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| Middle Tennessee State University |
| General Education Assessment Report 2011 |
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**Submitted to the Tennessee Board of Regents**

**November 16, 2011**

**Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes**

**Academic Year 2010-2011**

**Subject Area: Mathematics**

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

**MATH 1710—College Algebra and MATH 1710K—College Algebra**

1. 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.

**All 876 students taking the final examination in spring 2011 were assessed.**

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

**The procedures used are the same used in the 2010 report. Each learning outcome is associated with a specific set of questions—40 questions for the first learning outcome and 16 questions for each of the other learning outcomes.**

**It was felt that the distinction between Learning Outcomes 2 (real-life problems) and 3 (meaningful connections) was too subtle to measure with a single examination. Thus the same set of 16 questions was used to assess these two learning outcomes.**

**A correct response rate of at least 85% was deemed to be superior; a correct response rate between 60% and 84% was deemed to be satisfactory; a correct response rate of less than 60% was deemed to be unsatisfactory.**

**Spring semester 2011 results are included in this report.**

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| **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 1-40 |
| **Learning Outcome 2**: Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems. | Math 1710 Common Final | Questions 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,22,39 |
| **Learning Outcome 3**: Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines. | Math 1710 Common Final | Questions 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,22,39 |
| **Learning Outcome 4**: Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving. | Math 1710 Common Final | Questions 2,3,5,8,9,13,14,18,20,22,24,29,31,32,34, 38 |
| **Learning Outcome 5**: Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs. | Math 1710 Common Final | Questions 2,3,4,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,21,27,28,30,40 |

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 mathematics. 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.

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| **Mathematics**  Outcome to be Assessed | **Superior**  Number and Percent | **Satisfactory**  Number and Percent | **Unsatisfactory**  Number and Percent |
| **Learning Outcome 1**: Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable. | **15.2% (+2.6%)\***  **(133 of 876 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions** | **56.7% (-5.2%)\***  **(497 of 876 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions** | **28.1% (+2.6%)\***  **(246 of 876 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions** |
| **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. | **9.0% (-0.8%)\***  **(79 of 876 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions** | **55.6% (+2.2%)\***  **(487 of 876 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions** | **35.4% (-1.4%)\***  **(310 of 876 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions** |
| **Learning Outcome 3**: Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines. | **9.0% (-0.8%)\***  **(79 of 876 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions** | **55.6% (+2.2%)\***  **(487 of 876 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions** | **35.4%(-1.4%)\***  **(310 of 876 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions** |
| **Learning Outcome 4**: Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving | **12.6%(+3.0%)\***  **(110 of 876 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions** | **56.6% (+1.9%)\***  **(496 of 876 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions** | **30.8% (-4.9%)\***  **(270 of 876 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions** |
| **Learning Outcome 5**: Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs. | **18.5% (0.0%)\***  **(162 of 876 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions** | **54.0% (-3.0%)\***  **(473 of 876 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions** | **27.5% (+3.0%)\***  **(241 of 876 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions** |

**\*Change in percentage from 2009-2010**

1. 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?

**Learning Outcome 1. Last year 12.6% of the students were able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if the results are reasonable in the superior category. While the superior proportion this year has increased by 2.6% to 15.2%, the unsatisfactory proportion has increased by the same 2.6%, from 25.5% to 28.1%. These increases are matched by a decrease of 5.2% in the satisfactory category, from 61.9% to 56.7%. This distribution of students into the three groups is a statistically significant change from last year (at the 5% level). This leads to the conjecture that both the top and bottom levels of students are growing.**

**Learning Outcomes 2 and 3. Word problems continue to be a challenge for students. While the proportion in the superior and the unsatisfactory categories both decreased (the exact opposite of Learning Outcome 1), this change is not statistically significant.**

**Learning Outcome 4. Student performance improved on this outcome. The superior category increased from 9.6% to 12.6%, and the satisfactory category increased from 54.7% to 56.6%, while the unsatisfactory category dropped from 35.7% to 30.8%. These changes are statistically significant.**

**Learning Outcome 5. While there was no change in the superior category, the satisfactory category dropped by 3.0% and the unsatisfactory category increased by that same amount. These changes are not statistically significant.**

**These results are acceptable, but certainly they can be improved.**

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

**In order to identify actions and strategies to improve student achievement, these results will be considered by the Department of Mathematical Science’s Math Council, Service Course Committee, and Coordinator of the Mathematics Tutoring Lab, as well as by the Department of University Studies. Previously implemented strategies will be continued. See response to Item 7 below.**

1. Have you implemented any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from the assessment of 2009-10? If yes, please explain.

**Results of previous assessments have been shared with the Department of Mathematical Sciences Faculty, Service Course Committee, and also with the Department of University Studies.**

**The Departments of Mathematical Sciences and University Studies both provide free tutoring labs for students in College Algebra. These labs are open as many hours as tutoring staff are available. All students, especially those who have trouble mastering the outcomes, are encouraged to seek assistance in the tutoring labs.**

**In addition, University Studies has implemented 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 either failed the course in which they are enrolled or have previously failed DSPM 0850. 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.**

**Assessment of General Education Learning OutcomesAcademic Year 2010-2011Subject Area: Oral Communication**

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

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

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

The COMM 2200 procedure consisted of random stratified samples of representative populations of the COMM 2200 sections offered in Spring 2011. The total enrollment in COMM 2200 for Spring 2011 was 1878. Data were collected from 253 students (127 Presentation Outlines and 126 Oral Presentations).

From the randomly selected sections of COMM 2200, Informative Speech Presentation Outlines and Oral Persuasive Speech Presentations were randomly selected for evaluation. The outlines consisted of blind copies requested from the instructors. Selected student oral presentations were video-taped. No identifying elements were used for individual students or instructors. Outlines, demographics instructions, videotapes and sections were identified by assigned numbers for the study. Assigned number listings were secured in a locked drawer in the principal investigator’s office.All random selections were generated using Research Randomizer (Urbaniak and Plous, 2008) from the Social Psychology Network.

Four faculty members in Communication Studies participated in a Pre-Assessment Workshop and developed a speech rubric (for assessment of the Persuasive Speech Presentations) and an outline rubric (to evaluate the Informative Speech Outlines). Resources for development of each rubric were collected from a variety of sources, including the National Communication Association and recent workshops.Training for faculty members included three hours per evaluator to assess persuasive speeches, and three hours per evaluator to assess outlines. Evaluation of speeches and outlines required three evaluators (as stipulated by the National Communication Association and professionals in the field). For the 2011 assessment, five new faculty members were trained to be evaluators (three for speech evaluations and two for outline evaluations). This is in keeping with the original proposal to add several new evaluators each assessment cycle.

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

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

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

To increase sampling representativeness, the number of randomly stratified sections from which outlines were collected was increased for the Spring 2011 assessment from 12 sections to 40 sections (the same number of sections from which samples were collected for the persuasive speeches).

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

**TABLES (2011)**

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| **Oral Communication**  TBR Competencies to be Assessed  *NOTE: Since we assess persuasive oral presentations AND informative speech outlines, more than one table may be included for each TBR Outcome.* | **Superior**  Number  and Percent | **Satisfactory**  Number  and Percent | **Unsatisfactory**  Number  and Percent |
| **TBR Outcome I**  **Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.**  *[Table A: Revised on our rubric for the persuasive oral presentation to: Students are able to communicate the thesis/specific purpose in a manner appropriate for a persuasive presentation, the audience & occasion---students communicate within the opening few sentences of the speech a thesis/specific purpose that is clear, concise, is appropriate and one that the audience members should clearly understand.]* | (62); 49 % | (47); 38% | (17); 13% |
| *[Table B: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to: Student outlines contain a purpose statement that is appropriate for an informative speech, is clear and concise, and contains no deficiencies in expression.* | (35); 28 % | (77); 60 % | (15); 12% |
| **TBR Outcome II.**  **Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.**  *[Table C: Revised on our rubric for the persuasive oral presentation to: Students use persuasive appeals (ethos, logos pathos) appropriate to the purpose, topic, audience, & occasion---the speaker displays an ability to appropriately and effectively utilize all three types of persuasive appeals in the presentation and the speech is clearly persuasive throughout.]* | (59); 47% | (53); 42% | (14); 11% |
| **TBR Outcome III.**  **Organizational Patterns. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).**  *[Table D: Revised on our rubric for the persuasive oral presentation to: Students use an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation---students present an introduction that clearly engages the audience in an appropriate and creative manner; the body of the speech reflects clarity in organization, and the conclusion reflects clearly and accurately the content of the speech and leaves the audience with a compelling message or call to action.]* | (60); 48% | (48); 38% | (18); 14% |
| *[Table E: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to*: *Student outlines contain 2 to 5 main points; each point is clear and concise and consistently follows an organizational pattern (topical, chronological, etc.) that is appropriate for the topic and audience; all main points are fully developed.]* | (92); 73% | (27); 21% | (8); 6% |
| **TBR Outcome IV.**  **Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics**.  *[Table F: Revised on our rubric for the oral persuasive speech to:*  *The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear, vivid and appropriate and is free of inappropriate jargon, slang, and is nonsexist, nonracist, etc.]* | (18); 15% | (105); 83% | (3); 2% |
| *[Table G: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to: Student outlines contain clear language that is concise and appropriate to the audience, the topic and the occasion; may contain elements of style (the use of metaphors, parallelisms, etc.), and is void of language that is sexist, racist, etc.]* | (30); 24 % | (95); 74% | (2); 2% |
| *[Table H: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to: Student outlines contain no major errors in spelling, syntax and/or grammar.]* | (64); 50% | (60) ; 48% | (3); 2% |
| **TBR Outcome V.**  **Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.**  *[Table i: Revised on our rubric for the informative speech outline to*: *A bibliography or works cited page is present and contains a minimum of 6 sources; sources are cited using an accepted citation style with no major errors or omissions.]* | (47); 37 % | (29); 23% | (51); 40% |

**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?**

With regard to the five TBR Learning Outcomes, performance was moderately strong and showed improvement on **Outcome I.** (Tables A, B: Clear Articulation of a Purpose Statement) with over 87% of students scoring at the satisfactory level or higher on the speech as compared to 64% in 2010. Improvement on outlines was likewise indicated as scores of satisfactory or higher were increased from 53% in 2010 to 88% in 2011.

For **Outcome II** (Table C: the Ordering of Main Points in a reasonable and convincing manner) performance also remained strong with 89% of the students scoring at the satisfactory level or higher level as compared to 70% who scored at the satisfactory level or higher in 2010.

**For Outcome III** (Tables D and E: use of appropriate rhetorical patterns) 86% of students scored at the satisfactory level or higher on the speech and 94% scored at the satisfactory level or higher on outlines. Significant gains were indicated as a much smaller percentage of students received an unsatisfactory score in 2011 (10%) as compared to the percentage who received unsatisfactory scores in 2010 (57%).

Performance was also strong for **Outcome IV** (Tables F, G, H: diction, syntax, usage, grammar, mechanics) with more than 98% of students scoring at the satisfactory level or higher on both the outline and speech assessments. A higher percentage of students also received a superior rating in 2011. On average 30% of students received a superior rating in 2011 compared to 11% who, on average, received a superior rating in 2010.

Performance on **Outcome V** was also moderately strong with some indication of significant improvement (Table i: the gathering and use of multiple sources). While the number of students receiving a satisfactory score remained relatively the same in 2010 and 2011 (21% and 23% respectively), the number of students who received a superior rating in 2011 increased from 18% in 2010 to 37% in 2011, and the number of students who received an unsatisfactory score decreased from 60% in 2010 to 40% in 2011.

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

The training of evaluators will be improved in order to assure greater rater reliability. We will also increase the number of participants in the study to insure a valid representative sample (10 percent of the total enrollment).

Work on improving student attainment of the outcomes has already begun and will continue. See Item 7.

**7. Have you implemented any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from the assessment in 2009-10?**

The improvements in student learning noted in Item 5 can be attributed to a number of factors. Several workshops were conducted with the COMM 2200 faculty. During these workshops, the outcomes of the 2010 assessments were discussed in detail. The faculty developed a variety of strategies for improvement, and they likewise committed to implement these strategies immediately. The MTSU library staff also met with the COMM 2200 faculty, and as a result of that meeting, the library prepared a special subject guide available on the MTSU library site to assist COMM 2200 students conducting research on contemporary topics for the informative speech and controversial topics for the persuasive speech assignment. Finally, while the total number of outlines used for the actual assessment did not increase, the number of sections from which outlines were collected significantly increased from 12 sections to 40 sections. This increase improved the reliability of the sample and it may also help to explain the increases in the various scores reported for 2011.

At the beginning of the Fall 2011semester, all but one of the COMM 2200 instructors participated in a four-hour workshop during which time Jason Vance from the MTSU library presented a session on the research assistance programs the library has implemented that are intended to assist students with research for their speeches. Dr. Vance also demonstrated the new website and the power point presentation the library staff prepared specifically for COMM 2200 instructors to use in their classes on how to conduct research using the MTSU library. Heather Lambert of the MTSU library also presented a session on the Digital Media Center and assistance that can be provided to students gathering research materials for speeches. This collaboration with the library staff will continue throughout the academic year. Additionally, COMM 2200 faculty *strongly* *support* the proposal to provide a direct link to the Walker Library on the MTSU Home page.

Prior to the beginning of the Spring 2012 semester, an additional workshop will be conducted for all COMM 2200 instructors. This workshop will specifically focus on the 2011 assessment results. During this workshop instructors will have an opportunity to discuss and develop specific strategies for improving instruction on all the competencies, with special focus on those areas where students continue to fall below the satisfactory level of competence.

Currently, COMM 2200 sections are being capped at a 25:1 student/faculty ratio. COMM 2200 faculty strongly recommend that class sizes remain at this 25:1 ratio as recommended by the National Communication Association.[[1]](#footnote-1) Any increase in class size will only hamper efforts to maintain and improve the ability of instructors to provide adequate instruction in COMM 2200 and assure that all students meet the minimum competency requirements.

**Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes**

**Academic Year 2010-11**

**Subject Area: Writing**

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

English 1020: Research and Argumentative Writing

1. 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.

All 1020 instructors were asked to submit one copy of an essay submitted by each student, specifically the essay assignment requiring the most research. There were 2,379 students enrolled in English 1020 in spring 2011, a pool of 1,939 essays was collected, and 1,690 essays were able to be used for the study. The essays of 689 students enrolled in English 1020 could not be used for the study due to two main issues: instructor non-compliance (e.g., not turning in any essays, turning in essays that were written on or graded, or turning in essays after the deadline) and student non-compliance (e.g., not turning in an essay to the instructor). A computer-generated randomizer (www.random.org/lists) was used to decrease the original pool of 1,951 essays to a pool of 250 essays that were double blinded by clerical staff, using cover-up tape. The assessment organizer then double checked that the pool of 250 essays matched the data generated by the clerical staff. The computer-generated randomizer was used on these 250 essays, and the first 100 essays from the randomized pool were chosen as the final sample. Out of the original 1,939 essays, 5.16% of the total essays were chosen for the final sample and grading session. The next 50 essays picked by the randomizer were considered for the grade norming session, and five essays dealing with social networking and technology (from five different instructors) were chosen as the grade-norming samples.

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

In the pre-pilot (2007-08) and pilot (2008-09) studies, the assessment organizer discarded any essay that did not include a Works Cited. Based on a request from the Assessment Subcommittee of the General Education Committee, in last year’s and this year’s study, the assessment organizer did not discard any essays that were missing a Works Cited. Nine of the 100 essays used for the final sample did not include a Works Cited, even though instructors were asked to turn in a set of essays that resulted from assignments requiring research. Thus, 9% of the graded essays did not include a Works Cited, which would have an immediate detrimental effect on grading.

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

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| **Writing**  Outcome to be Assessed | **Superior**  Number and Percent | **Satisfactory**  Number and Percent | **Unsatisfactory**  0000  Number and Percent |
| Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.  [revised on our rubric to: The student writer is able to distill a **primary argumen**t into a single, compelling statement.] | 23/200=**11.5%** | 123/200=**61.5%** | 54/200=**27%** |
| Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.  [revised on our rubric to: The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on **primary argument**.] | 24/200=**12%** | 124/200=**62%** | 52/200=**26%** |
| Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition). | 23/200=**11.5%** | 97/200=**48.5%** | 80/200=**40%** |
| Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics. | 27/200=**13.5%** | 102/200=**51%** | 71/200=**35.5%** |
| Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.  [revised on our rubric to: The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple **secondary** sources.] | 24/200=**12%** | 87/200=**43.5%** | 89/200=**44.5%** |
| [added criterion for our rubric: **The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience**.] | 75/200=**37.5%** | 82/200=**41%** | 43/200=**21.5%** |
| [added criterion for our rubric: **The student writer has written a minimum of 1,000 words or four typed pages at 250 words per page (please estimate)].** | 9/200=**4.5%** | 135/200=**67.5%** | 56/200=**28%** |

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?

* + Based on **adequate or more than adequate** achievement by student writers in the pool, four criteria are notably higher than others:
    1. The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience. (78.5% of all students this year compared to 78% last year)
    2. The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument. (74% of all students this year compared to 58% last year)
    3. Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement. (73% of all students this year compared to 65.5% last year)
    4. Student writers have written a minimum of 1,000 words or four typed pages at 250 words per page. (72% of all students this year compared to 67% last year)
  + Student achievement in all four criteria above improved this year over last year’s assessment study.
  + Based on **less than adequate** achievement by student writers in the pool, three criteria need more attention than others:
    1. Student writers are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources. (44.5% of all students this year compared to 54% last year)
    2. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition). (40% of all students this year compared to 30% last year)
    3. Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics. (35.5% of all students this year compared to 40.5% last year)
* Student achievement in two of the above criteria (managing and coordinating basic information from multiple secondary sources/correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics) improved this year over last year’s assessment study. One criteria (developing ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns) did not improve since last year’s study.

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

The English Department plans to

* disseminate results of the 2010-11 assessment study. We will
  + provide copies of the results to Dr. Tom Strawman, Department Chair; Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director; Dr. Julie Myatt, English Coordinator of Graduate Teaching Assistants; and Dr. Wes Houp, Director of the University Writing Center.
  + discuss results at GTA orientation, fall and spring Lower Division curriculum meetings, and general faculty meeting at the beginning of the academic year.
  + mention specifically at orientations, curriculum meetings, and general faculty meetings the need for instructor compliance in providing all 1020 essays for the assessment study each spring semester.
* actively encourage tenure-track and tenured faculty to include ENGL 1020 on their requests for either fall or spring semester teaching.
* focus on student management and coordination of basic information. We will
  + have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and Dr. Julie Myatt, English Coordinator of Graduate Teaching Assistants, continue to invite Dr. Jason Vance and others from James E. Walker Library to GTA/adjunct/FTT orientations to discuss available library assistance, including Research Coach, SearchPath, and Embed a Librarian options.
  + have the English Lower Division Committee continue the requirement for each English 1020 instructor to take their classes to the library for at least one class period for a librarian-led introduction to using the library effectively for research in 1020.
* investigate the role departmental grade inflation may play in less than adequate scores. We will
  + have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and the Lower Division Committee continue to review 1020 syllabi (for GTAs, adjuncts, FTTs, and tenure-track faculty) for how instructors represented and fulfilled the Course Objectives for English 1020. The results will be given to each instructor with a request to revise any deficiencies by the next time the instructor teaches 1020. The committee will also confirm that each 1020 instructor uses appropriate texts that focus on the specific course objectives for 1020.
  + continue to provide instructors with end-of-semester grading data specific to their own courses and to the program.
  + have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and Dr. Julie Myatt, Coordinator of Teaching Assistants, organize grade norming sessions for GTAs/adjuncts/instructors in fall 2011 and spring 2012.
* continue the restructuring of the English 1020 course into a research and argumentative course that focuses on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), rather than on one that focuses on literary analysis, to stimulate more student interest in research and argumentation. We will
  + have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, lead the way in this restructuring. All 1020 instructors are required to choose one of the new WAC-based books and prepare new syllabi for this focus.
* review and revise the curriculum for ENGL 1010 to better prepare students not only for the demands of ENGL 1020 but for expository writing requirements in other courses. A review of the ENGL 1010 curriculum and objectives will be conducted by the Lower Division Committee and will include researching the first-year writing programs of our peer institutions.
* further customize the new handbooks for ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020 to emphasize the course objectives, the General Education Learning Outcomes, and the resources available to MTSU composition students.
* provide new opportunities for professional development for adjuncts and full-time instructors. We will
  + have Dr. Laura Dubek, Lower Division Director, establish a foundation account with grant monies donated by Bedford/St. Martin’s, publishers of our new 1010 handbook, *Easy Writer*, and McGraw-Hill, publishers of our new 1020 handbook, *Research Matters at MTSU*. Dr. Dubek and the Lower Division Committee will evaluate applications for travels funds for faculty to attend the annual convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Recipients will receive all travel expenses and will return to the department and host information sessions on composition topics.
* emphasize the 1020 course objectives for new hires and returning GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors. We will
  + guide all GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors to the General Education Faculty Resources and Lower Division FAQs web pages, located on the English Faculty website, that include the course learning and teaching objectives, sample syllabi and assignments, general information for contingent faculty, and specific assistance with grading, developing effective assignments, and judging written work in General Education courses.

○ provide more intensive oversight of General Education faculty. Course objectives, syllabi, assignments, and grading are already reviewed in the annual evaluation of each GTA, adjunct, and instructor in the department. Dr. Laura Dubek will receive reassigned time to conduct additional classroom observations.

* emphasize the need for freshman writing courses to follow the guidelines of the National Council of Teachers of English with regard to class size. Dr. Tom Strawman and Dr. Laura Dubek will
  + make a request to upper administration that the current class size of 25 students per freshman writing class fall into NCTE guidelines: “No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement.”

7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from the assessment in 2009-10?

The English Department has

* disseminated results of the assessment studies. Dr. Allison Smith, the assessment organizer, has
  + provided copies of the results to Dr. Tom Strawman, Department Chair; Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director; Dr. Julie Myatt, English Coordinator of Graduate Teaching Assistants; and Dr. Wes Houp, Director of the University Writing Center.
  + discussed results at GTA orientation, fall and spring lower division curriculum meetings, and general faculty meeting at the beginning of the academic year.
* focused on student management and coordination of basic information. Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director,
  + attended the MTSU Library Retreat in August 2011to discuss how the librarians can support students in ENGL 1020.
  + formalized the requirement for all English 1020 instructors to take their classes to the library for at least one class period for a librarian-led research introduction.
* investigated the role departmental grade inflation may play in less than adequate scores. Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and the English Lower Division Committee have
  + reviewed ENGL 1010 and 1020 syllabi and meticulously noted how each syllabus (for GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors) represented and fulfilled the Course Objectives. The results were given to each instructor with a request to revise any deficiencies. This syllabus review continues each year.
  + organized essay grade norming sessions for adjuncts/instructors in fall 2010 and spring 2011. Dr. Julie Myatt, Coordinator of GTAs, has also organized grade norming sessions for the GTAs.
* emphasized the 1020 course objectives for new hires and returning GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors. Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, has
  + created two new web pages—General Education Faculty Resources and Lower Division FAQs—that include the course objectives, teaching and learning objectives, sample syllabi and assignments, general information for General Education faculty, and specific assistance with grading, developing effective assignments, and judging written work in Gen Ed courses. Course objectives, syllabi, assignments, and grading are all reviewed in the annual evaluation of each GTA, adjunct, and instructor in the department.
* revised the ENGL 1020 curriculum to be more closely aligned with the General Education Outcomes. The Lower Division Committee

○ removed the literary analysis requirement from the ENGL 1020 curriculum.

○ selected new textbooks for ENGL 1020 that have a Writing Across the Curriculum focus and that better support the General Education Learning Outcomes.

○ selected new handbooks for both ENGL 1010 and 1020 that emphasize the distinctions between the two courses.

○ used the Syllabus Review to encourage more required reading and additional reading instruction in both ENGL 1010 and 1020 and to encourage more writing workshops and peer review opportunities in the classroom.

**Assessment of Critical Thinking**

**Academic Year 2010-2011**

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

California Critical Thinking Skills Test

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

Sampling was not used.

1. **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 = 17.0

National = 16.8

1. **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?**

For the fourth consecutive year, MTSU students’ critical thinking skills exceeded those of students taking the same test at universities across the country. Our students also scored in the mid-range or above on all sub-score categories: analysis, deduction, evaluation, induction, and inference. These test scores indicate that MTSU students are being taught appropriate and useful critical thinking skills in their classes.

1. **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 faculty understand the importance of including course activities that improve critical thinking skills. These efforts appear to be effective. Critical thinking skills are emphasized in each degree program. In addition, critical thinking is addressed in a number of university initiatives, including the following:

a. Required 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. The General Education Committee will recommend 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.

b. The development of critical thinking skills is an area of emphasis in the University Seminar course (UNIV 1010). UNIV 1010 textbooks contain a critical thinking component in each chapter.

c. Tutoring in the University Writing Center emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills in the writing process.

d. 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.

1. According to *The National Communication Association’s Standards for Undergraduate Communication Programs,* “. . . all performance courses (e.g. public speaking) should not have more than a 25:1 student /faculty ratio.”

   <http://www.natcom.org/Default.aspx?id=1128&libID=1149> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)