



Northeastern University

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# Northeastern Voice

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## Featured Article

**Northeastern to lead Homeland Security Center of Excellence**



Northeastern is the first university in Massachusetts to win a Centers of Excellence Grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for Explosive Detection, Mitigation and Response after a highly competitive grant process.

Northeastern will receive a grant of \$10 million over the next four years, and will assume a leadership role in research involving explosives detection, mitigation and response that can eventually lead to significant job creation, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced.

University President Joseph Aoun praised professor Michael Silevitch (above) and the team of researchers who won the grant.

## Vice provost briefs Senate on grad education success

Luis Falcon outlined the increased spending on scholarships and on marketing, among other measures, that have built a substantial growth in Northeastern's graduate student population.



The university brings in nearly 1,500 new graduate students each fall across the board, not counting those at the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, he said. Overall applications will number more than 9,000 this year, up from 5,000 just three admissions cycles ago, Falcon said.

## Students fanning out to help during spring break

Embodying Northeastern's commitment to solving global and societal needs, students will put their brains and their backs into community-service projects across the country and abroad during spring break.

- The American Prospect [argues for a New Deal for the nation's youth](#), relying in part on a study by the Center for Labor Market Studies.
- The Boston Globe [takes a look at Tinker](#), the biometric robot created by computer science assistant professor Timothy Bickmore, now lending a helping hand at the Boston Museum of Science.
- Researchers at the Computer Architecture Research Lab and Gordon CenSSIS are teaming with Massachusetts General Hospital on a [promising new breast cancer detection technology](#) that improves breast cancer screening accuracy.

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## Northeastern to lead Homeland Security Center of Excellence

After a highly competitive selection process Northeastern is the first university in Massachusetts and one of only 11 universities nationwide to win a Centers of Excellence grant from the Department of Homeland Security.

The new center will be called ALERT (Awareness and Localization of Explosives-Related Threats).

The ALERT research program led by Northeastern is driven by the needs facing homeland security today, such as the ultra-reliable screening of passengers and cargo, or the mitigation of explosive blasts so that damage to a building is minimized. Examples of ALERT's cutting-edge projects include the manufacture and study of new improvised explosives, detection at long-range (football field distance or greater) using multiple methods like infrared or radar, the study of "human factors" — how humans interact with technology — and neutralization of explosive devices without using traditional methods like controlled detonation.

With the collaboration of its industrial and national laboratory partners, ALERT will also focus on transitioning research into products such as a multi-mode suicide bomber detection system.

The ALERT educational program, led by Northeastern partner University of Rhode Island (URI), will include pre-college, undergraduate, graduate and career professional components. A response advisory board will work with both Northeastern and URI to plan workshops and short courses to review new threat detection and mitigation technologies for first responders such as the Secret Service, Transportation Security Administration, police, firefighters and EMTs.

University President Joseph Aoun praised professor Michael Silevitch and the team of researchers who won the grant.

"This grant will support the work of a visionary group who exemplify our university's leadership in fundamental and translational research," Aoun said. "Their work is vital to our national security, and we recognize the import of the confidence the Department of Homeland Security has placed in us."

Silevitch, who has more than 20 years of experience leading government-funded research centers, is also director of Northeastern's Bernard M. Gordon Center for Subsurface Sensing and Imaging Systems (Gordon-CenSSIS), a National Science Foundation Engineering Research Center that focuses on the broader issues of detecting hidden objects.



Michael Silevitch

Silevitch said the Homeland Security Center of Excellence is the next step in a natural progression of the engineering and technological expertise that has been refined at Gordon-CenSSIS and will continue at ALERT. "Preventing terrorist attacks is perhaps our foremost national security challenge," he said, "and we are confident our research will lead to methods to prevent and mitigate any such attacks."

The grant is the second significant award that Silevitch and his team have received within the last two years. In 2006, Bernard M. Gordon, founder of Analogic Corp., and his wife Sophia, donated \$20 million to Northeastern to rename Gordon-CenSSIS and establish the Gordon Engineering Leadership Program, a graduate offering through the College of Engineering that provides an innovative model for training engineering leaders.

As part of the grant, from the Department of Homeland Security, Northeastern will receive \$10 million over the next four years. An additional \$1.6 million in funding from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative's John Adams Innovation Institute will be used to foster industry collaboration between ALERT and local companies such as Analogic Corp., Raytheon and Textron Systems.

U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy lauded Northeastern for winning the funding. "I commend Northeastern for receiving this impressive grant. I'm confident the center will produce the expertise in disaster prevention and response that our nation urgently needs and it's gratifying that the Department of Homeland Security agrees."

Said U.S. Sen. John F. Kerry: "Northeastern is developing new and innovative ways to protect America. This historic opportunity to research and develop detection and high explosives technologies will help more effectively address 21st century threats and protect our nation."

Juliette Kayyem, the undersecretary of homeland security for Massachusetts, acknowledged Northeastern University as the first Massachusetts institution to win a Centers of Excellence grant, and noted the importance of the undertaking.

"This represents a tremendous opportunity, not only for Northeastern, but for the state. We look forward to working with Northeastern University and all its partners as they advance a project that will focus the Commonwealth's academic excellence on important public safety needs."

Mark Russell, vice president of engineering at Raytheon's Integrated Defense Systems, said the company is "pleased to contribute its expertise to the team in conducting research and technology development for effective detection, mitigation and response to existing and future explosives related threats facing our country.

"This new Center of Excellence is an important source for training our future technology leaders in partnership with Northeastern University and the team," he said.

With the grant, researchers are now equipped to discover technologies for detection, mitigation and response, three important components to make the world a safer place, said Silevitch.

"This grant is only the tip of the iceberg," he said. "Our efforts to discover new techniques on behalf of homeland security will continue to grow, and in the process, new opportunities for industry will also emerge."

David Luzzi, dean of engineering, sees the grant as embodying the

university's and the college's goals. © 2007 Northeastern University

The new center, he said, "is the latest example of Northeastern's momentum, underpinning one of the College of Engineering's five strategic research priorities: new technologies for national security, infrastructure, energy efficiency, the environment, and human health and well-being."

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### **Vice provost briefs Senate on grad education success**

Luis Falcon outlined the increased spending on scholarships and on marketing, among other measures, that have built a substantial growth in Northeastern's graduate student population.

The university brings in nearly 1,500 new graduate students each fall across the board, not counting those at the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, he said. Overall applications will number more than 9,000 this year, up from 5,000 just three admissions cycles ago, Falcon said.

The vice provost for graduate education laid out for the Faculty Senate some of the measures the university has taken, and will take, to continue the climb, including a growth in financial aid for graduate students and more online recruitment and database mining for prospects.

Provost Ahmed Abdelal said the university four years ago had predicted graduate student growth of 2 percent a year. However, the average in recent years, he said, has been 6 to 7 percent.

### **Senators support online course evaluations**

A new online course evaluation system is "a better instrument" for students to share their thoughts, according to James Fox, Lipman Family Professor of criminal justice.

Fox led a committee that recently tested the new evaluation system, dubbed TRACE, and urged the Faculty Senate to support its adoption across the board. Senators agreed overwhelmingly.

The online system, he said, has "many, many more qualitative questions" and gives students more opportunity to add their opinions. Because it's filled out by computer and not, as in the longstanding course evaluation system, by pencil in a classroom, "students tend to type away," Fox said.

It will also allow faculty more immediate access to their evaluations; while the wait could take months, for hand compilations of the current TCEs, TRACE results will be available online as soon as teachers turn in the final course grades.

Steve Lavenberg of the Student Senate told his faculty counterparts, "We're very excited to see it."

Faculty urged the systems' implementation for the end of the current semester.

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### Students fanning out to help during spring break



Students fix up a school during a recent community-service event in Boston's Mission Hill neighborhood. /EMILY CHIAVELLI

Embodying Northeastern's commitment to solving global and societal needs, students will put their brains and their backs into community-service projects across the country and abroad during spring break.

More than 90 students have formed 10 teams, each supervised by a faculty member or university staffer, for projects in eight states and two Caribbean countries under the Alternative Spring Break program begun at Northeastern in 2003.

The students will offer more than 4,000 hours of help to efforts including home-building, teaching, AIDS awareness and environmental cleanups.

The students are raising funds to cover the costs of trips and some supplies.

The projects and locations, by category, are:

#### Affordable Housing/Building

Fort Smith, Ark. - [Habitat for Humanity](#)

Macon, Ga. - [Rebuilding Together](#)

#### Children

Killeen, Texas - [Peaceable Kingdom Retreat](#)

Monte Cristi, Dominican Republic - Orphanage • Outreach

St. Elizabeth, Jamaica - [VIJON](#)

#### Disaster Relief

Biloxi, Miss. - [Hands On Gulf Coast](#)

New Orleans, La. - [Hands on New Orleans](#)

**Environment**

Kissimmee, Fla. - [The Nature Conservancy](#)

**Native American Heritage**

Tahlequah, Okla. - [Cherokee Nation](#)

**HIV/AIDS Awareness**

Mobile, Ala. - [South Alabama CARES](#)

For more information, visit

[www.neu.edu/communityservice/programs/springbreaks.html](http://www.neu.edu/communityservice/programs/springbreaks.html).

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