

Northeastern University: A Global Experience
2010 NAFSA Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization
Nomination Essay
Robert P. Lowndes

This year, Northeastern University (NU) celebrates the centennial year of its cooperative education program, for which it has been ranked #1 in the United States. The long-standing success of this experiential program is founded on an educational philosophy that integrates study and practice. More than 6,000 students participate annually with some 2,200 employers including multi-national and global corporations, NGO's and government agencies.

In 2007, under the leadership of President Joseph Aoun, a new Mission Statement and Academic Plan were developed, with both highlighting the commitment of Northeastern to become a global institution, and to internationalize the campus by preparing, students, faculty, and staff for globalization in the 21st Century. The new Northeastern University mission is:

- To educate students for a lifetime of fulfillment and accomplishment.
- To create and translate knowledge to meet global and societal needs.

As part of this new global strategic commitment, the University launched a second signature experiential effort in 2007, this time to integrate study and global experiences. As this initiative continues to move forward, President Aoun has declared that "Global Experience" would be the unifying theme for this academic year,

This nomination describes Northeastern's development of this new signature initiative to internationalize the campus through global experiences. It is organized under two distinct themes:

- Connecting Northeastern to the World
- Connecting the World to Northeastern

Connecting Northeastern to the World

Throughout the course of studies for a typical Northeastern University student, internationalization is one of the fibers threading all aspects of a student's experience together. The key to Northeastern University's approach to internationalization is to offer students multiple experiences throughout their years of study, helping students acquire – and constantly reinforce and grow – the skills a global citizen needs to succeed.

The NU student is connected to the world through four initiatives:

- Study Abroad and Dialogue of Civilizations
- NUIIn
- NU Global Corps
- International Coop

Study Abroad and Dialogue of Civilizations

The primary international student experience at NU is the University's multi-faceted study abroad program. Northeastern study abroad falls into two components: traditional study abroad in which students study at a partner institution abroad for a semester or more; and faculty-led programs in which students study for half a semester. Participation in study abroad at Northeastern University rose to 1,297 students in academic year 2009, a 31% increase over the previous year and nearly double the participation in the two-year period since the global initiative began.

It is important to note that all students can use their financial aid in our study abroad programs, and participation in any of these, including tuition, travel, and accommodation expenses, costs less than the equivalent on-campus expenses, so there is no extra cost impediment to participation for any student.

This year, an extensive assessment program for all study abroad programs was begun with seven area goals: Disciplinary Knowledge; Social and Emotional Growth; Global Awareness; Cultural Consciousness; Language Learning; Lifelong Learning; and Engagement. The assessment goals are evaluated through surveys prior to the student's departure, after the student's return, and six months after the student's return.

Much of the study abroad growth has been driven by our signature faculty-led Dialogue of Civilizations Programs ("Dialogues"). Dialogues allow Northeastern students from all colleges to engage with their peers in different national, cultural, political and social environments. Dialogues are one half semester long.

In 2006, Dialogues were operating in five countries with 5 faculty leading 96 students. In 2009, under the University's new commitment to globalization, Dialogues operated in 33 countries, including Armenia, Benin, and Cuba, with over 600 students being led by 43 faculty members.

The central component of each Dialogue is a series of meetings and discussions between students and local government leaders, community organizations, and their peers on various topics, including politics, human rights, and technology. Students earn 8 credits by taking two courses in their Dialogue; these courses are thematic, in line with a student's major and course of study, and blend classroom instruction with experiential learning through site visits, brief internships and attendance at cultural events. Language instruction is also a central component of Dialogues, with nearly 25 per cent of all

Dialogues providing students with opportunities to learn a foreign language through immersion.

NUIn

In addition to our traditional study abroad programs and faculty-led Dialogues programs, Northeastern University offers a study abroad experience for pre-freshmen, called NUIn. Two years ago, Northeastern University was one of the very first universities in the country to create an international experience for incoming freshmen, by providing a study abroad opportunity during their Fall semester. NUIn provides academic courses with NU advising and administrative staff offering on-site leadership, language and cultural training. In 2008-09, some 120 NUIn students studied in Thessaloniki, Melbourne and London. By the end of the semester abroad, students earn the equivalent number of credits toward their degrees that their peers in Boston earn.

NU Global Corps

Last year, NU Global Corps was established as a focus and advancement infrastructure for international service learning. Our international service learning activities for students operate throughout the world, including Cameroon, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, India, South Africa and Thailand. In 2009, more than 100 undergraduate and graduate students have participated in these programs, with some earning credit toward their degrees.

Highlighting international service learning at Northeastern University are three examples:

- In the village of Los Planes, Honduras, students in the NU chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) worked two years on the design and construction of a new water sanitation and distribution system for the village. Selected as the program of the month in October 2008 by the national EWB organization, and also featured this year on the U.S. Department of State's website America.gov, this project improved water resources and forged a lasting relationship between Northeastern and the village.
- The India NU Global Corps Practicum was established in partnership with the Deshpande Foundation, a leading philanthropic foundation in Massachusetts and India. Throughout the semester, NU Students work with their Indian peers at a local NGO to create community development programs related to poverty, development, and technology. Through intensive training with experts in the field, students learn the key skills of community development work, including action research, leadership skills, organizational development, and cross-cultural communication.
- The Social Entrepreneurship Program in the College of Business provides NU students with the opportunity to help create businesses in under-developed areas. Through field work and business planning, students have created microlending

programs in Cameroon and a manufacturing venture in South Africa, to name a few.

International Cooperative Education

In 2009, Northeastern students participated in some 200 international cooperative six-month work experiences in more than forty countries. As is true with all our international opportunities, international co-ops cut across all disciplines. This is exemplified by the diversity of companies receiving co-op students, including Children's Hospital of Costa Rica, the *Cape Times* newspaper in South Africa, and the Deutsche Bank office in Zurich.

This Fall, as a cornerstone of his "Global Experience" theme for this year, President Aoun announced a new Presidential Global Scholars initiative, a \$1 million program to encourage and support outstanding students seeking international co-op opportunities.

Connecting the World to Northeastern

Northeastern University's campus is richly populated with some 2,576 students from 119 countries and is a hub of global activity in the New England region through six key programs:

- International Student and Scholar Institute
- English Language Center
- World Languages Center
- Global Pathways
- World Class Cities Initiative

International Student and Scholar Institute

The International Student & Scholar Institute (ISSI) was founded in 1976, and serves as a catalyst for intercultural awareness throughout the university, and provides support for international students in all areas of their experience, including immigration advising and family support. The ISSI connects the international components of campus life, academic disciplines, and student-faculty community together through an interfaith worship center, cultural events, and support services for international students.

Examples of this include the creation of an interfaith worship center, lectures on Japanese culture, African dance performances, and international food festivals. The ISSI also serves the broader campus community as a resource, offering sensitivity training to campus police, and helping faculty and staff better instruct and support international students.

English Language Center

The English Language Center (ELC) serves some 3,300 students, faculty and staff each year through eight different English as a Second Language (ESL), or English for Special Purposes (ESP) programs. Many ESL and ESP programs earn college credit and are integrated into the core of a student's academic program. The ELC also interacts closely with Northeastern's writing center, advising teams and admission officers to help support students while they learn English and succeed academically.

World Languages Center

Recognizing that the study of languages is crucial to the success of our students, and to the internationalization of the campus, Northeastern took the dramatic step in 2007 of moving most language instruction out of the Department of Modern Languages and into a newly created World Languages Center (WLC). The WLC was created to better respond to the student demand for languages from across all international programs at the university, and as a means of attracting new faculty to teach new languages. The WLC currently offers instruction in thirteen languages including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew and Swahili.

To cope with the increased demand, the WLC has added 25 new fulltime faculty and is preparing to add additional faculty to teach Korean, Hindi and Farsi. New and additional dedicated classrooms for language instruction have been created. These investments have allowed us to offer students at least two years of instruction in all languages offered, and three years of instruction in several core languages like Arabic and Chinese. After many years of flat language enrollments, this new initiative has led to increased enrollments by nearly 45% during the first three years of operation for the WLC, with some 3,000 student enrollments in foreign language courses this year.

Global Pathways

Profiled a year ago in the *New York Times*, our new Global Pathways program is an innovative, first of its kind in the USA, partnership between Northeastern University and Kaplan Inc., the private education services company. Through Global Pathways, Northeastern University prepares international students for academic success in the US. The program organizes courses in ESL, academic skills-building, and sheltered content instruction, on three tracks: business and social sciences, engineering and computer science, and physical and life sciences.

Students who successfully complete the program, which depending on English proficiency can last one, two or three semesters, matriculate with credits into one of Northeastern's graduate or undergraduate programs. In 2008-09, the program served 441 students from 14 countries including Albania, China, Kazakhstan, and Venezuela.

World Class Cities Initiative

The World Class Cities Initiative (WCCI) has been created by the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Northeastern as a global network of city officials and practitioners, university faculty and students, and policy innovators working together to address the key challenges urban centers face in common around the world. Its mission is to bring together civic, business, and university leaders from cities spanning the globe for the purpose of creating sustainable social change through research, policy development, and implementation of best practice solutions to common challenges - a “Think & Do” network. The initial partners with Boston in the WCCI are the cities of Frankfurt, Hangzhou, and Kyoto, with the ultimate goal of expanding to ten partners. In 2009, Northeastern hosted a week-long workshop for 20 senior officials of the Hangzhou Municipal Authority with presentations by faculty and by senior government and industry leaders.

Summary

Over the past three years, Northeastern University has dramatically internationalized its campus through a second signature experiential effort – the global experience - tied to the new Academic Plan. Through innovation in programming, partnerships and curriculum, Northeastern University has dramatically increased the global experience and engagement for students and faculty, both abroad and on campus.