

Northeastern 2025: A Diverse and Inclusive University

Diversity and Inclusion at Northeastern: Pathways, Strategies, and Goals

The Context

The founders of our University recognized that opening the doors to higher education to those who had been excluded from its benefits would enhance the welfare, pluralism and democracy of the city of Boston and our Nation. They grappled with the challenges of providing an affordable, high quality education at a time when few Americans could attain a college degree. Today, Northeastern reflects that historic commitment to an accessible education in a model community that is thoroughly diverse and inclusive. We affirm that diversity and inclusion are central to achieving our goals of academic excellence and global engagement, even as we recognize that barriers to equity may be both external and internal. Our current goals are informed by three realities: first, our historic commitment to education that enriches the national democratic project; second, changing demographics, globalization, and economic trends; and third, the paradigm shift in educational philosophy that places on academic institutions the responsibility to serve a wide and varying range of students well.

As a result of careful planning we have created pathways to diversity in our admissions policies, curricular and co-curricular programs, and support systems for underrepresented students. Our diversity goals have informed our initiatives on faculty hiring and retention as well as our support for research and teaching. We have expanded the diversity and inclusion of our staff and created a workplace that allows them to enhance their skills and build rewarding careers. We have promoted mutually respectful engagement with our surrounding communities and launched productive partnerships to advance their development. We must now redouble and expand these efforts, for we recognize that diversity is not simply a goal. It is a continuous process and an enduring mission.

Our core values and unique history support our ambitious but achievable goals to significantly enhance the diversity of our community by 2025. We appreciate that inclusion is the key to the success of a diversity initiative. As stated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, “without inclusion, there is no true excellence.” The inclusive community is one which values and respects the differences and uniqueness of its members, and ensures their full and engaged participation in all aspects of community life.

Defining Diversity

We embrace a shared definition of diversity and inclusion across our community:

We are committed to confronting the barriers to full inclusion of historically excluded or underrepresented groups in all aspects of the 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, and each group is linked in a spirit of mutual protection with others.

Diversity and the 2025 Academic Plan

Our academic plan will outline the pathways, strategies, and goals for greater diversity and inclusion with respect to our student body, faculty, and staff. It will address the impact of our practices regarding diversity and inclusion upon our surrounding communities.

Our Students

Every student should experience our University as a welcoming and supportive place that empowers them to become active and lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and effective global citizens. During the period covered by this Academic Plan, we will: (1) recruit and enroll a diverse and talented student body; (2) sustain an environment that respects the dignity, personal choices, rights, and unique abilities of every student; and (3) encourage student participation in curricular and co-curricular activities that build diversity and promote social justice.

Our Goal Create a campus in which all students are recognized, respected, and encouraged as capable learners within the classroom and beyond

Our Strategies and Priorities

- Increase diversity-focused scholarship funding
 - Offer competitive financial packages to increase enrollment
- Create new initiatives to recruit and retain students from underrepresented communities and urban centers
 - Replicate the NU Scholars Program for underrepresented minority undergraduates with attendant resources, mentoring, and other support
- Enhance recruitment and enrollment of non-traditional students at state, community, two-year, and tribal colleges
 - Focus on Lowell Institute as degree completion center
- Provide adequate and respectful academic support, including summer bridge programs
- Attract larger pool of graduate students from under-represented groups,

- including women in STEM subjects
 - Recruit at society meetings, leveraging partnerships with minority institutions, and create a supportive environment for ethnic minority student training, mentoring, and community building
- Emphasize diversity and inclusion in curricular and co-curricular offerings
 - Ensure students graduate with competence in diversity and inclusion
 - Promote peer-to-peer dialogue on topical issues
 - Increase awareness among underrepresented student groups of opportunities for academic distinction, global internships, and other high impact experiences
 - Offer opportunities for underrepresented groups and first-generation college students to prepare for admission to graduate and professional school
 - Foster mentoring between students from underrepresented or previously excluded groups and faculty
- Improve retention and graduation rates for underrepresented students
 - Monitor and support students in crisis

Our Faculty

While Northeastern has dramatically increased the diversity of its student body and staff, the demographics among the faculty have been slow to change despite the increased availability of underrepresented faculty. Building an intentionally diverse and inclusive community requires an effective strategy to identify, recruit, and retain excellent teachers and innovative researchers from groups that have been excluded or underrepresented in higher education. We appreciate the correlation between the overall campus climate and our ability to attract and retain a diverse faculty and staff. We also acknowledge that the long-standing but false perception that increased diversity compromises the academic standards of a faculty remains a barrier to effective recruitment and retention. Both our experience and empirical research establishes that diversity enhances learning, critical thinking, and students' satisfaction with their academic experience. Our University's success as a globally-focused academic leader in Health, Security, and Sustainability depends on our ability to grapple with new bodies of knowledge, cutting-edge research questions, and diverse scholarly perspectives. We must take bold and effective steps to ensure that our faculty closely reflects the diversity of our country.

Our Goal Use best practices and processes to recruit, retain, and advance faculty from underrepresented groups; encourage and support research that pertains to diversity and equity; recognize diversity as a vital asset in a learning community; and foster a welcoming and supportive climate for diversity.

Our Strategies and Priorities

- Promote programs that widen the pipeline for faculty diversity

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- Enhance Future Faculty programs and expand opportunities for postdocs by participating in programs such as The Compact for Faculty Diversity
- Recruit at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges/Governments and American Indian Studies programs, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions
- Support opportunity hires
- Require diversity training for faculty search committees
- Ensure participation of underrepresented faculty and staff in academic administration
 - Redouble efforts of Research Leadership Development Initiative
- Support promotion and retention of underrepresented faculty
 - Recognize and reward faculty who mentor underrepresented students and engage with underrepresented communities
 - Enhance and coordinate mentoring efforts of faculty across career stages
 - Create cross-unit programming for underrepresented faculty
- Incentivize and reward successful faculty diversity hiring and retention initiatives
 - Include diversity goals in requests for hires
 - Prioritize diversity in Professor of Practice searches
 - Include diversity training in new faculty orientation programs
 - Create incentive pool to reward creative faculty diversity initiatives
- Support research initiatives on issues that pertain to diversity and equity
 - Create professorships for diversity research
 - Increase funding and support to diversity research centers and programs
 - Identify and eliminate traditional metrics of achievement that impede diversity goals
 - Provide opportunities for faculty to assess their diversity objectives

Our Staff

As an imperative that ensures excellence in learning, teaching, and global engagement, diversity must be reflected in our staff, including at the level of academic leadership. The University must become a magnet for highly accomplished staff from underrepresented groups. The University's human resources offices can play a critical role in shifting the focus on staff diversity and inclusion from a regulatory burden to a critical value. Every staff supervisor can be an agent for change by embracing our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Our Goal Sustain a diverse and inclusive staff through successful recruitment and retention; strengthen the cultural competence of all members of the community; examine institutional practices to confirm that they support diversity and inclusion; recognize staff diversity as a vital asset in our learning community.

Our Strategies and Priorities

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- Expand outreach, recruitment, and hiring initiatives with partners in the community
 - Collaborate with NU Crossing to offer job opportunity and interview preparation workshops with representatives from HRM, University temporary help agency partners, and Career Services for members of the community
- Provide Talent Development programs to support leaders and groom high potential underrepresented staff for stretch assignments and management roles
- Retain, reward, and integrate diverse staff into an inclusive culture on campus
- Align HRM's pilot Talent Acquisition initiative to focus on increasing diversity across all professional ranks
- Provide funding for programs that increase the hiring and retention of diverse staff
- Ensure sustained and committed leadership diversity and inclusion in every college and division
 - Offer training to hiring managers and supervisors on diversity hiring and retention, and University Affirmative Action Plan
 - Identify underrepresented staff for leadership, management and supervisory training programs
- Enhance the cultural competence of our staff
 - Offer diversity and "Respectful Workplace" training
 - Create an online forum to share success stories, areas requiring attention, and "how to" ideas
 - Support participation in professional development opportunities during work hours
- Expand staff mentoring
 - Improve support and outreach efforts of NU Dream Initiative to reach staff members of diverse backgrounds in all areas of employment
- Ensure that skills training and career advancement programs include women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and veterans

Our Broader Community

Our University fosters dynamic partnerships with our surrounding communities designed to impact community welfare and enable the dissemination of knowledge. Throughout our history, we have worked with community members and organizations in a spirit of collaboration, mutual trust, and shared responsibility. We aim to serve as a national model for community engagement as we enhance mutually beneficial partnerships in the communities where we operate, with special focus on underserved communities. We offer innovative programs, policy development, and services to our neighbors, and regard them as essential partners in our mission to become a global leader in higher education. We aspire to take advantage of our role as an economic engine to promote employment equity and healthy environments.

Our Goal Build and sustain mutually beneficial partnerships with our neighboring communities that reflect our core values and history of good citizenship.

Our Strategies and Priorities

- Increase relations with underrepresented groups and community vendors for products and services
 - Every academic and administrative unit include in their diversity and inclusion plan how they will contribute to this commitment with metrics and reporting.
- Support Northeastern Crossing to maximize its impact in Boston communities neighboring the University
- Evaluate impact and strategically coalesce community engagement programs and resources
 - Launch a university-wide forum to share progress (including Ashoka U)
- Launch a micro-loan project to link local businesses with resources and skills at the University
- Support employment recruitment in our neighboring communities
 - Expand Year-Up program and community job fairs
- Expand programs that engage community members in study and learning opportunities on campus
 - Create a web presence for events and programs open to community

Accountability

Our stated goals and aspirations will transform and strengthen our University, and position it to excel on a global stage in the next ten years. Building diversity brings with it tensions, risks, complexity, and frustration, but the prize is worth the price. To reach these objectives, we must refine traditional measurements of success to ensure our growth as a community and as individuals. The senior leadership of the University must set forth bold plans with clear goals, expected results, oversight, and mechanisms to measure progress. They must oversee the development of Diversity and Inclusion plans that include goals and metrics for each college and division. As much transparency as is consistent with legitimate privacy concerns should govern the community's access to data about diversity.

Our Goal To be a leader in the academic community in the US and abroad on issues of diversity by transforming institutional policies, practices, and habits, and by instilling a sense of collective responsibility for the changes we must make

Our Strategies and Priorities

- Conduct a climate study to assess diversity and inclusion
- Create a University Diversity Metric that includes measures of progress established for each diversity goal using a Goal Attainment Dashboard that captures targets, analysis of metrics, sources of data, and suggested corrective action

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- Identify and eliminate traditional metrics of achievement that impede diversity goals
- Make accessible data about diversity
- Set performance management goals
 - Include self-identified goals, metrics, and evidence in annual reviews
- Support efforts of colleges and divisions to promote diversity by holding workshops
- Implement training programs and discussions on diversity and inclusion as part of on-boarding to Northeastern for new faculty, staff and students
- Recognize and reward progress of colleges and divisions

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