

Regaining IT Staff Time and Innovating Computer Labs

Why Morgan State University prints with Wēpa

1. BACKGROUND

Seeing Wēpa in action at another university

Morgan State University is one of the nation's oldest and highest ranking Historical Black Colleges and Universities. Offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees across multiple disciplines, Morgan has 8,000 students studying primarily onsite at their Baltimore, Maryland campus.

When visiting Towson University to discuss classroom support strategies with their IT team, Keisha Blackwell, Lab Operations & Support Manager, noticed something different about their computer lab: there were no standalone printers. She asked the IT team where they kept them. "They asked us

to follow them into the hallway, which we thought was kind of strange," explains Blackwell. "And that's when they showed us one of their kiosks." The Towson IT team explained that the Wēpa cloud printing kiosk was located outside of the lab for off-hours access.

After some more discussion about the kiosks' overall ease of use, Cynthia Mendoza-Robinson, Deputy CIO of Operations, and Blackwell realized that the Towson IT team wasn't experiencing the same problems with printing that they dealt with at Morgan on a daily basis, so they began researching how Wēpa kiosks might help both students and administrators.

A student prints via the cloud



"Students love that they can print the document they need on their way to their next destination without having to detour into a computer lab, sit down, and login."

— Keisha Blackwell,
Lab Operations &
Support Manager



2. CHALLENGE

Unnecessary lab usage and paper waste

Mendoza-Robinson and Blackwell wanted to make sure that they brought in a solution that could meet three core goals: cut costs, save time, and modernize lab usage. “The University was spending so much money on paper and toner and printer maintenance contracts. It just didn’t make sense,” says Mendoza-Robinson. With 100% free printing provided by the university, waste was a major concern.

While costs were a major concern, the biggest frustration was the amount of time that Blackwell needed to spend on their current printing solution, which faced regular problems from server and deployment issues to failed print jobs. “We needed something that could assist with the staffing shortage that we had. We knew that there were other, more important IT projects to work on,” says Mendoza-Robinson. There was also a demand for off-hours printing.

3. SOLUTION

Cloud printing kiosks with no maintenance required

Morgan installed 15 Wēpa kiosks all around campus in January of 2019 to give their students the easy access to printing that they’d been asking for. The kiosks allow print jobs to be sent using six different methods, including from a cloud storage system such as Google Drive or Dropbox, their LMS, from a mobile app, and from a print driver.

Mendoza-Robinson says, “When it came to deployment, I really appreciated just how organized the team was, how everything was setup inside of Basecamp so we could get little reminders for any decisions or setup tasks.”



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Each year, Blackwell runs an annual computer labs survey. Students would continually report that they wanted the computer labs to stay open longer, with the primary reason that they wanted to access the printers. Mendoza-Robinson and Blackwell knew that printing was a primary reason for lab usage, and they wanted to make printing more convenient for students while also relieving the strain on lab space. In the annual computer lab survey, students have also shared that they wished there was more open study space, free of computers. It makes sense: 90% of students report that they arrive on campus with their own devices.

She also was grateful for the marketing materials provided by Wēpa, which helped onboard students quickly.

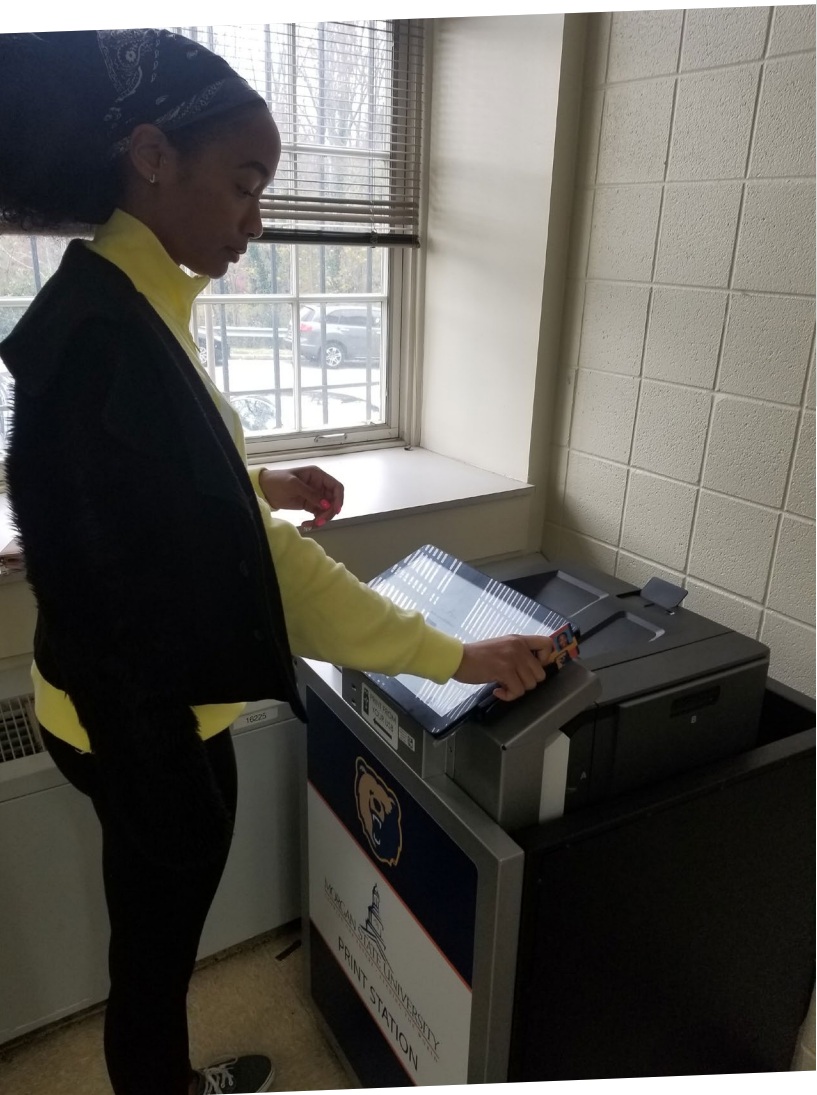
Most of the new kiosks replaced old printers, but a couple were located where printers didn’t exist before, in the residence hall and student center. While Morgan’s IT team knew the kiosks in these new spots would get usage, they saw an even greater volume than they were expecting. “From my experience being in the field, students are really thrilled with the service,” says Blackwell. “Students love that they can print the document they need on their way to their next destination without having to detour into a computer lab, sit down, and login. Printing is more convenient now.” Students have also shared that they’re glad they can access a printer even when the computer labs are closed.

4. IMMEDIATE RESULTS

Re-allocating IT staff time while saving money

IT staff time has already been allocated to more pressing projects. “Wēpa pretty much takes care of itself on the backend,” says Blackwell, who recently created a centralized way to manage the Macs on campus with the time she’s saved. “I didn’t have to install Wēpa into the lab, add it to each computer, enable certain features, get the IP addresses correct; I didn’t have to do any of that administrative work on the back end. All of that is done one time with Wēpa and then it’s just a green light from there.”

What’s more, printing costs are down. The all-in-one fee is lower than what they were paying when piecing together different vendors. In addition, Morgan was able to successfully transition from 100% free printing to allocating a credit limit of \$25 per semester per student. “I used to see recycle bins full of paper and now you don’t see as much of that,” says Blackwell.



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5. LONG TERM BENEFITS

Further innovating computer lab usage

“Over the next five years, we’re going to be virtualizing more of our apps and enhancing our backend infrastructure to support virtualization of applications as well as boosting our storage,” says Mendoza-Robinson. The two reasons that students primarily visit a computer lab are to print and to access specialized software that they don’t have on their own devices. Now with the cloud printing kiosks in place, the Morgan IT team can focus their efforts on virtualization.

“We think the combination of Wēpa and application virtualization is really going to change computer labs usage here on campus,” explains Mendoza-Robinson. Reducing computer lab usage for both printing and specialized software will free up space that the school might need in the future.

When Wēpa first launched, 90% of students were still sending print jobs to the kiosks from a desktop computer. Fast forward less than two semesters later and adoption has already taken off: just 32% of print jobs come from desktop, with the other 68% coming from a mobile or cloud application. “We obsessively looked over the daily statistics in the beginning and initially there was heavy usage in the labs,” says Mendoza-Robinson. “Then over time, we

gradually saw that students were using their mobile devices more. If you look at it now, the use of cloud storage providers is significantly higher than computer lab usage.”

This shift in usage means that less students sit down at a lab computer just to print, which in turn allows the IT team to consider removing computers when the time is right. “Having more space for them to sit down and work with their own device is going to be more beneficial than the traditional computer lab where you have these cubicles or desks with perfect little rows of computers,” says Mendoza-Robinson. “I think that model is definitely outdated at this point.” By choosing Wēpa as their printing solution, the Morgan IT team can more easily look to the future.

Wēpa kiosks featuring Morgan State University branding



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