



Faculty Engagement Day (FED) 2025: Summary of Findings

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Reporting (IER)

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Executive Summary

On July 17, 2025, a Faculty Engagement Day (FED) was conducted to review core objectives assessment results and propose improvements.

Faculty members were organized into groups based on core objectives and presented with multiple data sets, including specific core objective assessment results, NSSE data, and Exit Survey data. The day's activities included a starting presentation to explain the process and logistics, individual reflection using a Reflection Sheet, followed by small-group discussions, and reporting of findings to the larger group.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting (IER) coordinated and facilitated the event, and the key findings and recommendations presented in this report reflect faculty input gathered throughout the day.

Key findings from faculty input include:

- **Scaffolding and Instruction Sequencing:** Faculty identified the need for better scaffolded, low-stakes practice to develop skills and knowledge assessed in signature assignments.
- **Data Transparency and Usability:** Faculty consistently asked for visual dashboards, disaggregated data, sample sizes, and rater-reliability notes, indicating that current reporting formats require re-evaluation.
- **Misalignment Between Assignments and Core Objectives:** Faculty noted that many assignment prompts do not consistently require students to demonstrate the specific skills evaluated by core objective rubrics; a concern also identified during FED 2024.

IER Recommendations based on faculty discussions:

- **Scaffolding and Instruction Sequencing:**

Recommendation: IER will collaborate with the Center for research on Teaching and Learning Effectiveness to add a module to the Core Objective Course focusing on methods of scaffolding course content to develop core objectives. This course was developed based on key findings from the 2024 FED.

- **Data Transparency and Usability:**

Recommendation: IER will revise the data analysis strategy based on faculty feedback, focusing on adding data disaggregated by level, modality, major, and transfer status, with sample sizes and reliability notes, to support departmental curriculum review.

- **Misalignment Between Assignments and Core Objectives:**

Recommendation: IER will curate and make available a repository of successful signature assignment prompts organized by core objective, so faculty have vetted examples to reference when designing or revising their own assignments.

Thematic Overview of Collected Data

This section summarizes the main recommendations that emerged across core objectives during small-group discussions and individual reflection worksheets. These themes inform the Executive Summary recommendations.

Legend:

Critical Thinking = CT

Empirical & Quantitative Skills = EQS

Personal Responsibility = PR

Social Responsibility = SR

Teamwork = TW

Faculty Recommendations for Curricular & Instructional Improvements

Faculty should align assignment prompts and grading criteria directly to the rubric dimensions and make the expected evidence explicit in instructions.

- CT: Revise prompts to require a defended position with sources; map steps to rubric rows
- EQS: Add explicit “identify and test assumptions” criteria in task directions
- PR: Backward-design activities so students apply ethical frameworks, not just recognize issues
- SR: Rewrite prompts to elicit empathy/openness rather than assume they’ll appear
- TW: Use teamwork rubrics in grading, tied to contribution, climate, and role clarity

Faculty should sequence low-stakes, targeted practice across the term that rehearses specific rubric skills before the signature assignment.

- CT: Short “claim–evidence–warrant” exercises leading to the capstone paper
- EQS: Weekly mini-tasks that surface and evaluate assumptions with data
- PR: Case analyses that progress from identifying stakeholders to evaluating perspectives
- SR: Reflective journals → issue analysis → applied action proposal
- TW: Staged team skills—roles, peer feedback, conflict resolution—before a major project

Faculty should increase authenticity and motivation by linking tasks to disciplinary contexts and real-world problems.

- CT: Discipline-anchored topics to deepen buy-in and rigor
- EQS: Use program-specific datasets; require written interpretation, not just calculations
- PR: Apply professional codes/standards to realistic dilemmas
- SR: Service-learning or community-partner briefs to show impact
- TW: Cross-course/team projects aligned to industry-style deliverables

Faculty Recommendations for Student & Faculty Support Services / Resources

IER, in collaboration with the Office of Distance Education, should provide training to introduce the core curriculum, core objectives, core courses, and align signature assignments with core objectives and rubric dimensions.

- CT: Workshops on designing for evidence/position; norming on VALUE dimensions

- EQS: Calibration on the “Assumptions” dimension with shared exemplars
- PR/SR: How to teach and assess empathy, openness, and ethical application
- TW: Designing/assessing group work; using peer-evaluation tools effectively

IER, in consultation with the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC), should build and maintain a resource center to provide supporting material to faculty members teaching core courses (e.g., reusable templates and annotated exemplars aligned to each core rubric, etc.).

- CT: Annotated samples showing proficient “use of evidence”
- EQS: Micro-lessons on articulating assumptions and interpreting results
- PR: Prompts that require evaluation of competing perspectives
- SR: Reflection stems that make values visible in writing
- TW: Peer-evaluation templates; guidance on roles and accountability

Faculty Recommendations for Assessment & Data Collection Practices

IER should make results easier to interpret and act on by publishing visual dashboards that include disaggregation (level, major, modality, transfer status), sample sizes, and rater-reliability notes.

Departments should use these dashboards during curriculum reviews to target course-level changes.

- All: Dashboards with visuals, sample sizes, and rater-reliability notes
- All: Disaggregate by level, major, modality, transfer status

IER, in consultation with AIG, should strengthen evidence triangulation by aligning NSSE/Exit items (where feasible) to rubric constructs.

- All: Pair NSSE/Exit indicators with representative rubric results and short student reflections
- EQS: Include brief write-ups explaining methods/assumptions with numeric work
- TW: Combine rubric scores with peer ratings and contribution reflections

IER should consider implementing longitudinal assessment of core by adding cohort checkpoints (e.g., entry and exit of core curriculum, reporting transfer status, etc.) to ensure valid comparisons over time.

- All: Entry to mid-program to capstone checkpoints for cohorts
- CT/EQS: Note transfer status/exposure to UTA core when interpreting trends
- SR/TW: Track topic/course type to understand engagement effects

Detailed Findings by Core Objectives

This section presents detailed findings and recommendations offered by faculty during the Faculty Engagement Day, separated by core objectives.

Critical Thinking Skills

Faculty observed little to no improvement in rubric-scored critical thinking across academic levels, with several noting that seniors often performed at levels comparable to first-year students. While a few dimensions showed minor upticks, the overall pattern signaled a performance plateau. Participants discussed potential contributors, including the lingering effects of COVID-era learning loss, a steady influx of transfer students who may not have experienced UTA's intended scaffolding for the core, and the prevalence of surface-level task completion rather than deeper analysis.

A recurring concern was misalignment between assignment prompts and rubric expectations, especially for "Student's Position" and "Use of Evidence." Faculty reported that many prompts let students complete the task without explicitly defending a claim with credible sources or evaluating competing perspectives. At the same time, NSSE and Exit surveys' self-ratings suggested students feel confident about their critical thinking; yet those perceptions did not align with scoring results. Several faculty members also asked for data displays (e.g., visuals, disaggregation, and reliability notes etc.) to aid interpretation and instructional planning.

Faculty Recommendations:

- Make expectations explicit in prompts and grading: Embed rubric language (e.g., "defend a position," "evaluate evidence," "consider alternatives") directly in instructions and scoring.
- Scaffold practice before the signature task: Use short, staged activities (claim–evidence–warrant exercises, annotated source evaluations, counterargument drills) that build toward the final assignment.
- Reinforce foundational skills: Provide targeted supports for critical reading and analytical writing (e.g., micro-lessons in Canvas, tutoring referrals, discipline-tailored guides).
- Norming and exemplars: Offer calibration sessions for instructors and share annotated exemplars at benchmark levels to align expectations and feedback.
- Improve data usability: Deliver visualized, disaggregated dashboards with sample sizes and rater-reliability notes; pair results with brief qualitative reflections to contextualize scores.
- Address perception–performance gaps: Give students early, rubric-based feedback and brief metacognitive reflections so self-perception calibrates to demonstrated performance.
- Consider transfer context: Track students' exposure to UTA's core sequence (including transfers) when interpreting trends and planning interventions.

Empirical & Quantitative Skills

Faculty noted modest gains since 2022–23 but emphasized that growth remains slow and uneven. The "Assumptions" rubric dimension stood out as a persistent weakness; students were rarely provided the opportunity to make, test, or justify assumptions in their signature assignments. Several participants also raised interrater reliability concerns (calibration/clarity) and flagged

equity patterns (variation by race/ethnicity). A recurring theme was misalignment between common assignment prompts and what the rubric evaluates. Many tasks ask for calculations or plotting, but not written reasoning about why a method is appropriate or how assumptions affect conclusions. Consistent with other objectives, NSSE and Exit surveys' self-ratings showed higher confidence than core scoring outcomes.

Faculty Recommendations:

- Make assumptions explicit: Add prompt language that requires students to identify, justify, and test assumptions, and to discuss implications for results/uncertainty.
- Integrate reasoning with computation: Require short write-ups that accompany numeric work, explaining method choice, limitations, and interpretation.
- Scaffolded practice: Start with mini-tasks (selecting methods, articulating assumptions, sensitivity checks) leading to a final signature assignment.
- Calibration & exemplars: Conduct norming sessions focused on the “Assumptions” dimension; share annotated samples at multiple performance levels.
- Equity-aware review: Disaggregate results and target supports where subgroup gaps appear (e.g., score differences across race/ethnicity).
- Data usability: Provide visualized, disaggregated dashboards with sample sizes and reliability notes to guide instructional adjustments.

Personal Responsibility

Compared with earlier years, faculty saw lower performance in the 2023-24 data, as compared to the scores when the same rubric was used in previous years. Participants attributed gaps to assignments that emphasize recognition of issues more than application and evaluation, and to students' limited practice articulating reasoned justifications for actions. Indirect indicators, NSSE and Exit surveys, again outpaced rubric results, suggesting that survey items or student self-perceptions do not map onto the rubric's dimensions.

Faculty Recommendations:

- Backward design for application: Redesign tasks so students must apply an ethical framework, evaluate competing perspectives, and justify a position.
- Prompt language & rubric mapping: Embed rubric terms (e.g., *evaluation of perspectives*, *application of concepts*) directly into instructions and grading.
- Scaffolded cases: Progress from stakeholder/values identification → framework application → comparative evaluation → defended recommendation.
- Faculty resources: Provide exemplars of proficient ethical analyses and brief micro-lessons on applying frameworks in discipline-specific contexts.
- Survey alignment: Where feasible, revise indirect items to mirror rubric constructs; pair surveys with representative rubric results for context.

Social Responsibility

Results show modest gains since 2022–23, alongside improved rater agreement in 2024–25. However, scores remain below 2016 levels. In 2023-24 data, an unexpected pattern was juniors outperforming seniors in all dimensions, which the faculty linked to engagement and relevance (e.g., seniors prioritizing major/capstone work). Faculty emphasized that many prompts assume

evidence will appear in writing but do not explicitly ask for evidence of empathy, curiosity, or openness.

Faculty Recommendations:

- Prompt for visible values: Add explicit requirements (e.g., perspective-taking, self-reflection on bias, community impact analysis so empathy/openness are demonstrated in artifacts.
- Engagement via authenticity: Use real-world/community-partner problems, policy briefs, or service-learning reflections to increase relevance.
- Scaffold reflection: Sequence short reflective writes → issue analyses → applied proposals aligned to rubric rows.
- Spread beyond humanities: Encourage adoption in STEM and professional programs with discipline-specific exemplars.
- Data clarity: Continue reliability checks and provide disaggregated visuals (level, course type, topic) to understand engagement effects.

Teamwork

Faculty reported high student performance in teamwork based on direct (core data) and indirect (NSSE and Exit surveys) assessment. Mean scores for all dimensions were above 4 out of 5 points scale. Note: Teamwork data was generated in a sole assessment setting where the course instructor evaluates their students' teamwork skills and assigns scores for each dimension of the rubric.

Faculty Recommendations:

- Make contribution measurable: Pair rubric scoring with peer-evaluation tools and brief contribution reflections to capture effort/role clarity.
- Scaffold team skills: Stage team contracts, role rotations, feedback cycles, and conflict-resolution drills before the major group deliverable.
- Rubric-aligned grading: Tie a portion of the grade to teamwork behaviors (contribution, climate, accountability) using a shared rubric.
- Engagement opportunities: Expand research/practice-based collaborations with faculty/partners; align team projects to industry-style deliverables.
- Data improvements: Increase freshman sample size for trend comparisons; disaggregate by major/modality/team type to identify context effects.

Continuity with FED 2024

FED 2025 followed the pilot-year model established in FED 2024: faculty were organized by core objective, reviewed direct (rubric-scored artifacts) and indirect (NSSE, Exit Survey) evidence, completed individual reflections, and synthesized themes in small groups. IER again consolidated inputs to derive findings and actionable recommendations. The 2025 results echo several 2024 themes—particularly assignment–rubric alignment, targeted faculty development, and integration support—while adding sharper emphasis on data transparency (visualization, disaggregation), persistent perception–performance gaps, and emerging concerns such as AI’s effect on higher-order skills.

Progress on 2024 Recommendations

A comparison of FED 2025 recommendations with the 2024 set shows strong continuity, with substantial overlap in the core areas of Alignment, Training, and Integration. In fact, several 2025 items directly extend 2024 actions already underway. Table 1 shows the progress of recommendations from the FED 2024 report.

2024 Recommendation	Status	Evidence/Notes
Alignment: Collection & Review of Signature Assignments and Rubrics	✓ Completed	Signature Assignments Reviewed: 96 Courses: 76 Departments: 15 Colleges/Schools: 5
Alignment: Revision of Signature Assignments	➤ In Progress	Revision Recommended to Signature Assignments: 33
Training: Develop a course on core objectives assessment	➤ In Progress	The course is in progress with a target date to be complete in Spring 2026.
Integration: Train faculty by providing 1:1 consultation	➤ In Progress and Ongoing	1:1 consultation: 7 Group consultations where all faculty teaching core courses attended: 2
*Inclusion: Include a variety of courses in the core assessment	➤ In Progress and Ongoing	In the next scoring sessions, use courses for core assessment that were not used in the past.

* This was not a recommendation, but it came up as a byproduct of the Collection and Review of Signature Assignments.