

Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU): NSSE 2024 Overview

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a benchmarking tool used to gauge first-year (FY) and senior students' engagement levels and overall perception of their academic experience at their respective institution. NSSE provides information on how students spend their time and what gains are acquired at the end of the students' academic journey (seniors). Decision-makers can use survey feedback to identify gaps and to develop responsive policies and practices to reduce or eliminate existing barriers. Additionally, NSSE results offer institutions the opportunity to conduct intra-institutional comparison (e.g., trends) and interinstitutional comparisons with peers. Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) participated in the Spring 2024 NSSE cycle at the request of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) as required by the 2020-25 Quality Assurance Funding (QAF) guidelines for continuous improvement purposes.

Institutional Response Rates

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) launched its NSSE 2024 campaign in the early spring of 2024 as a mean to raise awareness of the survey and to increase student participation. The campaign was a collaborative effort with several offices and departments to increase the response rate. Participants had the opportunity to win one of several prizes (e.g., \$50 Vista Card, faculty parking permit, and \$15 flex bucks). Consequently, the overall response rate for the University was 16%. NSSE sent invitations to 5526 FY students and seniors attending MTSU, and 900 students responded.

NSSE noted an overall decline of three percentage point in the response rate for U.S. NSSE 2024 institutions compared to the previous year (23% versus 26%). MTSU response rates mimicked national trends with a drop in participation rates observed intra-institutional wide. Thus, FY students' rates decreased from 28% in 2019 to 19% in 2024, while seniors' rates went from 24% to 14% for the same period: the University's overall rate declined from 26% to 16% for this period (see Chart 1 and Chart 2).

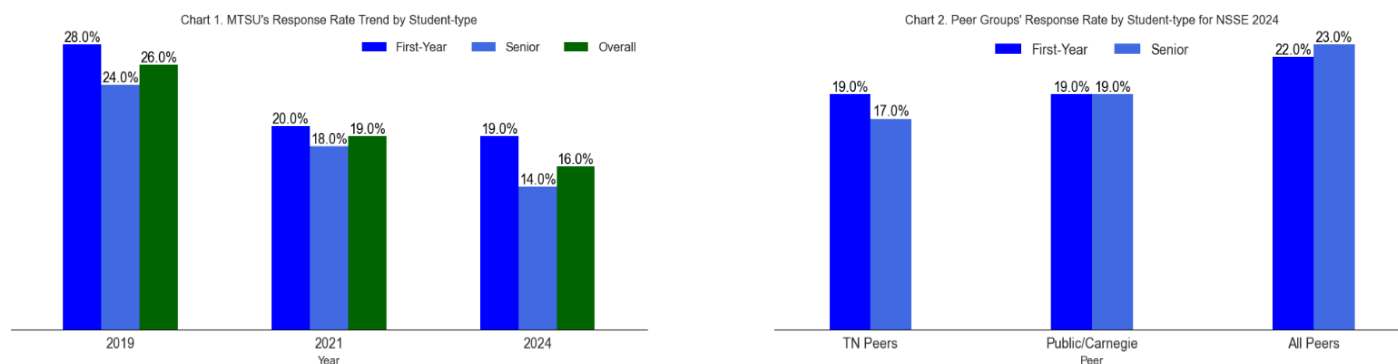


Chart 1 shows FY students responded at a comparable rate to all peer groups, but the rate for seniors at MTSU was lower than all its peers—a difference ranging from three percentage points (TN Peers, Public/Carnegie) to nine percentage points (All Peers). However, the average response rate for large institutions (10,000 or more undergraduate enrollment) this cycle was 16%: 69 out 344 institutions that participated in NSSE 2024 were classified as large institutions. In contrast, institutions with an enrollment of 2,500 or fewer had an average response of 28%.

NSSE 2024 Engagement Overview

NSSE constructed ten engagement indicators (EI) furthered grouped into four themes to represent the multi-dimensional nature of student engagement at national, sector, institutional, and intra-institutional

levels. Thus, each indicator provides information about distinct aspects of student engagement by grouping sets of related survey questions together and summarizing the responses¹. Figure 1 displays the four themes and ten indicators.

Figure 1 below shows FY students at MTSU did not differ significantly ($p < 0.05$) from students at peer institutions on four of the ten indicators: Higher-Order Learning (HOL), Reflective & Integrative Learning (RIL), Learning Strategies (LS), and Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI). This held true for seniors at MTSU on half of the ten indicators: HOL, RIL, Quantitative Reasoning (QR), Discussion with Diverse Others (DDO), and Supportive Environment (SE). It seems Collaborative Learning (CL) is a shared challenge for both FY students and seniors at the University. Outcomes for both groups compared to peer institutions are described in greater details in the sections below: *Accomplishments* and *Challenges*.

Figure 1. Engagement Indicators: MTSU Overview

First-Year Students		Your first-year students compared to TN Peers	Your first-year students compared to Public/Carnegie	Your first-year students compared to Peers
Theme	Engagement Indicator			
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	--	--	--
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	--	--	--
	Learning Strategies	--	--	--
	Quantitative Reasoning	▽	▽	▽
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	▽	▽	▽
	Discussions with Diverse Others	--	△	--
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	--	--	--
	Effective Teaching Practices	--	△	△
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	▽	--	--
	Supportive Environment	▽	--	--
Seniors		Your seniors compared to TN Peers	Your seniors compared to Public/Carnegie	Your seniors compared to Peers
Theme	Engagement Indicator			
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	--	--	--
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	--	--	--
	Learning Strategies	--	△	--
	Quantitative Reasoning	--	--	--
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	▽	▽	--
	Discussions with Diverse Others	--	--	--
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	--	△	△
	Effective Teaching Practices	--	△	△
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	△	△	△
	Supportive Environment	--	--	--

△ significantly ↑ with an effect size < 0.3 magnitude ▽ significantly ↓ with an effect size < 0.3 magnitude

Accomplishments

FY students

MTSU score significantly higher than at least one peer for an engagement indicator:

- ◇ Discussions with Diverse Others (Public/Carnegie) △

MTSU score significantly higher than two or more peers for an engagement indicator:

- ◇ Effective Teaching Practices (Public/Carnegie, Peers) △

Seniors

MTSU score significantly higher than at least one peer for an engagement indicator:

- ◇ Learning Strategies (Public/Carnegie) △

MTSU scores significantly higher than two or more peers for an engagement indicator:

- ◇ Effective Teaching Practices (Public/Carnegie, Peers) △
- ◇ Student-Faculty Interaction (Public/Carnegie, Peers) △

¹ *Engagement Indicators*. (n.d.). Evidence-Based Improvement in Higher Education. <https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/survey-instruments/engagement-indicators.html>

- ◇ Quality of Interaction (TN Peers, Public/Carnegie, Peers) ▲

Challenges

FY students

MTSU scores significantly lower than at least one peer for an engagement indicator:

- ◇ Quality of Interactions (TN Peers) ▼
- ◇ Supportive Environment (TN Peers) ▼

MTSU scores significantly lower than two or more peers for an engagement indicator:

- ◇ Quantitative Reasoning (TN Peers, Public/Carnegie, Peers) ▼
- ◇ Collaborative Learning (TN Peers, Public/Carnegie, Peers) ▼

Seniors

MTSU score significantly lower than two or more peers for an engagement indicator:

- ◇ Collaborative Learning (TN Peers, Public/Carnegie) ▼

Table 1 expands on Figure 1 by examining the University's mean score and the effect size (magnitude of the difference) for each indicator. Indicator scores are deprived averages based on select survey items converted to a 60-point scale (Never=0, Sometimes=20, Often=40, Very Often=60). NSSE defined an effect size of 0.1 as small, 0.3 as medium, and 0.5 as large. Table 1 compares MTSU students with its peers and highlights areas where significant differences emerged. Based on Table 1, the QR was the notable indicator for FY students compared to Peers (-0.20 effect size), while Quality of Interaction (QI) stood out for seniors compared to Peers (+0.29 effect size).

Table 1. Mean Scores by Student-type and Peer Groups

	MTSU	Your first-year students compared with						MTSU	Your seniors compared with					
Mean Comparisons		TN Peers		Public/Carnegie		Peers			TN Peers		Public/Carnegie		Peers	
Engagement Indicator	Mean	Mean	Effect size	Mean	Effect size	Mean	Effect size	Mean	Mean	Effect size	Mean	Effect size	Mean	Effect size
Higher-Order Learning	38.2	38.2	.00	37.7	.04	38.1	.01	40.9	40.6	.02	40.3	.04	40.6	.02
Reflective & Integrative Learning	36.0	35.4	.05	35.4	.05	35.9	.01	38.5	37.8	.05	38.2	.02	38.9	-.03
Learning Strategies	38.0	39.1	-.08	37.4	.04	37.9	.01	40.7	40.3	.02	38.9 *	.12	39.4	.09
Quantitative Reasoning	27.0	29.3 *	-.14	29.2 *	-.14	30.2 ***	-.20	30.7	31.5	-.05	30.9	-.01	31.6	-.06
Engagement Indicator	Mean	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	size
Collaborative Learning	28.8	30.3 *	-.11	30.3 *	-.11	30.3 *	-.10	30.5	32.6 **	-.14	32.0 *	-.11	31.9	-.10
Discussions with Diverse Others	39.9	39.4	.03	37.8 *	.13	39.9	.00	40.0	40.1	-.01	38.7	.08	40.7	-.04
Engagement Indicator	Mean	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	size
Student-Faculty Interaction	21.1	22.1	-.07	21.5	-.03	21.9	-.05	26.7	25.2	.09	24.1 **	.16	24.2 **	.15
Effective Teaching Practices	40.3	39.7	.05	38.1 **	.17	38.1 **	.16	42.1	41.0	.08	39.8 ***	.16	39.9 **	.16
Engagement Indicator	Mean	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	Mean	size	Mean	size	Mean	size
Quality of Interactions	42.8	44.2 *	-.12	42.3	.04	42.1	.06	45.7	44.3 *	.12	42.2 ***	.28	42.2 ***	.29
Supportive Environment	34.4	36.6 **	-.16	34.6	-.01	35.2	-.06	33.2	33.5	-.03	32.2	.07	32.7	.04

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Figure 2 shows how MTSU performed compared to the top 50% and top 10% of the highest performing NSSE 2024 participating institutions. MTSU scores were generally lower than these two groups with an effect size greater than 0.1 (small to modest). However, FY students at MTSU scores were at least comparable to NSSE top 50% on two indicators: *Discussions with Diverse Others* and *Effective Teaching Practices*. In contrast, seniors at MTSU scores were comparable to the top 50% on four indicators: *Learning Strategies*, *Discussions with Diverse Others*, *Effective Teaching Practices*, and *Quality of Interaction*.

Figure 2. Mean Scores for Top 50% and Top 10% NSSE Institutions

First-Year Students			Your first-year students compared with					
Theme	Engagement Indicator	MTSU Mean	NSSE Top 50%			NSSE Top 10%		
			Mean	Effect size	✓	Mean	Effect size	✓
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	38.2	39.8 *	-.12		42.4 ***	-.34	
	Reflective and Integrative Learning	36.0	37.3 *	-.11		39.9 ***	-.33	
	Learning Strategies	38.0	40.2 **	-.16		43.1 ***	-.36	
	Quantitative Reasoning	27.0	30.8 ***	-.25		33.3 ***	-.41	
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	28.8	33.4 ***	-.33		36.7 ***	-.58	
	Discussions with Diverse Others	39.9	40.7	-.05	✓	44.2 ***	-.31	
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	21.1	25.4 ***	-.28		29.9 ***	-.57	
	Effective Teaching Practices	40.3	40.8	-.03	✓	43.6 ***	-.23	
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	42.8	45.7 ***	-.25		48.7 ***	-.50	
	Supportive Environment	34.4	37.1 ***	-.21		40.4 ***	-.47	
Seniors			Your seniors compared with					
Theme	Engagement Indicator	MTSU Mean	NSSE Top 50%			NSSE Top 10%		
			Mean	Effect size	✓	Mean	Effect size	✓
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	40.9	42.4 *	-.11		44.9 ***	-.31	
	Reflective and Integrative Learning	38.5	40.6 ***	-.17		43.2 ***	-.40	
	Learning Strategies	40.7	41.2	-.03	✓	44.1 ***	-.24	
	Quantitative Reasoning	30.7	32.8 **	-.13		36.2 ***	-.34	
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	30.5	34.7 ***	-.30		38.0 ***	-.55	
	Discussions with Diverse Others	40.0	41.4	-.09	✓	44.1 ***	-.28	
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	26.7	29.9 ***	-.20		34.9 ***	-.51	
	Effective Teaching Practices	42.1	42.5	-.03	✓	45.2 ***	-.24	
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	45.7	45.4	.03	✓	48.1 ***	-.19	
	Supportive Environment	33.2	34.7 *	-.10		38.0 ***	-.35	

p < .05, **p < .01, *p < .001 (2-tailed)*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

MTSU Compared to TN Peers

NSSE provides insight into institutions' performance on EI by drilling down and examining individual survey items. The section below shows the five items where MTSU scores exceeded and lagged the most relative to its TN Peers. Individual items in parentheses denote whether the item is included in a specific EI or High-Impact Practice (HIPs) activity. The tables below illustrate areas of strength and challenges unique and common to both FY students and seniors compared to TN Peers.

Table 2. Comparison for FY students

Highest Performing Items	Lowest Performing Items
Discussions with...People from countries other than your own: +15	Quality of interactions with students(QI): -7
Instructors provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments(ET): +9	Quality of interactions with student services staff (...) (QI): -9
Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source (HO): +7	I feel like part of the community at this institution (SB): -9
Discussions with... People of races or ethnicities other than your own(DD): +6	Institution emphasis on providing opportunities to be involved socially (SE): -9
Instructors provided feedback on a draft or work in progress (ET): +5	Institution emphasis on attending campus activities and events (...) (SE): -12

Table 3. Comparison for Senior students

Highest Performing Items	Lowest Performing Items
Quality of interactions with faculty (QI): +10	Institution emphasis on attending campus activities and events (...) (SE): -5
Discussions with...People from countries other than your own: +8	Institution emphasis on providing opportunities to be involved socially (SE): -6
Instructors provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments (ET): +8	Worked with a faculty member on a research project (HIP): -6

Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices (...) (QI): +7	Worked with other students on course projects or assignments (CL): -8
Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member (SF): +6	Participated in an internship, co-op, field exp., student teach., clinical placement. (HIP): -12

Chart 3 highlights differences and commonalities with peer institutions related to participation in HIPs activities, overall satisfaction with the institution, and satisfaction with college selection. Both FY students and seniors at the University were less likely to participate in two or more HIPs activities (10%) than their peers. However, the differences for FY students were not as great as that of seniors, where differences in participation ranged from five percentage points (Public/Carnegie and Peers) to ten percentage points (TN Peers). Nevertheless, seniors were just as likely to rate their overall experience at MTSU as “Excellent/or Good” (82%) as their peers: 84%, 81%, and 81%, respectively. MTSU seniors were slightly more likely to say they would “Definitely/or Probably” (86%) select the same institution if they could start over compared to their peers—(Public/Carnegie 82%, Peers 81%). For the same two survey items, FY students’ responses were more favorable than their senior counterpart and FY peers.

Chart 3. High Impact Practices(HIPs) and Overall Satisfaction(NSSE 2024)

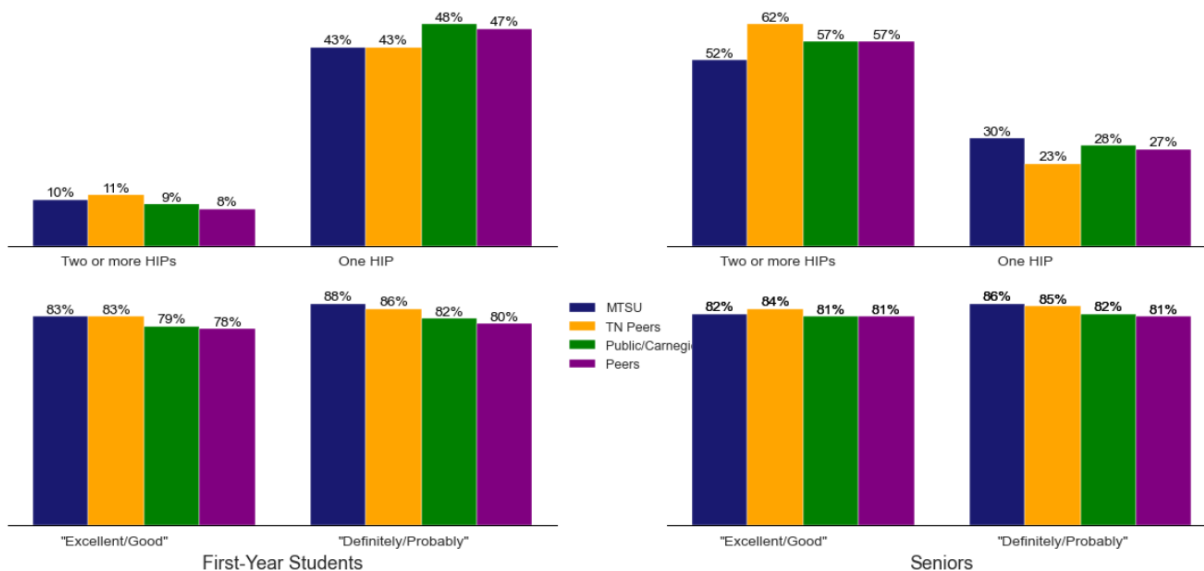
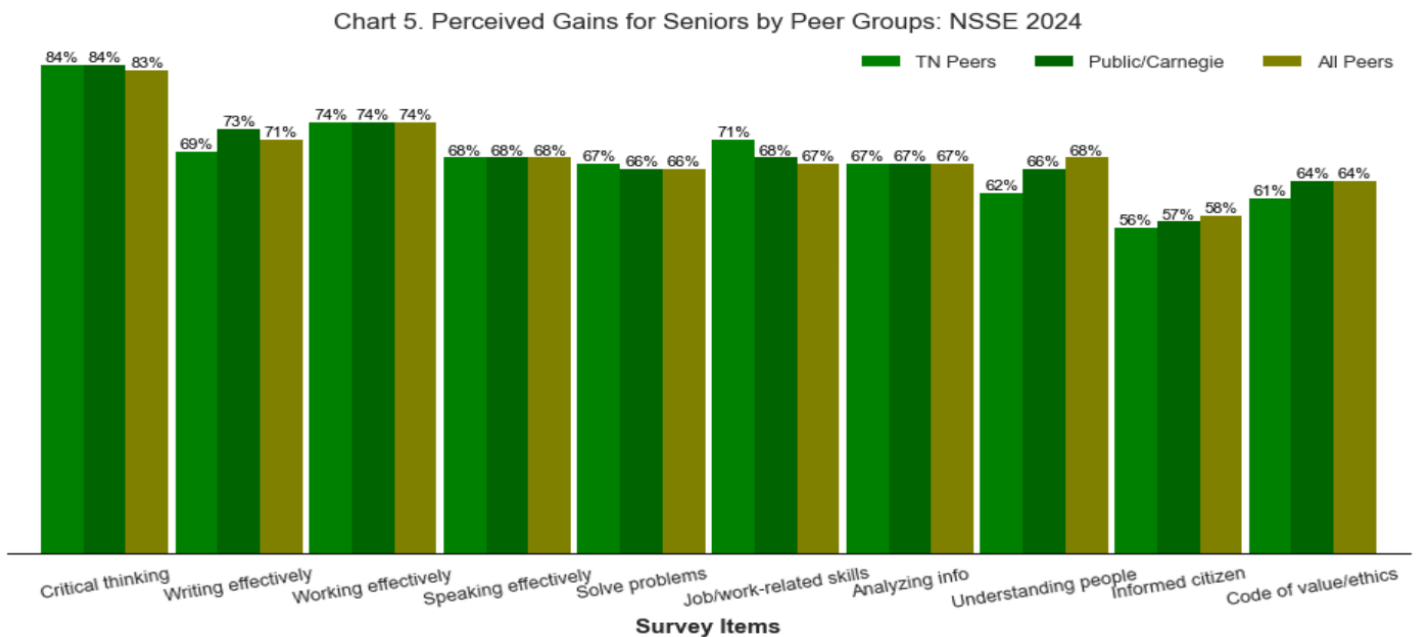
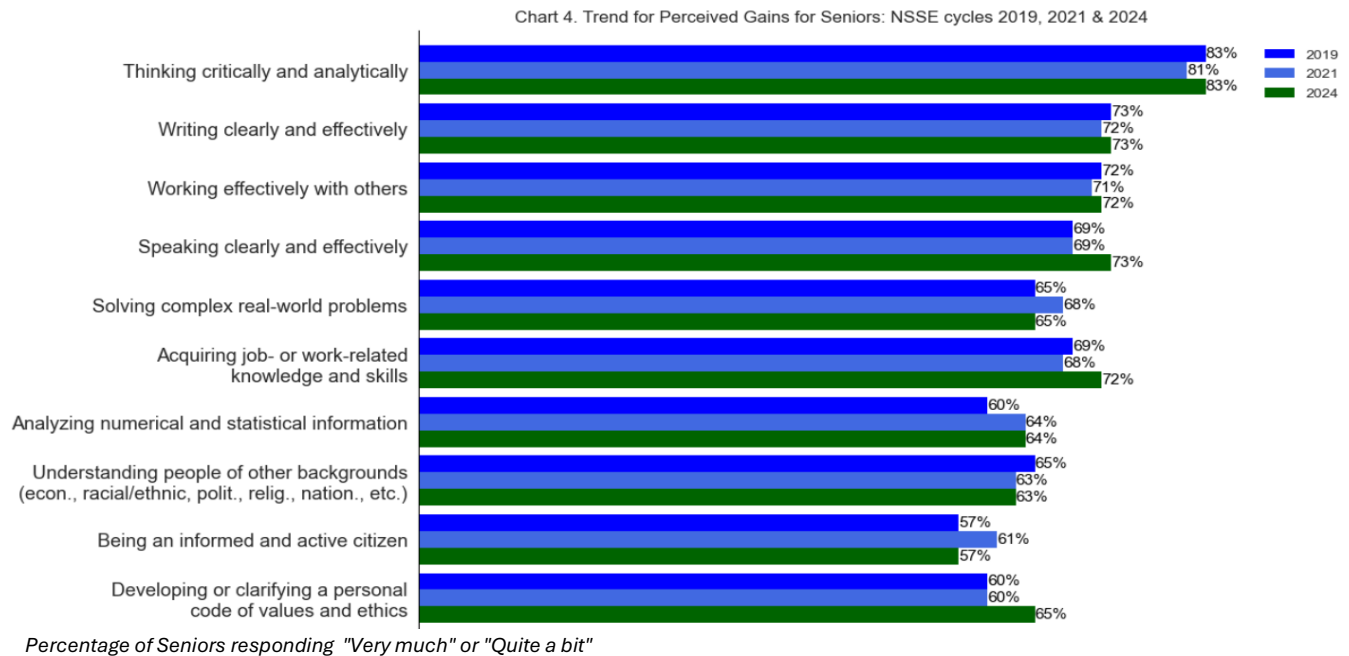


Chart 4 examines trends for perceived gains for seniors over time at the University, and Chart 5 explores similar gains for peers for NSSE 2024. For seniors at MTSU, the greatest gains were in “thinking critically and analytically” (83%), “writing clearly and effectively” (73%), and “speaking clearly and effectively” (73%) for NSSE 2024. However, “developing or clarifying a personal code..” (65%) increased by five percentage points compared to earlier cycles (NSSE 2019: 60%, NSSE 2021: 60%). In contrast, there were decreases in several areas compared to earlier cycles: “solving complex real-world...” (NSSE 2021: 68%), “understanding people of other backgrounds...” (NSSE 2019: 65%) , and “being an informed and active...” (NSSE 2021: 61%).

For NSSE 2024, MTSU seniors viewed their gains more favorably (by three percentage points or more) than peers for “speaking clearly and effectively” (TN Peers 68%, Public/Carnegie 68%,

Peers 68%), “writing clearly and effectively” (TN Peer 69%), and “acquiring job- or...” (Public/Carnegie 68%, Peers 67%). Conversely, seniors at peer institutions responded more favorably for “analyzing numerical and statistical...” (TN Peers 67%, Public/Carnegie 67%, All Peers 67%), and “understanding people of other...” (Public/Carnegie 66%, All Peers 68%)—see Chart 4 and Chart 5.

Trends in Perception for Seniors



Summary

Preliminary analyses highlight achievements and challenges for FY students and seniors at MTSU. The sample was sizeable and resembled the population in a number of areas (e.g., caseload status, college, department, race/ethnicity, etc.), so custom reports will expand upon the information provided in this overview. FY students at the University lagged behind their peers on several EIs, while seniors were comparable to or surpassed their peers on EIs. Thus, this observation suggests MTSU students undergo a substantial amount of growth from the onset of their academy journey to the end.