use of examples or the use of comparison, by clarification through use of narration or classification.
3	The paper reflects an understanding of the need to develop ideas but develops only one or two.
2	The paper reflects some but inadequate effort at developing its ideas.
1	The paper shows no effort at developing its ideas.

OUTCOME E: The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.

5	The paper makes *impressive* use of basic information from multiple, reliable sources to • make clear the situation, problem, or question that the paper engages; • introduce readers to different positions in an academic "conversation" regarding the situation, problem, or question; and

	• provide supporting evidence for the paper's arguments. All of the information from sources is well integrated and is appropriately attributed to the sources.
4	The paper makes *good* use of basic information from multiple, reliable sources to • make clear the situation, problem, or question that the paper engages; • introduce readers to different positions in an academic "conversation" regarding the situation, problem, or question; and • provide supporting evidence for the paper's arguments. Most of the information from sources is well integrated and appropriately attributed to the sources.
3	The paper provides supporting information from multiple sources, but the reliability or appropriateness of some sources would be regarded as questionable by likely readers of the paper. Information from sources is adequately integrated and attributed to the sources.
2	The paper provides supporting information, but only from one source or from multiple unreliable sources. Information is poorly integrated and/or poorly attributed to the sources.
1	The paper fails to use basic information gathered from multiple, reliable sources. Information is not integrated and is not attributed to the sources.

OUTCOME F: The student writer is able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

5	The paper reflects a degree of mastery over diction, grammar, syntax, and usage in formal written English, as well as a degree of mastery over other conventions appropriate to academic papers (e.g., APA or MLA documentation style), including the appropriate mechanics for citing sources.
4	In spite of a few errors, the paper reflects control over diction, grammar, syntax, and usage in formal written English, as well as control of conventions appropriate to the purpose of the paper, including the appropriate mechanics for citing sources.
3	In spite of numerous errors, the paper reflects basic control over formal written English, as well as control of conventions appropriate to the purpose of the paper, including the appropriate mechanics for citing sources.
2	The paper contains an obtrusive number of grammatical, syntactic, or usage, and provides minimal mastery of the mechanics for citing sources.

| 1 | The paper reflects a significant lack of control over formal written English (including diction, grammar, usage, and mechanics). |

[i] This document describes the levels of quality in performance for each of the TBR-mandated outcomes for assessing General Education Competency in writing. The rubric was developed by Dr. James Comas with input from a committee of English faculty representing all the faculty ranks in the department (GTA, adjunct instructor, full-time temporary lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor). The committee consisted of Deborah Barnard, Lando Carter, James Comas, Megan Donelson, Morgan Hanson, Martha Hixon, Jennifer Kates, Rebecca King, Kate Pantelides, Robert Petersen, Aaron Shapiro, Kathleen Therrien, and Aleka Blackwell (Department's Assessment Coordinator). The following sources were consulted in the development of the rubric:

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 2014). Textbook commonly used in ENGL 1020 at MTSU.

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Standard reference work for writers of research.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year: 2016-2017

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 = 16.1; National = 16.20

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 2016-2017 score for MTSU students (16.1) is below the MTSU score in 2015-2016 (16.2) and is slightly below the 2016-2017 national average (16.20). Over the past three years, MTSU's scores have fallen each year and been consistently below the national average, though the gap between MTSU's score and the national score is significantly smaller in 2016-2017.

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.**

   MTSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (MT Engage), which was implemented in fall 2016, emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, specifically integrative thinking and critical reflection. We will continue to encourage faculty to certify their courses as a MT Engage course.

   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.

   The Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) continues to offer workshops that help faculty incorporate strategies for improving critical thinking.

For example, the LT&ITC offered workshops on topics such as course redesign for increased student engagement, active learning, experiential learning, MT Engage pedagogies (including the use of ePortfolios to encourage integrative thinking and assessment), 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.

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.