SEP GTA Toolkit
Readiness Assessment

Readiness Checklist and Planning Tool: Get Ready, Get Set, Go!

Many campuses are exploring how to better prepare Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) for their teaching roles, particularly creating inclusive learning environments where all students thrive. The Readiness Checklist and Planning tool is intended to help campus leaders assess whether SEP's community of practice model for GTA training is a good fit for the campus and to begin early planning. The tool is organized into three sections:

1. *Defining your "Why" and Getting Traction.* Supports campuses with clarifying the rationale for launching GTA training, gathering support and buy-in from key stakeholders, and assessing institutional readiness.

2. *Assembling the team.* Helps leaders to identify the team and the support they will need to move the work forward.

3. *Supporting GTA Growth and Success.* Assesses whether campus conditions are conducive to sustained, meaningful engagement of GTAs.

Instructions

This tool is intended as a starting point for campuses considering launching a SEP community of practice with graduate students. We recommend that a small team complete the tool collaboratively and review responses together. Not every question will elicit a clear 'yes' or 'no'; in some cases, the answer may be 'not yet.' Completion of the tool may indicate that your campus is well-positioned to move forward—or it may highlight areas that require additional attention before launching, helping to ensure long-term success.

ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC & LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

Coalition of Urban Serving Universities

SEP Student Experience PROJECT

I. Defining Your Why and Getting Traction	Response (Yes/No/ Working on it)	
A. Is there an acknowledged need for change that the GTA training would address? SEP's model is intended to be part of a broader institutional effort to foster student belonging and support achievement for all students. It is most successful when stakeholders clearly understand how the training advances strategic goals and when there's an urgent need for change. Before proceeding, ensure there is a compelling rationale and adequate buy-in among college leaders, department chairs, and key faculty members.		
B. Do GTAs have a substantive role with teaching and/or supporting students? This training requires that graduate students have enough responsibility in the classroom and student interactions to implement SEP practices over a semester. Consider the roles of graduate students in your context. Are GTAs responsible for adjusting course curriculum to meet student needs? Are they the primary contact for a course and responsible for its delivery? Are they grading and providing actionable feedback to students? If so, then SEP's model may be a good fit.		
C. Is there a critical mass of "champions" who will support the work? Individuals that are well respected and have established networks within the department or college can act as catalysts for change. This may include a dean or department chair, associate dean, director of a program related to student success, or a faculty member with experience and expertise in using evidence-based practices to create supportive learning environments. These individuals will be invaluable in identifying resources, clearing obstacles, and signaling to others that this is a priority.		
D. Can you communicate how GTA training can benefit individuals at the institution? GTA benefits may include improving course experiences for all students, boosting GTA confidence and teaching skills, and fostering a growth mindset to help graduate students develop qualities needed for future success. There may be benefits for other individuals as well, such as faculty and lab coordinators who can gain insights or improvements into their own teaching practices. This resource describes these benefits and provides a starting point for defining what success would mean in your context.		

E. Do you have a plan to address potential barriers? Consider barriers that need to be tackled head on, and where you can be flexible or adaptable if issues arise. For example, helping faculty understand the importance of teaching is a common challenge. Many faculty still think that teaching effort impedes research success, despite evidence to the contrary (Shortlidge and Eddy, 2018; Feldone et al, 2011). If this is a barrier, you might need to enlist leaders who can make the case to faculty about the value of this effort to graduate students and the department, and reinforce the message over time.		

II. Setting the Team Up for Success	Response (Yes/No/ Working on it)	Campus Notes
A. Are there individuals in the department who are well-positioned to serve as Faculty Lead? The "Faculty Lead" champions the goal of equipping graduate students with knowledge and skills to foster inclusive learning environments and oversees the professional development of GTAs. This individual doesn't have to be an expert in SEP's research or practices, but they need to believe in the value of inclusive teaching, be willing to learn, and have agency to drive change.		
B. Are there faculty or staff on your campus who are trained in SEP's Evidence-Based Teaching Practices (ETPs)? Individuals with experience using SEP practices—or similar ETPs—can be valuable contributors to your GTA training team. They may serve as mentors to GTA fellows or participants, offer guest sessions, or share practical insights drawn from their own teaching. Their direct experience allows them to provide tactical guidance and highlight the real-world benefits of these approaches in everyday instructional settings.		
C. Is there a graduate student who could serve as a GTA Fellow to help lead or co-lead the training? Including a GTA Fellow on the team brings valuable insight into both the design and delivery of the training, ensuring it aligns with the needs and perspectives of graduate students. Having a peer in a leadership role can also make participants feel more comfortable engaging in the experience. GTAs with teaching experience and an interest in enhancing their pedagogical practice are ideal candidates. In addition to strengthening their own teaching, GTA Fellows gain leadership experience and confidence in their ability to contribute to positive change—skills that will benefit them in future academic and professional roles.		

D. Can you support team members to lead the effort? Those leading the effort will need sufficient time and resources to devote to it. Some campuses already have faculty and staff leading a pedagogy course or TA training for graduate students who could lead the effort. If not, a buy-out of faculty time or additional funding to support the team designing and implementing the training may be needed. In some cases, a departmental committee might spearhead the work as part of their service.		
E. Will the department chair endorse GTA training in inclusive teaching and encourage faculty and GTA participation? It's not necessary for chairs or all faculty to be deeply involved, but they should understand the program's value and be willing to express their support. Visible endorsement from leadership reinforces the message that addressing barriers to access and inclusion helps all students succeed, regardless of background. This kind of communication is especially important in contexts where the goals of inclusive teaching may be misunderstood or undervalued.		
F. Are there other department leadership groups who might support this work and in what ways? Some departments have standing committees (e.g., Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Committee; Student Success Committees) or coordinators (e.g., Graduate Program Coordinators) that may be relevant to this initiative. Consider how the GTA training could intersect with the roles of these committees and coordinators. For example, having the support of graduate program coordinators is key as they can communicate to graduate students the importance of the training as an essential part of their overall professional development. Additionally, the support of coordinators of foundational courses is important because they manage large-enrollment courses involving numerous TAs who significantly impact student retention in their disciplines.		

III. Engaging GTAS as Partners	Response (Yes/No/ Working on it)	Campus Notes
A. Is there sufficient trust and respect between the course faculty who supervise GTAs in their teaching roles and the GTAs themselves for this effort to be productive? A GTA training program can strengthen learning environments, but it cannot succeed if faculty themselves are reinforcing outdated or deficit-minded approaches to teaching. Course faculty do not need to be experts in SEP practices themselves, but they must value inclusive teaching and be willing to support GTAs in applying these practices. When GTAs feel trusted and respected by supervising faculty, they are far more likely to engage fully and effectively with the training**.**		
B. Is the department explicit about GTAs' roles supporting teaching excellence and student success? This preparation calls on GTAs to engage in a higher standard of teaching that involves learning and implementing new skills and practices. It is vital that departments acknowledge GTAs' role teaching undergraduates in ways that signal this work is important, valued and recognized.		
C. Is there capacity to embed the training within existing curriculum or incentivize GTA participation? When possible, we recommend integrating the training into existing coursework or professional development requirements. This helps ensure broad participation and gives GTAs adequate time to fully engage. When framed as "optional" or "extra," such training often draws only those already invested in teaching—limiting its reach and placing the responsibility for improving learning environments on a small group of students. To foster shared commitment, departments might consider adjusting workloads (e.g., assigning one lab section instead of two during the training semester, or reducing course loads) or offering financial support to compensate for the added time and effort the training entails.		

Are there ways supervising faculty and staff (e.g., lead instructors, lab coordinators) can support GTAs with SEP's evidence-based teaching practices? Beyond workshops and peer discussions, consider additional touch-points where supervising faculty can reinforce GTA practice and learning. This could be as simple as dedicating 5-10 minutes of a weekly GTA prep meeting to discuss how GTAs could apply evidence-based inclusive teaching practices or debrief practices used in recent weeks. On some campuses, supervising faculty choose to engage more deeply by learning about or incorporating some of the same practices themselves. When faculty have foundational knowledge of social belonging, growth mindset, and strategies for creating a supportive learning environment, they are better able to mentor and collaborate with GTAs in applying new ideas and working together to improve student experiences and outcomes.		