

NORTHEASTERN 2025:

LEADER IN LIFELONG EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE.

Lifelong Experiential Learning Team: Matthew B. Atherton, Madeleine Estabrook, Nathan Felde, Lori Gardinier, Edgar Goluch, Chris Mallett, Dave Merry, Cigdem Talgar, and Katherine S. Ziemer

THE CONTEXT: TODAY AND OUR PROJECTIONS OF THE FUTURE

With more than a century of commitment to experiential learning, Northeastern University today is an educational leader whose exemplary learning model integrates off-campus opportunities with classroom, laboratory, and studio learning experiences in disciplinary fields. Our Cooperative Education (Co-op) Program differentiates us as a university by providing students with unique, extensive, and meaningful professional work experiences. Employers recognize the value of our integrated learning model and rate Northeastern University graduates higher than other new employees in the professional competencies essential across all employment sectors. Our experiential learning model has increased classroom rigor while fostering deeper, broader and richer engagement aligned with individual student talents, skills, and aspirations.

Over 95% of our undergraduate students participate in co-op, with 20% completing one co-op, 39% completing two co-ops, and 36% completing three or more co-ops. In the last 10 years, we have enhanced experiential learning to include expanded international co-op opportunities, Dialogues of Civilization, service-learning, and a greater emphasis on undergraduate research. Curricula have expanded through greater opportunities for combined and double majors, minors, concentrations, and MS/BS plus-1 programs. This increased breadth, both on and off campus, provides students greater opportunities for personalization and customization of their college experiences.

Today's students enter Northeastern University with the highest ever SAT scores (University average of 1414 for 2015), the highest ever high school GPA (University average of 4.0 for 2015), and many Advanced Placement or other transferred credits. Moreover, they enter with high ambitions for impacting the global society, and they come explicitly ready to engage in our signature pedagogical model with a clear belief in its value for their future success. Our alumni are committed to Northeastern University and look for ways to engage in the further growth and success of the institution. Our educators are engaging at the intersection of disciplines, and are creating the knowledge and the disciplines of the future. Our employers perceive our students to be better prepared for the workplace than other college graduates, making them even more interested in partnering with the University.

Students, their needs and their profile, as well as the world around us, are changing. Disciplines are blurred by the complexity of today's societal needs. Technology enables the dissemination

of “facts” in an instantaneous and often overwhelming manner. Future adults will need to be evermore skilled at effectively using carefully analyzed data, rather than recalling knowledge. Future adults will need to be evermore sophisticated in their understanding of the natural and human world in order to effectively participate in and contribute to a more integrated global society; in order to evaluate options within an understanding of the human, societal, cultural, and natural impacts. Future adults will need to “retool” their skills as technology and fundamental knowledge continues to expand and change. Economic security and prosperity will belong to those who are willing and able to continuously learn. As such, Northeastern University 2025 must provide students with both the skills and knowledge necessary to work in a variety of settings, with diverse constituents, on a continuous basis and in an ever-changing world. As a university known for its strength in experiential education, we must also function as a center for producing research that informs practice in this domain.

VISION: NORTHEASTERN 2025

Northeastern University 2025 has synergized today’s opportunities and redefined lifelong experiential learning. Northeastern 2025 is known as the “boundary-less” university – no classroom or co-op boundaries, no industry boundaries, no country boundaries – and no such thing as a “typical student” or “typical student experience”. Current and future students interact with alumni, employers, and Northeastern educators to create an ever-evolving hub of lifelong education to which they always belong, and to which they participate at various levels and in various roles over time. Northeastern University 2025 offers a catalog of experiences, rather than just a catalog of classes, from which students are guided to create their personal educational path, and that path does not end at graduation. Northeastern University 2025 is known world-wide for its research leadership in the science of learning and the practice of that science to experiential education pedagogy.

- 1) Northeastern University will redefine the “when” and “where” of learning. **Lifelong experiential learning at Northeastern University will not be bounded by classrooms or timelines.**

Northeastern University 2025 has capacity to:

- Reach and serve any learner at any point in life, at any moment of need, and in any place or context.
- Construct events in any context which offer relevant lessons that can be learned by experiences.
- Connect, link and provide continuity to the lessons learned and the learners to each other to build communities of interest.
- Accumulate lessons and sort and match them with new learners in new contexts.

- Map new territory for learners to explore.
- Cultivate a library and catalog of lessons independent of disciplines.
- Create a Northeastern branded free-trade zone for lessons and new knowledge that one subscribes to and contributes to over a lifetime.
- Spread the tuition over a lifetime and give credits for intellectual and cultural contributions from learning in context.
- Move from “purchase” to “subscription” business model with loyalty rewards (frequent learner and contributor credits).

The term “Lifelong” means a lifelong relationship with the institution, beginning much earlier than the traditional freshman year and being sustained through digital affinity, topical communities, and via Northeastern campus facilities and partnerships around the globe. Our opportunity (and responsibility) is to enable lifelong experiential learning by connecting people, subject matter expertise, and authentic opportunities for learners to practice and master relevant competencies.

Northeastern University 2025 understands, through the science of learning, where students have been and where they are going as they mature, grow, develop and change in many ways. Thus, we will offer educational opportunities when and where they are needed as one’s life, goals and objectives evolve. Early career learners, for example, may prioritize career development, economic security, and personal prosperity. Late career learners may value sharing what they have gained over time by contributing to the learning of others. By looking at significant “events” in life we will better understand what learning means in context, and will align the university’s people, products, and services accordingly.

Future knowledge about individual cognitive capacity through advances in neuroscience will enable fine-grained and just-in-time matching of learner needs to resources. Thus Northeastern University 2025 will have dismantled the cumbersome semester blocks and timelines, and restrictive administration of semester hours and class accounting in favor of true learning assessment and credit appropriate to that learning. ALL student experiences, such as athletics, organizational leadership, and multi-cultural living environments, will be open for mindful and guided learning and assessment.

Northeastern University 2025 delivers curated content over and through networks (in-person and remote) to match the intent of the learner in context. Content and resources will anticipate and match individual learning goals. Northeastern University 2025 will be nimble, flexible, and “mobile by design” to allow for non-linear, fully integrated impact. Gene targeting treatment for disease is a model of what is possible. We will have to match the phenotype with the bits and pieces of knowhow valuable *in situ*.

Feedback loops will be built into the delivery infrastructure to permit the system itself to learn and to empower and equip both learners and those who serve them in order to leverage just-in-time, targeted support. Northeastern University (the system) will use its student, alumni,

and professionals input with analytics to power decision making and thus be capable of continual learning to keep pace with and anticipate new demands.

In order to be sustainable, Northeastern University's administration of the learning system will have the capacity for maintaining requisite variety and continual evolution. The velocity of change and rise of uncertainty will require an efficient "mesh" network of nodes that can learn lessons from the learners. This requires assessment of the system and the learners, as well as research into the science of learning and effective experiential education pedagogy. Learning without teachers will challenge the model of "professors" controlling the agenda for learners. The test of learning will become the ability to transmit what you have learned to another learner and within the context of employment. Leaders will become learners and learners will be leaders. Each context will shape what is to be learned, what was learned and who cares about and values the lesson then and later.

Northeastern University 2025 exists in a world where the dominant service models of the contemporary marketplace are embraced by leading academic institutions. To keep pace with population growth and circulation globally and the just-in-time nature of knowing something, Northeastern University 2025 creates opportunities to congregate with others in person with a common goal to accomplish. This temporary "school" is a unique experience for a particular need at a vital moment. The long term relationship is key and the loyalty of a learner to the larger community would be cultivated and rewarded.

- The network becomes the course, programs, and services catalog, able to match lessons to context and intent and phenotype in a manner that aligns with a real time, proprietary understanding of the competencies, experiences, and capacity society and its employers value.
- Embodied knowledge accrues wisdom from experience, so mapping lessons to events in context becomes valuable "institutional memory".
- Anyone can be a Northeastern student at anytime, anywhere.
- Tuition moves from commodity cost basis to long-term value-based investment.
- Credentialing moves to what is accomplished with the lessons, discrete and meaningful.
- A "degree" means less and less but any credential's value or credibility is earned by endorsements over longer time.

2) Northeastern University will be the center of a dynamic learning community involving past, current, and future students. **Lifelong experiential learning at Northeastern University engages diverse faculty, students, alumni and professionals in dynamic and responsive learning networks constructed and reconstructed to meet learning needs.**

As the world continues to become more globalized and interconnected, students and professors are arriving at Northeastern from a greater diversity of geographies, and

graduates are beginning to advance their professional careers in a similarly diverse manner. Through this trend comes an opportunity to build out a Northeastern University global network to facilitate knowledge sharing and cataloguing, professional development, and cross-cultural education for all members who are connected to the University.

With increased investment in the University as a “Hub” for students, alumni, professors, and other professionals, there also comes an opportunity to connect faster with professional networks to get stronger pulses on various industries in real time. These learnings allow Northeastern University 2025 to tailor classroom and experiential learning to give students the skills needed to meet the demands of an ever-evolving world. This is especially compelling because of the competitive advantage that students will receive as they begin their careers and compete for jobs.

Northeastern University 2025 will be the Hub as experiential learning continues to occur in more places, whether through traditional study abroad programs, international co-op opportunities, international dialogues, or classroom education in satellite campuses. Whether in Boston or abroad, students feel well-connected to a shared community and share a similar Northeastern culture.

The Northeastern University 2025 Hub is now possible due to advances in technology. Members of this network can share experiences and life learnings through blog postings, videos, and forums for discussion. Over time, as students graduate and continue to participate in this network, it can lead to a multigenerational ecosystem of reflective learning and career support to become a learning community. Students will have a view into their next stage, including graduate school and careers, while working professionals will have the opportunity to share professional experiences and non-textbook challenges with younger colleagues. The Northeastern Hub will build a large network of social capital.

While the role of technology is key to providing a multi-generational, global network, students also desire a more human connection while being more geographically mobile. Northeastern University 2025 as a Hub will deliver on this front by building out professional networks to encourage mentoring, knowledge sharing, and cultural education opportunities. For example, students studying abroad in Beijing might have an opportunity to connect to alumni living in the area, or somebody originally from China, who can teach them about the local culture or give them professional advice and opportunities. Despite being thousands of miles from Boston, these students are now more connected to Northeastern than ever and can augment their experiential learning opportunity.

Northeastern 2025 as centralized hub:

- We will fully embrace the realization that global experiential learning takes place everywhere that NU has a real or virtual presence...cross cultural communication happens everywhere.

- NU will be the acknowledged world leader in global human capital development...this will be achieved by the creation of a globally-respected research center, one dedicated to the creation and dissemination of knowledge in the field of global human capital development.
 - The university will be committed to fostering mutual respect and friendships between domestic and international students. Courses and student activities can reinforce these behaviors.
- NU will be the world leader in offering globally networked student learning opportunities.
- Northeastern will similarly be recognized for its support of globally networked faculty careers.
- Northeastern will learn from the knowledge of professionals within the network and this will enable greater anticipation of future student needs.

3) Northeastern University will redefine the “what” of learning. **Lifelong experiential learning at Northeastern University is built around a catalog of experiences versus a catalog of courses.**

To match students with the experiences that enrich, challenge and empower them we have to change the “catalog” of choices. Orange revolutionized mobile phone markets by busting open the “year-long” contract and pricing “minutes.” Northeastern University 2025 will have deconstructed and decomposed semesters and courses into modular recombinant choices and packages that match the just-in-time needs of a nomadic population of students. Similarly, traditional notions of co-op will have been expanded to deliver experiential opportunities in ways that are accessible, and able to be integrated within the circumstances and context of one’s life responsibilities, yet still in full partnership and close collaboration with employers and community stakeholders.

- Northeastern will develop a range of situations for each program of study that students can experience around the globe.
 - In 2025, students at Northeastern will be able to choose a situation within their desired interested area and the location where they will experience the training. (e.g. a student interested in the music industry could choose to shadow/work with a talent scout with a record label in India. This experience will provide the student with the general skills they are interested in acquiring as well as exposure to the unique regional and cultural characteristics related to the given topic.)
- Mentors/guides will assess the student’s performance and intellectual growth as they progress through the situation.

- Students will report to instructors at Northeastern on what they are learning and how they are maturing during the experience. Instructors will assess the student's performance, in consultation with the mentor/guide, and issue a grade/credential.
- The amount of credit the student receives will be proportional to the length of time for the experience and the level of complexity of the situation to which the student is being exposed. No predetermined semester hour or credit limits will be set.
- Co-op and other experiential opportunities are open to alumni and professionals, and are tuned to their specific timing and learning goal needs.
- Instead of taking a particular course in a classroom or completing a co-op at a specific company, individual professionals will offer projects that will allow a student to master a specific skill. (e.g. a construction engineer might be designing a new building and need to determine the specifications of the load bearing walls. A student could work with that professional instead of completing a traditional statics course. Depending on the complexity of the project, the student might also receive credit for a materials course. During the project, the professor could ask the student probing questions to ensure that the student learns about and considers all the necessary parameters. Both the statics and materials credits could count towards a degree in civil engineering.)

4) Northeastern University will redefine experiential learning. **Northeastern University will become the world leader in educational research in experiential and lifelong learning.**

In 2025, Northeastern will be the leader in Experiential Learning research through the work of the Research Institute for Experiential Learning Sciences (RIELS). As a result of the work of this institute:

- Northeastern University 2025 is a research-based incubator for new experiential learning approaches. We are both an innovator in this space, and also one that shares the impact of these approaches through a deep and rich research focus. The incubator approach ensures that all new approaches are anchored in evidence and yield research that can further build our model.
- Northeastern University 2025 has a research program that is supported by a vast network of researchers throughout its global network from different departments and units, creating a lattice of crowd-sourced research that is facilitated by the Research Institute for Experiential Learning Science.
- Northeastern University 2025 is a hub that connects a vast network of national and international collaborators also focused on researching the mechanisms underlying and expanding approaches to experiential learning.
- Northeastern University 2025 is home to the leading graduate research programs that develop and encourage innovative approaches to researching experiential learning.