MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Morgan's Structured Teaching Assistant Program (MSTAP): Innovations in Teaching Future Educators

Mark Garrison, PhD

Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Morgan State University was designated a **National Treasure** by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2016. **The Entire Campus**

Today's Agenda

1. Setting the Context
   a. Morgan's opportunity for change
   b. A challenge for graduate education
2. Teaching Assistantship Project: MSTAP
3. Award for Innovation
4. A Research Opportunity

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Setting the Context

a. Morgan's opportunity
b. A challenge for graduate education

MSU Mission and Vision

- Morgan State University is the **premier public urban research university** in Maryland known for its excellence in teaching, intensive research, effective public service, and community engagement. Morgan prepares diverse and competitive graduates for success in a global, interdependent society.

- Founded 1867 as Centenary Biblical Institute.

- One of nation's leading public HBCUs.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

About Morgan State University

- R2: Doctoral Research — High Research activity. (84+ million external funds, 22-23.)
- 9850 total enrollment.
- 1500 graduate students.
- 31 doctoral programs; 70 doctorates annually
  - 13 are recently approved doctoral programs.
- 45 masters programs; 300 masters annually.

Recent Events at Morgan

- Maryland's HBCU Settlement:
  - $577 Million over ten years, FY23 through FY32
  - Morgan's share FY25 about $26 million
- MacKenzie Scott Gift, December 2020
  - $40 million, followed by many gifts
- State Funded Research Centers
  - 7 new centers as of last Fall about $22 million
  - Funds new faculty, new graduate support, etc.

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Education at Morgan

Enrollment has increased steadily, with a recent shift to being predominantly doctoral

- *Enrollment:*
  - Fall Census **1509**; Final Count **1535**
  - Doctoral Enrollment **800**
  - Masters Enrollment **700**
  - Certificate Enrollment **29**

- *Graduation:*
  - **Awarded our 1000th Doctorate Fall 2022**

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Education at Morgan

Enrollment has increased steadily, with a recent shift to being predominantly doctoral

Challenging conditions at Morgan beginning Fall 2021:

- Morgan's funding of doctoral students lags national norms significantly.
- The COVID-based programs (RICA and HICA) ended.
- Morgan's increasing research stature calls for reducing faculty instructional loads in favor of increased research and scholarly activity.
- Three years of dramatic undergraduate enrollment increases, with fourth year of continued growth anticipated.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Education at Morgan

More Challenges:

- Anxiety about losing touch with our HBCU identity embedded in a socially just and inclusive learning environment.
- Adding a large number of teaching assistantships without a clear and coherent plan would be a recipe for disaster.
- As of Fall 2021, the minimal use of TAs had no organized training or assessment mechanisms.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

The research dominant model.

The Research Apprentice Model

- **Doctoral Demographics:**
  - 55% Finish in 6 years.
  - Of that; 50% seek careers in Academe (@30).
  - Of that; 60% are successful (@15).
  - Of that; a tiny portion enter Research dominant institutions (maybe 1 or 2).
- However, the dominant model of doctoral instruction, especially in STEM, remains that of the **apprentice** in a research program.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Education Jeopardy

Besides,

Teaching is a distraction

Especially in the research apprentice model.

So it is often teaching is treated as a side line. And this may has worse consequences for minorities.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Education at Morgan

We must embrace an approach of inclusive, equitable, and diverse instruction.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Morgan is an HBCU with about 75% of our doctoral students representing one or more minority groups.

- There is a significant exodus of Blacks from higher education.

- This exodus is driven, in part, by the near toxic anxiety they observe in research-dominated, tenure-seeking behavior.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

MSTAP

Morgan's Structured Teaching Assistantship Project

Teaching Assistantship Project: MSTAP

Morgans circumstances provided a special opportunity to resolve issues.

These circumstance opened the opportunity for the creation of **Morgan's Structure Teaching Assistant Program**, **MSTAP**

This program has several innovative elements. The appointment as a TA requires full participation in all aspects of the program. Though content is flexible, all components of MSTAP are required of TAs across the university.

We intend for the MSTAP experience to change a few minds, not only of students, but also of the faculty caught in the apprentice model.

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Teaching Assistantship Project: MSTAP

MSTAP offers a new approach for Morgan to support graduate programming and the mission of student success

Project Purpose:

Create a comprehensive, University-wide program of Teaching Assistantships that promotes quality instruction and professional development for graduate students and achieves cost-effective benefits for the University community.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Teaching Assistantship Project: MSTAP

MSTAP offers a new approach for Morgan to support graduate programming and the mission of student success

Overarching Goals:

1. Provide in-depth instruction to TAs regarding all aspects of teaching and coordinate that instruction with coaching and feedback for the TAs; in turn, enhancing the progressive development of the TA from novice instructor to proficient teacher.

1. Create a TA experience that is as productive as possible, with attention to a range of issues like class management, well-designed learning outcomes and assessment, and deliberate attention to inclusive instruction in a highly diverse learner population.

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Teaching Assistantship Project

Programs Benefits

- ***For Graduate Students:*** Provides funding and critical professional development consistent with best practices.

- ***For Faculty:*** Provides recruitment opportunities and strengthens graduate programs across the University.

- ***For University:*** Reduces dependence on adjuncts and enhances methods of funding graduate students.

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Teaching Assistantship Project

Programs have special needs and differing concerns related to each doctoral student's readiness for instruction.

- *Flexibility:* Programs require individual, tailored plans.

- *Oversight:* Uniform oversight reduces irregularities.

- *Progressive Responsibility:* TAs must progress from **novice** to **proficient** in their capabilities as instructors, and whenever possible, demonstrate **distinguished** performance.

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Additional components include:

❖ Director of MSTAP

❖ Bi-Weekly Colloquia

❖ Mentoring with Instructional Supervisors

❖ Regular Professional Development
  ○ Center for Innovative Instruction and Scholarship
  ○ SGS Professional Development Events

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

MSTAP

Advanced coursework focused on mastery of post-secondary pedagogy is required of all TAs.

- ***GRAD 601: Introduction to Higher Education Instruction.*** Developed by CIIS and covers best practices in post-secondary pedagogy, online learning, basics of testing and assessment. **(Required)**

- ***GRAD 607: Understanding Student Outcomes through Tests, Measurement, Assessment, and Evaluation.*** Learn best practices in test development. Master assessment techniques and the role of assessment in student success. Understand the role of evaluation in higher education. **(Required)**

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

MSTAP

- ***GRAD 617 (or equivalent): Content Specific Instructional Practices.*** Each program or group of allied programs must develop a content specific course.

- ***GRAD 647 (or equivalent): Teaching Practicum***. At the TA III level, a course can be selected for observation and critique in the form of a practicum.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

MSTAP

MSTAP is grounded in the science of teaching, a reflective teaching approach, and close mentoring.

What is Reflective Teaching?

- Regularly review and reflect on instructional episode with critical view toward improving.

- Maintain a journal of these reflections, articulate good techniques as well as those you should avoid or improve, find new ways to engage.

- Establish goals for improvement based on discovered opportunities.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Long Term Objectives

- The best way to articulate our objectives is through the concepts of **Student Success and Career Readiness.**

- **Comprehensive Learner Record.** Morgan is moving to launch CLR, and the components of MSTAP can be both transcripted in traditional formats and badged in a CLR.

- **MSTAP** should have impact on a number of critical issues being faced by higher education today.

Critical Advantages

MSTAP graduates will have several advantages:

- They will have both transcripted and CLR evidence of advanced teaching skills and readiness to begin as a new faculty member.
- Less time spent learning to teach in the early probationary years will increase the chance of success with tenure.
- They will provide much needed role models for undergraduate minority students.
- Those who choose industry or government will be prepared to teach when opportunities arise.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Critical Advantages

For Morgan:

- MSTAP will fund about 25% of our doctoral students at any given time.
- More funding correlates with increased doctoral completion rates.
- The program will eventually reduce adjunct dependency.
- The program will contribute to the reduction of instructional workload.
- MSTAP with strengthen recruitment through success models and attractive funding.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Review Our Innovation

- Two required graduate courses for *all* doctoral TAs. Courses build skill and knowledge of best practices for higher education instruction.

- Unique course on test, measurement, assessment, and evaluation for content specialists created by assessment specialists.

- Additional programming developed to enhance student success and career readiness.

- Two additional, optional courses to receive a transcripted post baccalaureate certificate.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Award for Innovation

ETS®/CGS 2022 Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admissions through Completion

MSTAP

MSTAP has been recognized as an innovation in graduate education through the ETS®/CGS award.

From its inception in 2021, we recognized the potential for MSTAP to help us respond to a wide array challenges. Because we were establishing a comprehensive program in an environment with few pre-existing elements, the opportunity to study the impact of being a TA was quite enticing.

My first effort was to apply for the ETS®/CGS innovation award in 2022. The award is paying for faculty to develop the course series (GRAD 601 was already in place and underway).

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

A Research Opportunity

MSTAP Research

Very much emboldened by the ETS®/CGS award, we assembled a team from across campus, including education faculty, science and engineering faculty, and the Director of the *Center for Innovation in Instruction and Scholarship* (CIIS) and The Director of Graduate Professional Development to pursue an NSF Innovation in Graduate Education grant. We also enlisted our Center for Predictive Analytics (CPA) to develop, validate, and deploy an extensive assessment process that is central to our study.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Another Project

NSF Innovation in Graduate Education Award:
Evaluating an Innovative, Structured Teaching Assistantship Program: Impacts on Student Success and Career Readiness.

The central question is whether receiving a teaching assistantship—accompanied by course-based instructional training, significant professional development, and mentoring from well-trained mentors—increases or decreases the likelihood of student success and career readiness.

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

MSTAP Research

The circumstances of MSTAP provide for a unique living laboratory. Having no prior TA program, there are few obstacles to overcome in the implementation. This allows for inquiry and discovery.

There are three distinct interventions:
1) the MSTAP instruction;
2) mentor training and mentoring; and
3) enhanced professional development.

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MSTAP Research

These three interventions allow examination of five more specific empirical questions:

- What are the effects MSTAP on retention and completion?
- What is the impact of MSTAP on the TAs' program success and career readiness?
- What is the impact on time to degree?
- What are the changes in attitude and perception about the role of the TA appointment on overall readiness and success?
- How do undergraduate students experience instruction provided by TAs?

MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Thank You

mark.garrison@morgan.edu