

Reclaiming Authentic Self-Reflection

Does a Restructured Journaling Assignment Change How MBA Students Write?

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01 Context & Motivation

- Progressively **less reflective** and **more generic** final papers in Haas' core EWMBA Leadership Communications.
- Redesigned assignment** for Spring 2026 requiring three structured self-reflection entries and option for recorded peer-dialogue transcripts.

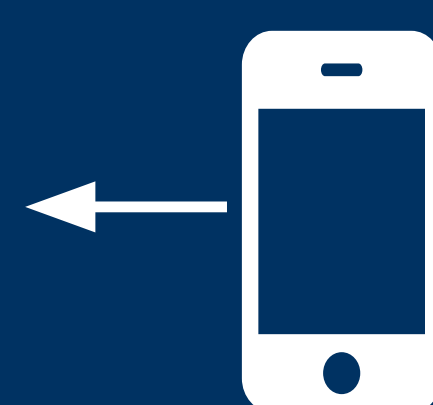
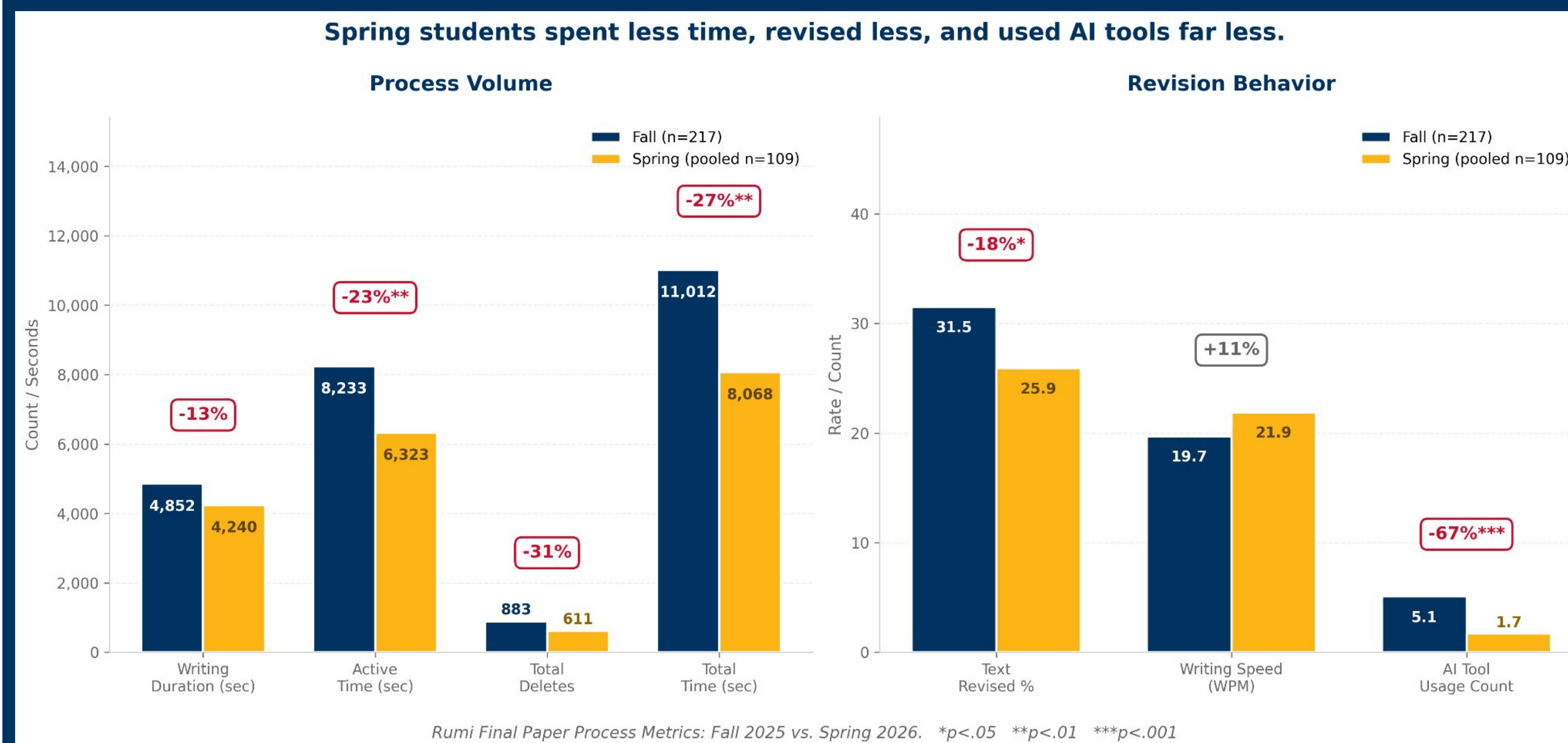
02 Research Questions

- Did the redesigned assignment change **how students wrote** the final paper?
- Did it change the **substance and depth** of journal reflection?
- Did the **transcript option** yield comparable engagement to written journals?

03 Research Methods

- Cohort comparison: **Fall (n=217) vs Spring (n=109)** final-paper Rumi process metrics compared to journal-type choices (written, transcript, combination).
- AI (Claude) **qualitative coding review** of stratified sample of 30 journal entries (15/semester)
- Bias controls:** Section and timing checks.

Restructuring the journaling assignment dramatically changed *how* students wrote their final papers, suggesting they arrived at the paper with their thinking already organized.



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04 Results

- Process changed dramatically.** Spring students used **23% less active time**, **18% lower revision rate**, and **68% fewer AI tool calls**. (Final paper grades held constant by design — graded to a 3.65 GPA target.)
- Specificity and integration with course concepts rose modestly.** Whether reflection itself deepened could not be determined from a 30-journal sample.
- Format choice didn't predict performance.**

05 Conclusions

- Scaffolding works at the level of process and structure** — students arrive at the paper with thinking pre-organized and write more efficiently.
- Whether scaffolding deepens reflection remains an open question.** Detecting depth changes will require larger samples and multi-coder qualitative methods.
- Format flexibility** (journal vs. transcript) **widened access** without compromising process or content.

06 Future Directions

- Test depth more rigorously** with larger samples and multiple independent coders before drawing conclusions about reflection quality in both journals and final papers.
- Test use of additional AI prompts** in Rumi beyond spellcheck & grammar.
- Compare results across **different student groups** in same course: EWMBA, Flex EWMBA, eMBA.