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## Transcript of the State of the University address given by Provost Abdelal, September 28, 2005

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ACADEMIC PROGRAMS faculty mentoRing POLICIES FACULTY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH Graduate education SEARCH

## Speeches

### State of the University Address

Wednesday, September 28, 2005  
Noon  
Blackman Auditorium

I would like to use this occasion to report to you on the advances that we are making in the academy at Northeastern. These advances result from the creative and hard work by the academic community, support from the administrative units, and the fruits of the Academic Investment Plan.

Starting first with undergraduate education, we have added tenure-track faculty in majors with high student demand. We strengthened our flagship cooperative education program, which is already recognized as the top such program in the nation, through strategic partnerships, nearly 100% placements, and increasingly high-quality opportunities. We enriched this experiential learning model through fostering inter-disciplinary learning for many of the undergraduate majors; 11 new dual majors and 13 new minors were developed during the last three years.

Simultaneous initiatives by the Provost Office and the SGA leadership last year resulted in increased participation by undergraduate students in research. We enhanced opportunities for international experiences by establishing partnerships across disciplines with premiere universities in different parts of the globe, an effort supported by the establishment of five academic international centers. We believe that the mix of our cooperative and experiential model with interdisciplinary learning, undergraduate research, and international experiences enables our graduates to be, first, more competitive in the workplace; second, to excel in the global knowledge-based economy; and third, to be informed global citizens with deep inter-cultural understanding. I am pleased to note in this regard, that one of our majors in Computer Science, who has incorporated these elements in her education, was recognized by a national computing association as the 2005 Outstanding Female Undergraduate in the United States and Canada.

Another significant development at the undergraduate level is the strengthening of the Honors program. This year, a rich mix of number of independent Honors courses and seminars are being offered for the first time.

Also starting this year, a number of first-year academic learning communities were established. These learning communities foster student connection with each other in specific areas of broad academic interest and also connect students early with faculty in their areas of interest. We expect such efforts to enhance further student retention and success at Northeastern.

We have enhanced support for scholarship in numerous areas such as implementing a regular cycle of desktop replacements and enhancing the Library collection. I am pleased to report that funding for the Library collection increased by 23% over the first two years of the AIP. We are committed to continue to enhance the collection. I should add here that the academic leadership was simply delighted when the SGA asked for expanded library hours. It is wonderful that the student leadership pushed last year on two fronts; increased opportunities for undergraduate research and extended Library hours. I think we should all take special pride in this emphasis on scholarship by our students.

Similarly, we have made significant strides in graduate education and research. Through the Academic Investment Plan, we strengthened the ranks of tenure track faculty in professional graduate programs in Business, in areas of regional and national needs in the Health Sciences, in the inter-disciplinary sciences and engineering, and in the interdisciplinary social sciences. These efforts resulted in increase of graduate enrollments and a corresponding increase in net graduate revenue that readily exceeded budget projection. This is the first significant increase in net graduate revenues for a number of



Provost Ahmed Abdalal

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years.

During last year, Northeastern established several new research centers and secured significant new funding that strengthened further inter-disciplinary work. While it is not possible to do justice to all that has been accomplished, I wish to highlight a number of these accomplishments. The first is a nanotechnology center led by Northeastern and funded by the National Science Foundation. This center was one of six national centers established last year by NSF after a keen competition. The other five centers were led by universities such as Stanford, UC Berkeley, and the University of Pennsylvania. Clearly, I am trying to impress you here and hopefully, I am succeeding.

The second center is the Center for Drug Discovery. Research in this premier center with over 30 scientists now housed in state-of-the-art facilities, is significantly funded by the National Institutes of Health, and graduate students associated with this center are supported by an NIH training grant. The third is an interdisciplinary graduate training grant in nano-bio-technology.

By this time, I expect you figured out biotechnology and nanotechnology; this, of course, is the right time to introduce this new term, which really reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the frontiers of research in these areas. This training grant, jointly funded by the National Cancer Institute and NSF is one of four awards just announced last week. The fourth is an impressive number of research career awards; specifically, six of these prestigious awards were received by assistant professors in the sciences and engineering.

We have strengthened doctoral programs, such as English, that are fundamental to high caliber education at great universities. Our Northeastern University Press, guided by an accomplished editorial committee, has continued to publish series, books, and monographs under its label and under the auspices of the New England University Press consortium.

We have begun the implementation of an Urban Affairs and Public Policy Initiative that capitalizes on faculty strengths in the Social Sciences, Law, and Health. Our goal here is to lead in developing strategies and policies for social, health, and economic development not only in Boston but also nationally and internationally.

Our faculty in international business has been ranked among as the 10th in research in this area by *Management International Review*. This national recognition is reflected in the *US News and World Report* ranking of our undergraduate program in international business. This ranking moved from 18th to 16th in 2005. In the Division of Adult and Continuing Education, a creative, entrepreneurial, and collaborative effort with the academic colleges developed a rich array of new graduate professional programs. We are now positioned to compete effectively for leadership in the Boston metropolitan area in adult, continuing, and executive education. This entrepreneurial effort should come as no surprise to any of us. After all, we were ranked by *Forbes* magazine this past year as the 4th most entrepreneurial university in the nation.

Regarding external funding of our research, I am pleased to report that funding from federal sources, industry, and foundations increased by 15% in FY05 over FY04; such funding is not only important in enabling more vibrant research but also is an important indicator of research capacity that will be reflected in national rankings of Northeastern.

I cite these accomplishments by our academic community to underscore my conviction that these accomplishments will secure increasing national recognition for Northeastern as a premier research university in the inter-disciplinary foci that we have identified and for excellence in professional education. Importantly, all this is in the context of a university that leads nationally and internationally in cooperative education, experiential learning, and that prides itself on excellence in teaching and learning.

Thank you.

