

# Standard Five: Faculty

## OVERVIEW

The transformations of the past ten years in Northeastern's student body and campus have also reshaped Northeastern's faculty, although on a somewhat different timetable. As Northeastern refashioned its undergraduate student body in the 1990s, aiming at greater admissions selectivity with smaller entering classes, the University invested heavily in the residential campus and undergraduate financial aid. Over this period tenured and tenure-track faculty numbers fell, roughly in tandem with overall enrollments although more slowly, reaching their lowest point in 2001.

From 1998 onward, full-time undergraduate enrollments — driven by successful recruitment and strongly improved retention — have risen steadily. Since 2005, graduate enrollments have also risen significantly, especially in professional master's degree programs. Along with the instructional demands produced by these recruitment and retention successes have come intensified academic ambitions for Northeastern. To meet these demands the University has embarked on substantial faculty hiring initiatives since 2004. Northeastern has recruited significant numbers of new tenured and tenure-track faculty members, with a special emphasis on enhancing the University's academic profile in areas of interdisciplinary opportunity.

## Faculty Profile

### DESCRIPTION

Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty in Northeastern's day colleges are distributed across the customary ranks of professor, associate professor, and assistant professor. Their roles include teaching, scholarship, and service as appropriate to tenure status and experience.

The full-time, non-tenure-track faculty comprises a number of position categories, of which the most common are academic specialist, clinical professor, and lecturer. Academic specialist and clinical professor positions are differentiated by rank (assistant, associate, and senior, with the latter also offering a clinical instructor rank), and their duties may include service. Lecturer positions in the day colleges currently have no rank ladder and are defined as full-time teaching. Northeastern also offers research assistant, associate, and full professor ranks.

Cooperative education (co-op) coordinators have faculty standing and are ranked (assistant, associate, senior). Although six long-serving co-op faculty hold tenure and carry professorial rank, faculty members currently being hired into this category are no longer eligible for tenure.

As of fall 2007, 97 percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty members held terminal degrees in their fields (the doctorate in most instances; for co-op coordinators, the master's degree is considered terminal). In keeping with Northeastern's identity as a practice-oriented institution, distinguished leaders in professional fields who do not hold terminal degrees are occasionally hired into full-time non-tenure-track positions that may carry professorial titles.

College of Professional Studies (CPS) faculty fall into three categories: lecturers, full-time academic specialists, and standing faculty. The first category comprises two ranks: lecturer and senior lecturer. Academic specialists in CPS are promotion-eligible and ranked as in the day colleges. Standing faculty are members of the faculty, staff, and University administration who are employed full-time in some other capacity at Northeastern but who perform valued work for CPS, such as teaching off load; acting as a consultant to particular programs; or serving on the Academic Council for Lifelong Learning, the College of Professional Studies' advisory and governing body.

Responsibilities of CPS faculty include teaching and some service, but not research or creative activity. Virtually all members of the CPS faculty hold field-appropriate advanced degrees and some 30 percent hold field-appropriate terminal degrees.

In addition to the full-time and part-time faculty, some graduate students also carry teaching responsibilities in the day colleges. In most departments, teaching assistants serve as lab instructors, section leaders, and graders. In English and Mathematics, PhD students on teaching assistantships typically serve as instructors of record in introductory courses; in other departments, such assignments are given to senior PhD students only. The Provost's Office conducts a training orientation for all incoming graduate students with teaching assistantships. Some departments also require additional discipline-specific orientations of new teaching assistants. The English Language Center tests the English skills of incoming international students on assistantships, offers training, and notifies departments of students whose level of spoken English requires they be assigned to duties outside the classroom.

**Procedures and policies.** Faculty appointments and other faculty procedures and policies are governed primarily by the University-wide *Faculty Handbook*. The current *Faculty Handbook* is the 2000–2001 edition.

During the period of 2002 through 2005, the Faculty Senate voted on a series of resolutions affecting the *Handbook*. Representatives of the Provost's Office and the Faculty Senate Agenda Committee collaborated in Spring 2008 to resolve a number of outstanding questions in the area of faculty appointments. Following their work, the Faculty Senate in April 2008 approved a number of changes and submitted them for review and approval.

CPS faculty are governed by the sections of the general *Faculty Handbook* that are applicable to their individual appointments as well as by a handbook specific to CPS, last updated in 2002. A revised CPS handbook is in the final phase of preparation and will go to University Counsel for review before the beginning of the 2008-2009 academic year.

**Composition.** Forms 8-1 to 8-4 summarize the composition of the faculty in the recent past.

The hiring initiatives mentioned in Standard Two have resulted in a growing number of tenured and tenure-track faculty members; from Fall 2003 through Fall 2008 Northeastern has added 54 tenured or tenure-track faculty members. The percentage of full professors has grown 2 percent and the percentage of assistant professors 4 percent over this period, while the percentage of associate professors has diminished 6 percent.

Reliance on full-time non-tenure-track faculty varies considerably across Northeastern's colleges: Of the four large colleges, 18 percent of the full-time Engineering faculty are not on the tenure track, compared to 24 percent in Arts and Sciences, 33 percent in Business Administration, and 51 percent in Bouvé College of Health Sciences, where clinical specialists play a major role in instruction.

Women currently represent 37 percent of Northeastern's full-time faculty (CPS included), slightly higher than the 2006 national average of 32 percent at private doctoral universities. As of 2006, 42 percent of Northeastern's tenure-track faculty, 24.6 percent of its tenured faculty, and 21 percent of its full professors were women, slightly higher than the national averages for private doctoral universities of 39 percent, 23 percent, and 19 percent respectively (<http://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/63396944-44BE-4ABA-9815-5792D93856F1/0/AAUPGenderEquityIndicators2006.pdf>).

Northeastern's colleges vary considerably in their representation of women among the full-time (tenure-track and non-tenure-track) faculty, from a low of 17 percent in Engineering to highs of 50 percent and 61 percent in the School of Law and Bouvé College of Health Sciences respectively.

As of Fall 2007 Northeastern's full-time faculty was 81.3 percent white, 4.1 percent black, 8.2 percent Asian, 2.7 percent Hispanic, and 0.3 percent American Indian (U.S. Census categories), with 3.4 percent not specified. This compares with national averages at private research universities for fall 2003 of 77.6 percent white, 4.9 percent black, 12.8 percent Asian, 3.5 percent Hispanic, and 1.2 percent American Indian (Department of Educational Statistics, 2006; ([http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06\\_236.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_236.asp))). Northeastern's tenure-track faculty, however, includes more Asian and Hispanic representation, with 63.9 percent reporting as white, 3.9 percent black, 14.8 percent Asian, 7.7 percent Hispanic, and 9.7 percent not specified.

***Workloads, evaluations, and salary increases.*** Tenure-track faculty workloads vary across the University, but a 2-2 teaching load over two semesters is typical of research-active faculty members in most unfunded fields. For non-tenure-track faculty members whose appointments are defined as 100 percent teaching, a full semester load is 3-3.

The workload policy approved by the Faculty Senate and the President in 2004 reaffirmed that faculty members at Northeastern, as appropriate to a research institution, are typically responsible for balancing instruction, scholarship, and service, and stated that “[a]n equitable workload policy must emphasize equity of total workloads, rather than equity in one or two components of the workload.” Under the policy, units are required periodically to review and adjust individual faculty members’ loads as appropriate in light of actual faculty contributions and the unit’s needs; faculty members’ distribution of effort must then be reflected in the weighting of the three areas in their annual merit evaluation.

Annual evaluations and merit-based salary recommendations for full-time faculty are governed by procedures approved at the unit level, in compliance with *Faculty Handbook* guidelines, and reviewed by the college dean and the Provost. In addition to the merit raise pool, the University in the past decade has funded a second raise pool for salary adjustments. Originally focused on addressing salary inequities associated with race or gender, the second raise pool now more often addresses changing market conditions. Full-time non-tenure-track faculty members are now eligible for consideration for raises from this pool.

The annual merit raise pool has been funded consistently since 1998, generally at a rate of 3 to 4 percent; the ten-year average is 3.1 percent. Pools for market adjustments have also been funded annually in varying amounts, ranging from \$500,000 to, most recently, \$1.32 million in the fiscal year 2009 budget. Average faculty salaries have recently risen faster than the total of the two raise pools because of aggressive recruitment coupled with attrition and retirements.

***Progress toward tenure and promotions.*** In addition to annual reviews for merit-based salary increases, tenure-track faculty members undergo a *Handbook*-mandated annual review of progress toward tenure as well as a more extensive midcourse evaluation in the third or fourth year of the probationary period. The midcourse evaluation is conducted by a unit's tenured faculty and, in some colleges, forwarded to the college dean for review. Under the usual timetable for an assistant professor without previous tenure-track experience at another institution, tenure consideration begins in the spring term of the candidate's fifth year with the selection of external referees and the compilation of the dossier. The dossier review at all levels is typically complete by the end of the sixth year. Tenure consideration is governed by University-wide criteria and procedural requirements set out in the *Faculty Handbook*; by additional unit-based procedures; and by the dossier requirements set out in the "Model Tenure Dossier," (<http://www.facultymentoring.neu.edu/documents/ModelDossierCurrent.pdf>) which is annually reviewed by the Faculty Senate Agenda Committee with the Provost.

The University has a number of means for supporting tenure-track faculty. The 2004 faculty workload policy formalized released time for tenure-track faculty members at a minimum of two courses over the first two years of service. The Provost's Office runs an orientation for entering faculty, followed by an array of tenure and promotion workshops. Some of the colleges provide workshops with more discipline-specific advice. The Provost's Office runs a pre-tenure faculty mentoring program in which senior faculty members are assigned as formal mentors to new faculty members and are invited to Provost-sponsored workshops along with the tenure-track faculty members. In addition to unit-based faculty development funding, there are several competitive funds, administered through the Provost's Office, that provide research and faculty development support.

Full-time non-tenure-track faculty members in ranked appointments — academic specialists, clinical specialists, and co-op coordinators — may request promotion consideration after three years of service in rank. Requirements for the promotion dossier reflect the specialist's or coordinator's position responsibilities. The dossier is reviewed by the appropriate dean and the Provost's Office, and, in some instances, by a college or school committee. Specialists and coordinators at the associate or senior rank are eligible for multiyear renewals of their annual contracts, subject to university need and assuming continued satisfactory performance.

## **APPRAISAL**

Over the past ten years, from Fall 1998 through Fall 2007, a significant portion of Northeastern's rising instructional demand was met by non-tenure-track faculty members, both full- and part-time. From Fall 1998 to Fall 2002, full-time non-tenure-track faculty as a percentage of all full-time faculty in the day colleges rose from 20 percent to 29 percent, further increasing to 32 percent in Fall 2007. From Fall 2002 to Fall 2007, the number of part-time instructors also increased, from 28

percent to 32 percent (by headcount) of all instructors in the day programs.

Some of the shift toward full-time non-tenure-track instruction was strategic: Faculty members who bring professional experience outside of traditional academic career tracks contribute to Northeastern's mission. In some instances, full-time non-tenure-track faculty members replaced part-time instructors. Some of the shift to non-tenure-track full- and part-time faculty, however, was driven by the need to respond quickly to rising course demand created by improved undergraduate retention and, more recently, growth in the graduate and clinical programs.

As noted in Standard Two, in pursuit of its aspirations, in the early 2000s Northeastern first set priorities to address student financial aid and the development of a residential campus. After the success of this investment, the next priority was to invest in the growth and development of the faculty. Mindful of the limitations presented to the University by a growing reliance on non-tenure-track faculty members, in Fall 2004 Northeastern invested in a tenured and tenure-track faculty hiring initiative. In Fall 2007 support for faculty hiring was further enhanced.

The University's hiring initiatives were intended to gain ground more quickly in funded research, academic reputation, teaching capacity, and academic leadership, especially in units where slow hiring of tenure-track faculty in the 1990s had resulted in low numbers of tenured mid-career faculty members today. All of the colleges were successful in increasing their tenured and tenure-track faculty numbers from 2002-2007, although total tenured and tenure-track faculty numbers have been slower to rise than projected under the hiring initiatives. Some funded positions, in such areas as nursing and business, currently remain unfilled due to the competitive nature of the fields. Furthermore, as retention increased and other programmatic demands became clear, especially in Arts and Sciences and Bouvé, colleges continued to put resources into non-tenure-track and part-time instructional positions.

Northeastern's overall student-faculty ratio in 2007-2008 stood at 15:1, higher than the 14:1 ratio goal in the institution's mid-1990s strategic planning. With the hiring that has occurred for Fall 2008, Northeastern anticipates reaching a ratio of 14:1.

Given the age profile of Northeastern's faculty, it is reasonable to anticipate a relatively large number of faculty retirements in the near future. The combined impact of retirements and efforts to enlarge the tenure-track faculty will test the University's hiring processes, which are inefficient. Position authorizations, approvals to interview, and formal written offers travel slowly up and down the academic hierarchy.

More important than procedural hurdles to hiring, however, are the strategic challenges and opportunities Northeastern faces. As implementation of the Academic Plan moved out to the colleges and departments from 2007 to 2008 and as departments and colleges began to work across their boundaries to recruit new faculty members, it became clear that success in both arenas will require faculty recruitment strategies that go beyond plugging gaps created by departures. Instead of taking the immediate past state of the discipline and department as their reference point for requesting faculty lines, faculty members are being invited to project the future of their fields more actively, identify and build on areas of strength more committedly, make collaborative investments in emergent cross-disciplinary fields, and recruit faculty members with the capacity to make an immediate impact on Northeastern's academic reputation.

The University's transition to a more active model of faculty recruitment — no longer just screening pools of applicants, but vigorously courting faculty members whose advanced research agendas and experience closely fit Northeastern's distinctive areas of excellence — has challenged its faculty, administration, and faculty governance. Departments have found that such senior courtships effectively extend hiring into a year-round effort, and their interdisciplinary dimensions require both extended negotiations and improved administrative procedures to capture and formalize interdisciplinary faculty members' distributions of effort and voting rights in their several home units.

Other challenges as well appear more frequently with targeted senior recruitment. Northeastern is learning to respond with some flexibility to requests for partner hires and other issues presented by dual-career couples and faculty members beyond the beginning stages of their careers. The University is a member of the Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, which pools employment opportunities at a number of area institutions.

The shift to a more active faculty recruitment model has potential for increasing the diversity of Northeastern's faculty. Until very recently, the processes of the Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity emphasized wide advertising to develop a broad pool of candidates, rather than the targeted recruitment of individual faculty members, as Northeastern's key strategy for improving faculty diversity.

The results of the outreach-focused model were uneven. Asian and Hispanic faculty numbers are now rising in the tenure-track ranks, but African-American faculty representation actually declines from the currently tenured to the tenure-track faculty. Together, black and Hispanic faculty now represent 7.4 percent of the tenured and tenure-track faculty ranks, little changed from the 7 percent average remarked on by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) team in 1999. This is a disturbing sign for the future, especially because a number of the tenured African-American faculty are nearing retirement. Clearly, the active recruiting skills and strategies now being honed, including cluster hiring, will need to be transferred into the realm of recruiting underrepresented faculty of color as well.

Although women represent 44 percent of Northeastern's assistant professors, the representation of women in the tenured and tenure-track faculty as a whole has made rather modest progress since the 1999 NEASC Team Report, going from approximately 28 percent to 29 percent in Fall 2007. In some colleges, the pipeline is narrowing: The College of Computer and Information Sciences, for example, currently has no women on the tenure track. Some of the colleges, however, have made notable recent strides in hiring women to the full-time faculty (including non-tenure-track faculty): Business Administration has increased women's representation from 21 percent in Fall 2002 to 30 percent in Fall 2007, Criminal Justice from 25 percent to 35 percent, and Engineering from 10 percent to 17 percent.

For faculty members hired into entry-level tenure-track positions at Northeastern, the past decade saw increasing tenure expectations, particularly in research and scholarship. Consonant with these rising expectations, the semester conversion lowered faculty teaching loads as measured over the academic year. The effort over the past decade has been to maintain a balance of teaching and scholarship, with relatively modest service, to enable probationary faculty members

to build a solid and nationally recognized case for tenure. The teaching load reduction mandated by the 2004 workload policy reinforces this message. In tandem with Northeastern's rising academic profile, the Provost's Office has worked with the colleges to improve the quality of tenure dossiers and particularly the external evaluation letters.

Survey data compiled in the 2007 Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) study suggest that Northeastern's tenure-track faculty vary in their perceptions of the tenure process and the support available to them on the way to tenure. Some consistent cross-disciplinary concerns, though, were revealed. Tenure-track faculty members rated tenure expectations in the area of teaching and service as more reasonable than expectations in the area of scholarship by margins wider at Northeastern than at other universities. Tenure-track faculty in all disciplines at Northeastern also reported lower satisfaction, relative to peer institutions and to ratings of other areas of academic life, with access to graduate students and access to research support services. Tenure-track faculty members in some areas reported troublingly low levels of satisfaction with a number of areas linked to successful mentoring, especially professional interaction with senior colleagues. Their concerns in these areas correlated with lower reported clarity about, and satisfaction with, tenure standards.

These survey data reflect a university moving toward higher overall levels of research and scholarship. They also reflect a university reshaping its overall tenured and tenure-track faculty profile. As of Fall 2006, about 20 percent of the University's tenured and tenure-track faculty were fewer than ten years beyond their terminal degree. About 10 percent were ten to 15 years beyond the terminal degree, and another 10 percent were 15 to 20 years beyond. Almost 60 percent of the faculty were more than 20 years beyond the terminal degree.

The faculty's experience profile presents Northeastern with both opportunities and challenges. Replacing a significant portion of long-serving tenured faculty in the fairly near term will give the University flexibility in implementing its Academic Plan and recruiting an excellent faculty at every rank. At the same time, this profile challenges the University's capacity to mentor its tenure-track faculty toward tenure. In many units, low levels of faculty hiring in the past have left the University with slender ranks of tenured faculty in the middle stages of their careers, when their professional identities and projects are likely to be closer to those of tenure-track faculty members.

In some instances, tenure-track faculty members hired under rising tenure expectations serve in departments with many senior colleagues and limited numbers of active mid-career faculty members, or in departments with a small tenured leadership relative to the department's numbers of non-tenure-track faculty. For these faculty members, the University will need to forge networks beyond the department to provide the mentoring needed to help establish their research agenda and teaching profile for tenure, as well as the intellectual community that will help retain them at the University. Northeastern's current emphasis on interdisciplinarity in senior faculty hiring increases the opportunities for ambitious tenure-track faculty members to connect with tenured faculty members whose expertise transcends disciplinary boundaries.

Implementation of the 2004 Faculty Senate workload policy has moved forward, although not

uniformly, with some departments having completely codified and implemented policies and others only partially so.

As the Faculty Senate reaffirmed in Spring 2008, the implementation of the University-wide workload policy depends on unit-based annual merit review evaluations being responsive to faculty members' differing assignments and fair in evaluating faculty members' areas of contribution. Faculty merit policies and procedures vary widely across units in response to disciplinary norms. Surveys conducted by the Senate's Faculty Development Committee in Fall 2007 suggest that faculty members on the whole feel positively about this diversity: 67 percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty members who responded reported that their unit's merit procedures were "clear" to them; 61 percent said that the merit procedures were "fair" in the evaluation and reward of teaching; 62 percent said that they were "fair" in respect to research; and 65 percent said that they were "fair" in respect to service. Faculty members were significantly less positive about the developmental function of their annual evaluations: Only 48 percent agreed that merit reviews provided them with "useful information for [their] ongoing development as a faculty member." ([http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20072008/2007\\_special/documents/FDC\\_MeritReport2\\_3.pdf](http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20072008/2007_special/documents/FDC_MeritReport2_3.pdf))

## **PROJECTION**

Northeastern will accelerate its hiring of tenure-track and tenured faculty over the next ten years and will reduce its overall student-faculty ratio significantly. In selected areas, the University will continue hiring full-time benefits-eligible non-tenure-track faculty members to reduce reliance on part-time instruction. As it broadens the range of its offerings to include more graduate programs and more teaching of traditional undergraduate students, CPS will continue to expand its full-time faculty.

In anticipation of upcoming retirements and the thin mid-career ranks in many disciplines, Northeastern will hire a mixture of tenure-track and tenured faculty members to achieve more balance between junior and experienced faculty members and provide all academic units with appropriate leadership, research activity, and instructional capacity.

Northeastern will augment cross-departmental mentoring and other measures to introduce tenure-track faculty members to Northeastern's interdisciplinary academic opportunities and to amplify the mentoring offered to tenure-track faculty members in units with smaller ranks of experienced faculty.

The faculty workload policy will be fully implemented across the University within two years, better aligning faculty strengths and efforts with the University's and the individual units' missions. Department chairs and college deans will align full workload implementation with more effective developmental feedback to faculty members following annual merit reviews.

Over the next two years, the Provost's Office, deans, and faculty will develop and deploy procedures that streamline the hiring of faculty members. These will include templates for formalizing faculty members' participation in multiple units and accounting realistically for their distribution of efforts in unit budgeting.

The University will accelerate its progress in recruiting Hispanic and Asian-American faculty, and

will recruit aggressively to end its stagnation in African-American faculty numbers. It will authorize additional cluster hires such as the one that brought three junior African-American faculty members to the College of Arts and Sciences in Fall 2008; continue to recruit faculty members of color through pre- and post-doctoral residential fellowships; and prioritize senior faculty hires that present opportunities to increase faculty diversity. The University will monitor the expected progress of tenure-track faculty members and will assess the impact on faculty careers of its policy (newly clarified as of Spring 2008) on delays of the tenure clock.

The Provost and President will complete their review of the draft *Faculty Handbook*, including resolutions passed in Spring 2008, by the end of Fall 2008.

## Teaching and Advising

### **DESCRIPTION**

Excellence in teaching — required of all instructional faculty members at Northeastern — is documented both in annual merit evaluations and in tenure and promotion dossiers. The *Faculty Handbook* mandates that University-standardized, anonymously administered student evaluations of teaching be conducted in every course meeting enrollment minimums, and that these evaluations become part of both annual merit evaluations and tenure and promotion dossiers. The *Handbook* also calls upon units to assess regularly the teaching of all faculty members by discipline-appropriate means in addition to the standardized evaluations.

The mission of the new Center for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning is to promote a campus culture that values learning and provides leadership in the design, delivery, and assessment of teaching. The Center coordinates the University-wide standardized teaching evaluation, arranges for mid-semester evaluations as requested, and promotes and develops assessment tools. CIETL works closely with the Educational Technology Center.

Student advising as a component of faculty members' instructional roles varies widely from unit to unit. Some of the professional colleges, such as Business Administration and Engineering, rely almost entirely on professional advisors to serve undergraduate majors. Other colleges employ more hybrid models of advising. In the College of Arts and Sciences, all departments have full-time, usually tenured, faculty members as head advisors in addition to professional advisors located in the Dean's Office. In CPS, student advisement is the responsibility of the college's Office of Student Support Services.

Graduate students are advised by faculty members within their individual departmental structures. Generally, graduate students are advised by the department's graduate coordinator; students in research programs are also advised by their major professor and thesis or dissertation committee members. In the School of Law, in addition to the academic advising provided through a faculty advising system, the assistant dean and the associate director of the Office of Academic and Student Affairs counsel students individually on their academic programs.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, the Senate approved a new online teaching evaluation instrument, the Teacher Rating and Course Evaluation (TRACE), which includes more open-

ended questions for soliciting qualitative student feedback than had the former classroom-based TCE. A pilot study was conducted in Fall 2007 and University-wide implementation of TRACE took place in spring 2008.

A new academic monitoring and early warning system, the Faculty Advisor Communication Tool, has been put in place (<http://www.neu.edu/registrar/fact.html>). It coordinates information from faculty members and academic advising staff and also gives students early warning of problems. It has enhanced and streamlined this aspect of advising while proving easy to use.

In the late 1990s, the colleges of Engineering and Arts and Sciences secured a multi-year grant from the GE Foundation to improve the teaching of science and engineering courses to freshmen engineering students. An interdisciplinary group of faculty members, working on a peer-to-peer basis and engaging the resources of the Center for Effective University Teaching (CEUT), discussed and shared best practices. They carried out studies on learning and met with all the science and engineering departments to share perceptions and practices. Out of their activities emerged an advice column on University teaching and learning that won a national award.

The success of this cross-college collaboration led to a similar effort between the College of Arts and Sciences and the Bouvé College of Health Sciences, focused on the strengthening of teaching of freshmen Bouvé students. The original faculty group also developed a peer-assessment program, focused on formative evaluation, for faculty members. They offered this evaluation, sometimes with the director of CEUT, to other faculty members. More recently, a peer observation and evaluation tool for large classroom teaching was developed by professors in Bouvé College of Health Sciences.

## **APPRAISAL**

Most departments conduct multiple means of evaluation of teaching by tenure-track faculty, augmenting standardized teaching evaluations with peer evaluations of classroom teaching. Some departments supplement these evaluations with discipline-based written instruments.

The Fall 2007 pilot of the online TRACE instrument showed fewer students completing online evaluations in comparison to the TCE form, administered during class sessions. The response rate for TRACE increased in the Spring 2008 full implementation of the online form. The Fall 2007 pilot study showed that students using TRACE supplied significantly more detailed commentary than those using the TCE instrument. Another benefit of using the online form was that TRACE results were available to instructors as soon as final grades had been submitted.

The GE Foundation-sponsored interdisciplinary teaching councils have provided a valuable forum for both motivating and recognizing interest in teaching. They have also provided a springboard for other projects. For instance, an engineering professor who had been part of the original group, working with a cross-disciplinary group of engineers, game designers, and educational assessors, recently received a significant National Science Foundation grant to assess next-generation learning through computer-facilitated networked play.

The College of Arts and Sciences has developed “teaching circles,” groups of faculty members

working together to enhance teaching and learning across the college. These are often very diverse groups of faculty members who come to learn from their peers.

## **PROJECTION**

The TRACE instrument is very new to Northeastern, so its implementation will be monitored closely. Among the issues that will be studied are the timing of the availability of the form to the student, the level of student participation in its usage, and the review of possible inappropriate content in the student responses.

The FACT system will be monitored to ascertain its usage and effectiveness in retaining students at risk.

Some teaching circles are evolving from groups that discuss common issues to groups that advocate for new programs. Currently the Dean of Arts and Sciences is working with faculty members to develop themed learning communities for student groups beyond the freshman year.

## Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

### **DESCRIPTION**

Several important aspects of the research environment for faculty have evolved during the self-study period. Perhaps most significant are the University's internal financial support for research, the research support infrastructure, and the extent and management of externally funded research.

New investigators are supported initially with startup funds as well as laboratory and office space. Tenure-track investigators may apply for competitively awarded Provost's Office Research and Scholarship Funds. Another Provost's Office grant program supports new ventures in research and scholarship by tenured investigators seeking to further develop their research or move into a new research area. The University also maintains a generous overhead return policy that distributes 10 percent of overhead return to the principal investigator.

Research programs are managed through the investigators' academic department as well as through designated research centers for group research activities. Funded research programs have continued to grow, with research expenditures reported to the National Science Foundation increasing from \$70.0 million in fiscal year 2005 to \$78.2 million in fiscal 2007.

External grants are submitted through the Division of Sponsored Project Administration (DSPA), which is under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Research. DSPA assists faculty members in proposal submission as well as with post-award activities. The Division of Research Integrity is responsible for managing compliance with federal, state, and University regulations in the areas of human and animal research, and the responsible conduct of research. The Office of Technology Transfer and the Division of Research Development also provide research support.

### **APPRAISAL**

Expectations for faculty research and scholarly productivity have increased over the self-study period, leading to correspondingly increased demands on all aspects of Northeastern's research support infrastructure, including internal research-funding mechanisms; research space and facil-

ities, including the library; grants and contracts administration; and technology transfer and legal support.

A number of reports by faculty committees and external consultants during this time have documented needed improvements in the structure and institutional capacity of the support system. In response, there have been several efforts to remedy acknowledged shortcomings and meet support increased demands. The most significant changes were a reorganization of the University research administration division into four separate units — the Division of Sponsored Project Administration, the Division of Research Integrity, the Office of Technology Transfer, and the Division of Research Development — and the creation of a standing Faculty Senate Research Policy Oversight Committee. In 2006 the Division of Sponsored Projects Administration was given new leadership and reorganized into distinct pre- and post-award teams.

Even with acknowledged improvements in the research-support system, faculty members maintain strong perceptions about its shortcomings. The current administration has publicly recognized deficiencies and its part in the problem and is moving to address these deficiencies. The charge to the 2007-2008 Faculty Senate's Committee on Research Policy Oversight explicitly noted this as an issue for review and analysis. (See Committee charge and final report, [http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20072008/200708\\_research/](http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20072008/200708_research/)).

## **PROJECTION**

There is every reason to expect that support for research and scholarship at Northeastern will continue to improve. The current administration has made a strong commitment to enhanced research productivity in general, as evidenced by its commitment to increased faculty hiring, and has communicated to the faculty its awareness of the importance of successfully addressing lingering problems in research infrastructure.

The University has engaged a consulting group to look at many elements of research infrastructure. The University is also weighing the report of the 2007–2008 Faculty Senate Research Policy Oversight Committee, which recommended changes to the University's research administration structure and proposed electronic systems to enhance research proposal development.

As the incoming Provost begins his tenure, the recommendations in the consultants' report and those of the Research Policy Oversight Committee will be carefully considered and prioritized.

## **INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Northeastern assesses the effectiveness of its efforts to recruit, retain, and develop faculty members both through ongoing means and as prompted by significant transitions. For instance, the semester conversion process prompted a campus-wide discussion of appropriate faculty teaching loads in view of the University's mission, and provided the context for the development of the University-wide load policy.

The Provost's Office, in consultation with the academic deans and the Faculty Senate, oversees the integrity and improvement of recruitment and tenure processes. The Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity assesses and recommends improvements in supporting faculty diversity. The Senate maintains a standing Faculty Development Committee, which has historically made recommendations on a wide range of issues, including support for teaching. The Financial Affairs Committee

represents the Senate in the University's financial planning, including planning for new faculty positions and improvements in faculty salaries. The Senate's standing Research Policy Oversight Committee examines the University's effectiveness in supporting faculty research.

The common aim of these offices and bodies is to provide Northeastern's distinguished faculty with the level of support needed to fulfill its mission.