

BEYOND 2025: The Academic Plan

[*Experience Unleashed*](#), our overview of the Beyond 2025 Academic Plan, presents a unique vision of the future of education rooted in experience, emphasizing impact in the world through our education and research, and promoting deeply held values at the heart of Northeastern's mission. This document describes in greater detail how we expect to achieve that vision — together, as a diverse and inclusive community of students, faculty, and staff, with our many global partners and in the neighborhoods that surround our campuses.

1. Our Goal: Maximizing Our Positive Impact in the World

Northeastern's uniqueness as a university has always been rooted in the strong connection it makes between the classroom and the world, as exemplified by our co-op program and many other opportunities for experiential learning. For us, scholarship and education are directly related to the communities around our campuses, our broader society, and the world beyond.

We are now in a position to make even stronger connections between Northeastern and the problems and issues of our time — a renewed and recast inspiration for the work we do. We are best serving our students and our community when we highlight and strengthen the bonds between our education and research mission and the improvement of the world we interact with as part of that mission.

An academic plan is a roadmap for the future. It gives us our destinations and tells us how we will get there. It is visionary and at the same time, practical and attainable. The academic plan lights the way and clearly signals how we will achieve our goals and aspirations.

Our goal is to maximize our positive impact in our communities and in the world. Everything in this plan stems from this overarching goal. To achieve this goal, we aspire to:

- Recognize the complexity of acute and chronic challenges, and work collaboratively across disciplines and sectors with the communities of which we are a part to develop and implement solutions.
- Translate excellence in scholarship and learning, alongside our partners, into measured impact.
- Ensure that all our students, faculty and staff have access to the skills, tools, know-how, and support they need to take a mission-driven project from idea to implementation.
- Advance leadership in experiential education by enabling globally mobile, culturally agile, partner-integrated, lifelong learners.

- Develop an academic community that reflects the diversity of our surrounding society and completely embraces and leverages that diversity in all its forms for an equitable and inclusive university.
- Provide an unparalleled experience for those who have placed their trust in us — learners, employer and research partners, and families, enabled by seamless technology integration.

No progress towards these goals and aspirations can occur absent pervasive diversity, equity, inclusion, and a profound sense of belonging across all our campuses. How we become an inclusive university is the *first question*, not the last question, as we re-envision our university and plan for the future. The imperative is clear. From here forward, the first question we ask about any new initiative is “how does this fit with our goal to be a diverse and inclusive university?” Northeastern 2025 provided a pathway toward a diverse and inclusive university that has shaped our work in recent years. Our shared definition of diversity and inclusion is one that has even greater relevance and resonance today.

We are committed to confronting and removing the barriers to full inclusion of historically excluded or underrepresented groups in all aspects of the our community, and deepening the cultural understandings of every member. Our diversity is reflected in our different social identities, including race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, abilities, and national origin, as well as our varying religious, spiritual, humanist, and moral traditions. The inclusive community we seek to create is one in which all members value and respect differences, share a sense of belonging, and fully participate. We recognize that the production of knowledge depends on the complexity and dialogue that emerges from intellectual, political, and ideological diversity. We seek to foster critical engagement with questions of identity, oppression, privilege, and inequality in our classrooms and beyond. The peaceful and just community we seek to create is one in which each member is respected and affirmed. The inclusive community is one that values and respects the differences and uniqueness of its members, and ensures their full and engaged participation in all aspects of community life.

2. Our Educational Offerings and Research Enterprise

What distinguishes our university is its profound commitment to experiential learning and use-inspired research across the academic enterprise, our deep connections to industry and communities, and a receptive, open mind that listens, collaborates, and co-creates on a global scale. These priorities and strengths mean that our playing field is not merely the disciplines or research in which we excel, but our outward expansion into real-world challenges in health, sustainability, security, and social justice. Our research, as is true with our educational offerings, impact large-scale societal issues. And because these grand challenges do not end with the conferral of a degree, our approach to learning is lifelong.

2.1 Educational Design: From Rigid Courses to Customized Education

We will design our educational offerings to meet the needs of our learners and the communities in which they live. Our programs will be robustly informed by our interactions in the physical world, and by expansive data about our students and the society around them. Educational

offerings will be focused on real-world issues, and designed around the actual circumstances and issues in local contexts. We will thus emphasize a nimble, constant flexibility in our learning pathways, tailored by geographic location and changing circumstances.

2.1.1 Lifelong Learning

We will provide these new educational offerings across the lifelong learning continuum. Modular, stackable learning will serve learners across that continuum, especially those for whom the degree and adherence to rigid semester-based timelines is not necessary. We will provide an expanded online portfolio to address students on co-op and those who work full-time. Modules across disciplines will be available to students who want to add a specialization to their degree path. Work-integrated credentialed learning in specialized topic areas and accelerated master's programs will support upskilling and reskilling for our professional learners. Credentialed courses that create additional pathways to higher education will be offered to our pre-college learners. Overall, our products will be responsive to all learners, whose needs grow and change over time and as they move from place to place.

2.1.2 Education Tuned to Business Needs

Through our deep and long-standing connections with thousands of businesses and organizations, we are right where learning needs originate. This physical embeddedness gives us unique, advanced, data-driven insights into emerging skills and knowledge that will soon be in high demand. We will formalize a rapid-response educational track for those businesses and organizations that will be scalable within a large enterprise and more broadly in an industry.

These educational products will come in multiple shapes and sizes, from weekend pop-ups and short certificates or badges, to more in-depth master's degrees that are tailored to the specific needs and subject domains of each enterprise. We will leverage the modularity detailed in this plan to create ad hoc combinations of topics that fit on a cost and length basis.

2.1.3 The PhD

The PhD is a research degree necessarily involving a specialization of knowledge and skills, but we believe it can simultaneously strive toward intersections with problems in the real world and help to develop solutions to those problems — in the process forging graduates empowered to identify crucial issues they locate in specific communities, and work both as leaders and on a peer-to-peer basis toward positive impacts. Since our research mission is impact-focused, increasingly our PhD students will draw strength from the disciplines while also tailoring them, as needed, in the pursuit of larger goals.

Northeastern will adopt a revised model for PhD training, involving:

- Framework-based education to empower PhD trainees with problem-solving and personal skills, through specific courses, or incorporation into existing courses.
- Mechanisms to promote cross-disciplinary research and education, through greater information about opportunities, flexible requirements, a smaller core of required courses, and new or modified funding mechanisms.

- Professional training expanded through and beyond the PhD Network, and within colleges.
- Expansion of work experience opportunities through colleges and partners, and in conjunction with the PhD Network.

These unique additions will create degrees with an enormous competitive advantage, and will in turn make a Northeastern education sought after in every field, and at every level.

2.2 The Research Enterprise

From under \$50 million in grants in 2006 to over \$200 million just fifteen years later, Northeastern has, in the blink of an eye, become one of the nation’s premier universities for the exploration of the frontiers of knowledge. This recent ascent of our research enterprise will grow even further, and in new ways, under this strategic plan.

Our commitment to research that meets the needs of the communities we live in and interact with across the globe will be especially robust in our areas of investment. We have already identified key fields that impact all communities, although often in different ways: climate change, sustainability, and resilience; the promise and perils of new technologies, including in the life and computer sciences; and the complex and often fraught interactions between health, social justice, equity, and our urban environments.

We will continue to expand our signature humanics focus, in which our expertise in data and technology, and our deep sensitivity to human factors, are fused into research in critical emerging fields. Creating and improving entirely new forms of data- and device-driven drug discovery and delivery, urban informatics and social determinants of health, the digital mapping of land and sea in relation to global warming, the complex interaction of race and technology, and the improved visualization of the massive and ever-growing sets of data that describe our world all fall into this vibrant realm.

We will make bold new investments in these areas that build on our core strengths and that have a high probability of leading to significant impacts. Moreover, this investment pattern will be guided by our eyes and ears on the ground — our faculty, students, and partners working on relevant problems and solutions in locales around the world. Their insights and the data we collect will shape new configurations of research collaboratives, from centers and institutes to crucial new clusters we call Impact Engines (see Section 3.3).

3. How We Will Continue to Excel

3.1 Learning Experiences

Northeastern 2025 captured the phrase that our students can “learn any time, from anywhere, with anyone” on their personalized, customized journey at Northeastern. Our new plan elaborates on that theme in several critical ways. An overarching principle dictates that all students have equal access to every learning experience regardless of financial status, race, ethnicity, or privilege. For too long, those with resources, connections, and power have been more likely to be given opportunities and support. Our design, whether the focus is the

curriculum, experiential learning, academic support, global opportunities, or co-ops, must be open to all. Furthermore, we need to create mechanisms for reaching out and anticipating the needs of those who may be less likely to ask for help.

What then, is our new strategic plan for our learners?

Experiential learning is the DNA of Northeastern University. The connection between learning and working is at our core and our origin. While the enterprise has expanded, the commitment to the understanding that our learning comes from working, and working creates learning, has never wavered. The new tenet of this strategic plan is a commitment to experiential learning from the moment learners walk on campus. From summer orientation to walking in commencement, our students will be experiential learners. What will it take to make this a reality?

First, our students will need to know of every opportunity in a technology-based, user-friendly catalogue of experiences across our global network. Such an updated and savvy experiential learning platform will provide the inventory and the opportunity to document and access experiences. As our students begin their experiential education journey, we create paths that foster the “start small and go big” approach. Thus, in their first semester, experiential learning is a part of their academic portfolio. We do this by encouraging every faculty member to integrate some aspect of experiential learning into their class, whether by real world projects or simulation of such. As our students progress through their years at Northeastern, the myriad of experiential learning opportunities grows and expands, such that all students not only participate in co-op as is currently the case, but that horizon is broadened by providing chances for involvement in research teams, short-term projects, and global experiences that expose them to the world of work, all of which is integrated back into the classroom.

Our learners must have continual support and guidance for their learning journey. Our co-op coordinators, in conjunction with our academic advisors, will have expanded roles so they become a “life and learning coach” to our learners, providing scaffolding and support from start to finish. Such coaching also offers the opportunity for high quality and continuous feedback, which creates transformative experiential learning. In providing feedback and guidance, our faculty and staff will be assisted by a fully integrated feedback system that utilizes state-of-the-art technology to provide networking capacity and opportunities assisted by artificial intelligence to guide our learners to grow and develop throughout their academic career.

3.2 Global Experiences for All

At present, over 50% of our students spend time at our global campuses or around the world. Our offerings for global study are vast and varied. Still, we can do better to become the premier choice for students who are interested in expanding their learning journey beyond the confines of one place. We recognize there are significant barriers to a goal of “global learning for all” and our strategic vision is to break down these barriers to afford opportunities for place-based learning in all kinds of places for all students. How?

Students should not be limited to global experiences because they can’t afford to do so. We made a commitment to develop a financial assistance system whereby any student who wants a global experience can have one — or two. Working with our partners in financial aid, we will

make the resources available to students so that our goal can be realized. We also need to make travel between our campuses easier for students and for faculty. Housing, resources, flexible scheduling, easing place-based restrictions on faculty teaching, technology to enable and integrate systems, and coordination between campuses will need to be configured to make this goal a reality.

On the learning side of global experiences, we want to expand educational content at our campuses and across opportunities to guarantee a learner's journey is rich and complete. We will expand the breadth of our global experiences to include more places around the globe for students to work and study. And we will better utilize our alumni, industry and organizational partners, and neighbors near our campuses as we expand our global offerings. In more concrete terms, this means that we will offer ever more customized, experience-connected learning opportunities that are available nowhere else. For our undergraduates and master's students, the degree is not a finish line, but a starting line, from which they will encounter new educational possibilities of all shapes and sizes throughout their career. They will see Northeastern as a trusted, lifelong partner.

3.3 Impact Engines

By connecting our research with real-world problems, by linking our research to the experiences of work and life, we ensure our efforts have meaning and impact. This tight connection between our core experiential methods and our vanguard research means that new ideas for research will always emerge organically at the intersections of our labs and our business and community partners, and at the intersection of the many fields of our endeavor.

Impact Engines, a new concept for interdisciplinary co-creation, will empower the university to leverage its distinctive strengths and create dynamic multiple-expertise collaborative communities focused on advancing complex intellectual domains and addressing pressing social, environmental, scientific, health, and technological challenges in concert with community, government, and industry partners.

Impact Engines will be launched in two ways. First, where we have identified key existing areas of interdisciplinary interest and faculty expertise with the strong probability of global impact, we will enable the immediate formation of Impact Engines, with resources, faculty and researchers, and staff coordinators as needed. They will be designed to encourage wide-ranging participation from across the university, and to leverage our extensive global partnerships.

Second, for more nascent areas that show promise, we will map a pathway to becoming an Impact Engine: a staged process, in which research groups develop initial concepts in multi-campus and interdisciplinary networks. These incipient Impact Engines will use the Tier 1 internal grant system to start up. Those that succeed through a generative process will receive substantial and diverse forms of support to accomplish their goals as they continue to expand. Resources will be allocated in a longitudinal, inclusive, and transparent spin-up process that will enable their robust multi-disciplinary and university-wide scope. The scale and forms of support will vary among these nascent Impact Engines, based on their aims and needs, and will be collaboratively determined during the nucleation, germination, and planning processes.

The success of Impact Engines will be measured, as their name suggests, in terms of real-world impact: Are the lives of communities and individuals improved through new technologies, products, processes, or ideas? What is the scale of that improvement in quantitative and qualitative terms? By emphasizing replicability and flexibility, can we extend this improvement to other regions in our network?

Research that aims for solutions that work in actual, rather than purely academic, settings, or that are tailored to the specific needs of our campuses' surrounding community will imbue meaning and energy into our scholarship. It will also present opportunities for translational work that in turn drive new, innovative lines of inquiry.

Impact Engines will not mean the end of departments and majors, although they will stretch across and draw strength from these areas of expertise. But Impact Engines will greatly expand our efforts in widespread, cross-university collaborations that address important social challenges in visible, impactful ways, and we anticipate that students and faculty will seek to affiliate themselves with those efforts as well. In this way, all members of the Northeastern community can be drawn into the seamless incorporation of multiple disciplines in the service of positive change in our world.

3.4 Strong Community Relationships

While we embrace the technologies that enable our community to work and learn anywhere on the planet, our campuses remain centrally important. Our immersion in the world begins with these campuses and the communities that surround them. Over the next decade, we will create deeper and more synergistic connections with those who live and work in our campus neighborhoods as our students learn and our faculty teach and conduct their research. Our recognition that all of our campuses exist in neighborhoods and are surrounded by diverse communities will drive us to better integrate the workings of the university with the lives of the people who are most proximate to us.

By learning from our success stories, we will leverage existing partnerships and Northeastern stakeholders, assets, and programs as fully as possible as we strive to be intentional in the development and building of stronger community relationships with infrastructure and resources. Our work in this area, particularly at our global campuses, is in the very early stage. Our focus in our global campuses has been primarily on learners, programs, and curriculum as we build out our network. It is time that we expand this focus to learn what the communities that surround our global campuses might need from us, how they could benefit from what we do, and how they could be integrated into our teaching and research endeavors. In doing so, we must be mindful to ensure that Northeastern faculty, staff, administrators, and students' programmatic engagement is mutually beneficial and consistent with our principles of ethical engagement. We will need to work hard to ensure that our global campus network is afforded the agency and resources to provide local outreach, so that each local community, guided by our shared values and practices, has the capacity to effect positive change.

Some specific means by which we can accomplish these goals include the following. First, we will develop spaces across the global network of campuses for *co-creation and community engagement*. Leveraging Northeastern's commitment to creating community-facing spaces where co-creation can be initiated and sustained in nimble fashion, across collaborative partnerships, will provide

access ramps to intellectual and degree opportunities to our neighbors. Second, we will launch Northeastern Gateway as an online platform to showcase and co-create local engagement around our program of DEI-oriented experiential learning. Highlighting our connections, with an emphasis on our efforts toward diversity and inclusion with our community partners, will move us toward better relationships and meaningful activities with our closest neighbors. Third, we will carefully record and track engagement, and measure impact, as we engage with our neighboring communities. Such online real-time tracking should be transparent to, and accessible by, relevant community members within and outside the university.

Northeastern Gateway is an invitation to expand our formalized experiential learning opportunities and pathways across our stakeholders as well as our informal experiential learning opportunities — community organizing, community arts, and artisan experiences. Finally, our connection with community partners and our university should expand to engage all of our university family, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, and employers to collaborate in specific community outreach projects. An inventory model that reflects our strategic priorities and each campus' needs will solidify the places and spaces we can work together toward addressing the needs of those in the communities that surround us.

4. Our Distinctive Community Members and Capabilities

4.1 A Magnet for Diversity, and a Place of Belonging

Although we have made some recent gains in greater diversity in our faculty, staff, and student populations, our efforts to realize equity, inclusion, and belonging are nascent and in need of greater attention. Furthermore, we have not determined how we measure success in these constructs, which are harder to quantify. When we describe our research vision, we must ask how to diversify our research-focused faculty and lead them to successful tenure and retention here. We should examine our mentoring practices for faculty of color and determine best ways to support them both early and late in their career.

We must ask how all of our undergraduate students can access research experiences, regardless of their financial status where the need to work over the summer may override the opportunity to volunteer in a research lab. We need to consider how we can better diversify our research staff and address retention and advancement. We must foster the development of Impact Engines that address racial injustice and social unrest, and support faculty who ask difficult questions about bias, race, ethnicity, climate justice, and other research topics that touch equity and inclusion.

The power of the PhD as an entry-path into a vast set of top careers is often not appreciated, especially across educationally disadvantaged and diverse learners. PhD training programs can be rigid, with strict requirements in each, that may not best serve trainees, and may deter the diverse set of students from taking this path. In addition, they can be divorced from critical issues that can only be experienced and understood in settings beyond academia, including community and work environments. Empowered, flexible, experiential PhD training across the university will make Northeastern a destination for the best PhD candidates from all backgrounds and identities, and enhance our research excellence.

As we create a new design for the way students are educated at Northeastern University, we must similarly begin with questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will do this in many ways, beginning with the recognition that accessing support is often easier and is offered most completely to the most privileged and empowered learners. We need systems in place that are culturally competent and respectful that identify early on those students who are in need, and reach out in ways that will be taken up by them. We must examine grade and graduation and retention discrepancies between our students of color and our white students — and act decisively to dissolve such disparities. We must provide opportunities for all forms of experiential learning to all students, regardless of geographic location, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic of identity.

As noted by President Aoun, our students of color “must feel valued, included, and safe at their university.” The President requires that we increase diversity so that our entire student body “will fully reflect the relevant national racial diversity within five years.” With a promise to increase grant funding to students for diversity programming, to invest in first-generation student needs, and to catalogue how racism and anti-discrimination are addressed in our curriculum, our blueprint for this critical work is clear. (*Refer to Appendix A with President’s October 2020 announcement.*)

4.2 A Magnet for Talent Through Unique Possibilities

Northeastern is only as good as its people, who will continue to forge new ideas and make new discoveries, and who will provide constant help and unique services to our students. We believe that our model of experiential learning and research, re-envisioned and expanded as we have laid out in this plan, will serve as a magnet for the world’s best researchers and staff members.

Because our model emphasizes spirited collaboration and the encounter with the novelty and significance that is only found by working closely with our communities and our employer partners, we will serve as the preferred home for faculty and staff who want to see their work make a direct impact on the world beyond the four walls of a lab or the covers of a monograph. Yet we firmly hold that the best research, and the best researchers, now grasp that our major societal problems require a new model of scale and interaction. We can become a home for a new set of knowledge workers who work together, and who deeply care about solving those social ills.

Similarly, the most talented staff can find university environments confining, as roles have overly strict parameters, and the opportunities for collaboration across units and disciplines highly limited. We seek to hire the most creative and flexible staff members, those who are invigorated by the challenge of working in diverse teams on some of the greatest problems of our time. Like our students, we see these staff members continuing to learn new skills each and every year as they are regularly connected to emerging forms of knowledge — a model of professional development that acts as an additional, major benefit. The type of innovative faculty and staff who are drawn to Northeastern do not want to be pigeonholed, and in our system, cannot be.

4.3 A Magnet for Students Who Want to Make an Impact

The constituent elements of a university, including campuses, majors, departments, colleges, schools, and research centers and institutes will not disappear in this plan. But our learners will also have the opportunity to craft their educational pathways with the societal grand challenges they wish to solve foremost in their minds. In the 2025 Academic Plan, we took some initial steps to make that interdisciplinary association with the theme of “no boundaries,” and we now have over 130 combined majors and minors, with many of these new learning possibilities spanning two colleges. A student who is interested in climate change need not need to choose in a binary way between majors such as environmental science or political science, but instead can design a coherent and broad-based plan that incorporates the courses, experiential learning, and research opportunities to graduate equipped with all the tools to confront this challenge via a connected academic path.

4.4 Serving Our Audiences

We will differentiate ourselves by a relentless focus on excellence in serving our audiences. To our learners in particular, we are a service organization, and we believe the market will increasingly demand service quality on a par with organizations like Amazon.com and Memorial Sloan Kettering. This is not at odds with our rigorous and non-negotiable academic standards; rather it has to do with the range of support services we provide, our responsiveness, and our laser-focus on learner success.

Advising represents one of the central learner services we provide, and this plan envisions an extension and strengthening of the program. Advisors will not only regularly meet with students to help them shape their educational pathways, but they will maintain this relationship over a greatly extended timeline, and ensure that students have the chance to constantly encounter new experiential opportunities.

In areas such as information technology, a frictionless experience with straightforward, rapid, and equal access to services and support, regardless of one’s location or role or level of skill or institutional knowledge, will be the norm for our approach to service delivery. Shifting to a unified service experience standardizes and integrates service offerings, practices, and providers across network locations and promotes self-service to speed time to resolution or productivity. Ensuring 24/7 access to service and support commensurate with the university’s global footprint, regardless of time zone, is a key tenet of this plan.

4.5 Innovative, Unified Technology Platforms

Put simply, a number of significant changes in what people, processes, and technology do are needed to fully realize Northeastern’s strategic plan. We have the opportunity to mature our organization at scale, provide consistency across the globe and through our network, and maintain our high-touch student experience by building on our culture of adaptability and “just do it” execution.

The operations and technology will be intuitive and anticipatory to meet faculty, staff, and student needs. Knowledge of the organizational structures and internal processes of the institution will not be required for an individual to get or provide service. Experiences of the institution will be consistent and congruent and reflect a “global first” mindset, not Boston-centric, thereby accelerating momentum and the network effect. Key technology investments

will be broadly adopted, with nimble redeployment of staff supported by retraining or realignment.

For example, during the summer of the pandemic, Information Technology Services launched the “Student Hub” which provided one-stop-shopping for all things Northeastern, including a user-friendly way to schedule classes as in-person or remote, sign up for a Covid-19 test, and quickly get an appointment with an advisor, among other innovations. Such a model will be used to re-envision systems and modes of working across the university. Technology should allow for seamless interconnectedness between our systems, provide easy and accessible ways for the network campuses to access all main campus platforms, and provide our students answers to their questions quickly and accurately.

Incremental, localized change and modernization, while typically more tolerable and often lower risk, is insufficient in meeting the accelerating demands and aspirations of Northeastern. Transformation at scale aims to solve large-scale institution-redefining opportunities, rapidly and comprehensively. Rather than a patchwork quilt approach to change, the university will identify areas, processes, and technologies that can and should be transformed globally and at once. This will require coherence in the adoption of new processes, organizational structures, and tools, university-wide; a consultative approach to innovation to leverage both internal and external talent and ideas; compromise and a willingness to learn from and leave behind past ways of thinking and doing; a global and mobile mindset; and a focus on automation, reserving people for higher-value activity and the things machines can’t do. Concretely, our interconnections with our global campuses will benefit from such transformation. A user-friendly and coherent set of platforms and technologies will assure that all faculty, staff, and students are able to participate seamlessly across one Northeastern University.

APPENDIX A: PRESIDENT'S OCTOBER 2020 ANNOUNCEMENT

October 19, 2020

To all members of the Northeastern Community,

On June 15th, I announced a call to action for our university to address the scourge of systemic racism—especially anti-Black discrimination—and advance our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Since then, you have shared further ideas and insights through discussions, gatherings, and other forms of feedback. At the same time, a multi-faceted team of university leaders has been meeting regularly and developing concrete plans to turn aspirations into reality.

I am pleased to provide you with updates in the areas we identified in June. The initiatives listed below are the result of many people's work, including the university's six senior vice presidents, Dean for Cultural and Spiritual Life Robert José, and the co-chairs of the President's Council on Diversity and Inclusion, Deans James Hackney and Uta Poiger. The Dean of the Library, Dan Cohen, also played an instrumental role.

Representation: It is vital for every member of our global community to find in Northeastern a welcoming home. Achieving this goal will demand a collective effort to meet our objectives for increasing student, faculty, and staff diversity across all our campuses. As a general principle, we seek to reflect the diversity of the societies in which Northeastern maintains its campuses—the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

With respect to our student body, we will increase the diversity of our entering classes at both our domestic and global campuses. We commit that across our campuses, incoming undergraduate students, master's students, and doctoral students will fully reflect the relevant national racial diversity within five years. For example, the percentage of Black students in the United States will more than double at the undergraduate level over this time period. To achieve these goals, we will establish new financial aid streams and devote significant resources to targeted recruiting and retention efforts.

With respect to faculty, our long-term goal is that the faculty should reflect the diversity of the societies we serve. Our specific intermediate goal is to double the percentage of new faculty hires from underrepresented groups across all our campuses within five years. A specific focus will be to double the percentage of Black faculty hires in the United States over this period. We will initiate targeted efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming environment that attracts and retains a diverse faculty.

Our community has a long tradition of research, scholarship, and high-impact academic programming that advance the cause of racial justice, such as our extraordinary Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project led by University Distinguished Professor Margaret Burnham and her colleagues. Now, we will create a new institute that will serve as the focal point for a larger university initiative related to racial justice and inequality. We will create at least 10 new faculty positions to support this effort, and propel Northeastern to a leadership position in high-impact, globally-networked learning and discovery on topics related to race, social justice, and related issues such as technology, health, and the environment.

In addition, we will reform hiring, retention, and HR protocols so that, within five years, our newly hired staff cohorts will reflect the societies in which we do our work. This will include the creation of new workforce development programs that ensure robust career pathways for people of all backgrounds within our community.

Student Support: We will strengthen and further invest in the links between the colleges and our cultural centers, drawing on their great potential to create integrated curricula on racism and anti-discrimination. In that same vein, we will expand successful models, such as the College of Engineering's Summer Bridge Program, to help students from underrepresented backgrounds across the university more quickly feel at home in our community. We will substantially increase funding for grants to students who develop educational programming related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will also invest in programs, activities, and initiatives that specifically address the needs of our first-generation students. And we will ask all academic departments to show how racism and anti-discrimination are specifically being addressed in their courses of study, in field specific as well as interdisciplinary ways.

NUPD Community Advisory Board: This new organization, which I announced in June, has had many meetings, town halls, and pop-up sessions that examine policing on and around our Boston campus. Its chair, Professor Jack McDevitt, recently announced the first in a series of reforms that the board has developed, including expanded feedback mechanisms for NUPD. This new approach will allow any member of the Northeastern community, including residents of our surrounding neighborhoods, to file a complaint, offer a commendation, or request information about NUPD policies and practices. This is just the beginning of the advisory board's ongoing work.

Cultural Competency and Anti-Racism Training: We will implement mandatory, university-wide cultural competency and anti-racism training programs for all faculty and staff on a regular basis. This will include embedding cultural competency and anti-racism modules throughout the curriculum.

University-wide Accountability: Starting immediately, administrative and academic leaders and managers at all levels will have meaningful diversity and inclusion goals for their departments and direct reports, as part of their annual goal setting and review. Beginning this academic year, we will launch an annual climate survey on diversity and inclusion; we will provide regular updates to share and assess our progress.

Community Engagement: We will deepen community service and expand service learning in the neighborhoods surrounding all of our campuses. In doing so, we will strengthen the ties between our community engagement programs and our academic programs. We will also increase procurement from businesses that are designated as women- and minority-owned, with a special emphasis on Black-owned businesses at our U.S. campuses. Our goal over the next five years will be to double the total value of those contracts from the last five years.

Amplifying our Impact through our Employer Partners: We will launch a new initiative called NU PLACE, the Northeastern University Professional Leadership and Career Engagement Program. Beginning with a dozen employer partners who are recognized for their success in recruiting and developing underrepresented minorities, Northeastern will partner with them to learn and create new best practices, and create hiring pipelines for them to recruit and retain diverse talent from Northeastern.

We are navigating challenging times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic uncertainty. But complacency is not an option. I believe that these actions will lead to a more inclusive and dynamic university community—one that makes Northeastern a model for what we want our society to be.

It is important to acknowledge that meaningful change is a journey, not a moment in time. As we work together in the coming months to imagine a new academic plan, the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion will be infused throughout every dimension. As we continue to pursue this work together—and in so doing, achieve higher levels of mutual respect and understanding—I will continue to provide our community with regular updates on our progress.

I thank you for all you have done—and all that you continue to do—to make our collective efforts successful.

Sincerely,

Joseph E. Aoun

President