

February 27, 1997

Address to the Northeastern University Corporation

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Address to the University Community February 27, 1997 Blackman Auditorium

Thank you for coming.

Five months ago, when we assembled in this hall for the state of the university address, I announced a series of activities designed to enhance the quality and intensity of our work in areas of particular importance. I stated at that September meeting that this "intensification process" would be a focus of my own efforts during the months preceding the presidential inauguration, and that I would call a follow-up session in the winter term to summarize steps taken and progress made. It is to provide that report that I have invited you here this afternoon.

I will not, in these comments, review all parts of the intensification process, for the inevitable abbreviation time demands would not do justice to the hard work of so many of you; rather, I will address the main themes embedded in these activities, summarizing along the way the budget I am presenting to the Board of Trustees, and invite you to read a more complete account of progress that will be published in tomorrow's Voice along with these remarks. There will be time for questions and discussion at the end of my comments.

I am aware, of course, that February is a dangerous time to call a general meeting of the university. One lesson I have learned in my years of administrative work is that February is a grumpy

period in the academic calendar. The excitement of the fall and the joys of the holiday season are now behind us, the labors of the year are beginning to take their toll and the summer holidays are too distant a prospect to provide much present enthusiasm. In New England these unhappy factors are compounded by the reality that February sits toward the end of winter, when we have been burdened by months of bleak weather from which we can expect no immediate release. So February is notoriously a time when academic governance bodies are disposed to resist administrative proposals and indeed to express their frustrations with the deficiencies of the local leadership.

So February is not the smartest month for me to have chosen to invite this community to review our circumstances. Yet I am emboldened by the wisdom of a small town newspaperman in Ohio, who wrote an editorial on the doleful character of midwinter in the farming communities of the northern plains, a season and a setting that reduce life to its most confining, least encouraging circumstances. The writer used the dreariness of the time to offer advice to the young. "Fall in love in February," he wrote, "when the forces of the natural world conspire to defeat positive feeling; for whatever you can love in February you can love truly, and relationships begun at the time are most likely to endure."

Budget and Enrollments for 1997-98

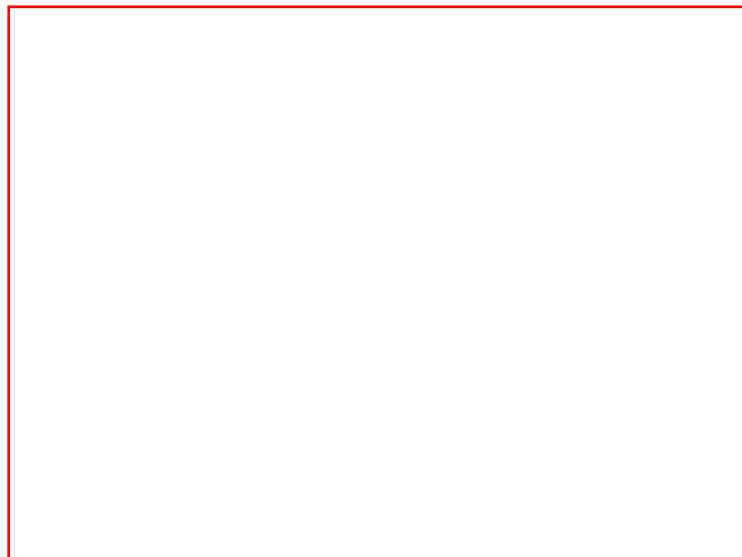
I have asked you to come together today to remind ourselves why we love this place so much and why we are inspired by our work - even at this difficult time of year. I am particularly pleased, given the season, that my news is good. Last September, I indicated that our circumstances with respect to enrollments and budgets had improved over the recent past, and that I hoped to avoid another round of the budget reductions and mid-year crises with which this community has had to contend in recent years. Six months into the year, my optimism continues. Our enrollments have remained strong, and it now seems clear that we will end this year with a modest budget surplus. Applications for next fall are well above last year's level

at this time, so we anticipate a continuation of stable conditions.



[Chart 1] summarizes in broad numerical terms the enrollment picture we are anticipating for next year. There are two key points to notice:

- first, overall enrollments will increase slightly, based upon increased undergraduate enrollments that should more than offset slight declines in graduate and part-time numbers;
- second, the higher undergraduate enrollments will result entirely from increased upperclass students, reflecting our improved retention in the recent past, not from increases in new freshmen.



[Chart 2] indicates that higher enrollments, coupled with a

modest tuition increase and small increments in other sources of revenue, will produce increased revenues of approximately \$23 million for next year. This additional \$23 million represents the opportunity, for the first time in several years, for new expenditures; determining how best to allocate these precious dollars among competing claims has been the primary focus of the budget-building process.



[Chart 3] summarizes the components of the increased charges we have planned for next year. I am pleased that we have been able to keep the average tuition increase under 6 percent and the average overall increase, combining tuition, room and board, at 5.3 percent. You will also observe that the proposed tuition increase is considerably greater for freshman than for upperclassmen; there is an important reason for this that I will discuss shortly.

I should note that we are taking a number of steps now to increase future revenues from sources other than tuition by making more effective use of the campus in the summer, deriving greater income from the use by outside groups of specialized facilities like Matthews Arena, expanding our programming in English for non-native speakers and strengthening our programs of alumni/ae support and sponsored projects.

The improvement in our financial circumstances means two things to me. First, it is time to recognize the sacrifices made by this community in recent years by fulfilling my commitment to

return to a solid program of salary increases. A central feature of the budget I shall be recommending to the trustees is a merit pool of 5 percent for full-time faculty and staff as well as part-time faculty



[see Chart 4]. These salary increments would represent the largest round of increases this community has enjoyed in many years. I am aware, in addition, that the salaries of some members of the professional and support staff have fallen below market levels, and the proposed budget provides for salary adjustments in response to this reality. I am also committed to working with the Faculty Senate to review our relative position with respect to academic salaries and to address any issues raised by such a study. I should also note that we shall continue for the summer of 1997 the pattern of four-day operations that has been the practice at Northeastern in the recent past.

The second thing our improved circumstances means to me is that we have the opportunity, for the first time in some years, to set institutional goals we wish actively to pursue rather than seek ways to survive the next crisis. Indeed, the central purpose of the intensification process has been to identify the actions we most urgently need to take to seize opportunities that the years ahead seem likely to offer. Thus, over the past several months, committees and task forces have been discussing various aspects of our work - including cooperative education, graduate education, adult education, the instructional uses of technology, technology transfer, urban outreach, diversity, faculty roles and

responsibilities - to determine how best to direct our efforts and to allocate whatever incremental resources may be available to us. At the same time, the colleges and key administrative offices have crafted proposals to improve services to our students. I want to thank everyone who has participated in this process: the members of the working groups; the deans of the colleges and directors of key administrative departments and their associates; the Strategic Advisory Group; the Financial Priorities Committee; the University Budget Committee; and, of course, my administrative colleagues both academic and financial.

Though made up of many parts, the intensification process has been driven by a single, overarching goal: to realize the potential of Northeastern as a smaller, better institution by achieving qualitative improvements in our education, research and service activities. I am convinced that, by building wisely on our historic strengths, this university has an opportunity for national leadership as a student-centered, practice-oriented, urban-engaged research university. Three key challenges, all critical to achieving our potential, have shaped the intensification process: first, we must be more effective in enrolling and graduating a student body of the size, qualifications, diversity and interests appropriate to our mission and character; second, we must redesign our educational offerings to reflect more powerfully our purposes as a practice-oriented university; third, we must strengthen and focus our scholarly work to highlight our commitment to technical and social progress.

Enrollments, Admissions, Retention

Last September I called for an immediate focus on enrollments, admissions and retention for the very evident reason that progress in these areas is the precondition for achieving both our academic and our financial objectives. Unless we can increase the flow of well-qualified applicants, we will never be successful in raising our academic sights; and unless we can reliably achieve our enrollment goals, both qualitative and quantitative, we shall never have the financial stability

necessary to our long-range development.

As I have mentioned, our applications have been rising in the recent past and are likely to continue growing for the next several years as a result of increased numbers of high school graduates, our outreach activities, ably led by Vice Provost Eddy and Director Kines, and our strengthened reputation for quality. In principle, these increases would permit us to become larger and therefore richer, but our intention is not to increase our scale but to raise our sights. Accordingly, our enrollment plans for next year call for fewer freshmen than we enrolled this past fall.

The important thing to notice on [Chart 5],



beyond the aggregate reduction in overall freshmen, is the planned redistribution of enrollments among the colleges; in particular, I am intent on reversing the pattern of recent declines in engineering and business, and on reducing enrollments in the health sciences and criminal justice, which have grown dangerously overcrowded, and in arts and sciences, where we have become excessively reliant on part-time faculty.



[Chart 6] summarizes another critical goal of our admissions effort - increasing the number of new students who come to us as transfers. This is an arena where we should be attracting much higher numbers of able students who are likely to complete their degrees with us.

We will continue to strengthen our admissions outreach efforts to enroll the strongest possible class within the numbers I have just outlined. Initiatives that we are taking this year fall into two general categories: targeted increases in financial aid and additional administrative support.

The \$8.3 million increase in financial aid detailed in [Chart 7]



represents the largest area of increase and, along with salary increases, the highest priority in next year's proposed budget;

indeed, this is the biggest expansion in direct dollar support for students in more than a decade. This financial aid allocation will allow us to do more in both need-based and merit programs for well-prepared freshmen and to maintain our commitment to enrolling a diverse class. Increased administrative support for admissions outreach will include an enlarged budget for recruitment activities by the admissions office as well as a special allocation to the law school, which is facing highly competitive market conditions. I should also emphasize our goal of increasing, not shrinking, enrollment in University College. A task force led by Vice Provost Hellman is devising strategies to achieve this objective, and next year's budget will support a new computer laboratory that will enable University College to reach additional students.

Graduating those we enroll is every bit as important as admitting those we seek to achieving our long-range academic goals. At the moment, far too few of our students complete their degrees with us, a phenomenon that reflects badly on us academically while denying us revenues that we desperately need. Our performance in this area reflects a number of factors, and it will take time to address them all, but I am convinced that a critical contributor is our practice of dedicating so much financial aid to new freshman that we are unable to sustain upperclass students at the levels they need to stay with us. As [Chart 7] indicates, we propose to put this practice behind us once and for all. The increase in need-based aid of \$2.6 million for sophomores will enable us to maintain this year's freshmen at approximately constant levels of support as they move into their upperclass years. I intend to continue this commitment as this year's freshman class progresses toward graduation and for new entering classes as well so that four years from now we will have achieved a fair and equitable distribution of financial aid among all students. This is the prudent thing to do, and it is also the right thing to do. And as we take the first step in phasing in this policy, we have also built into the budget additional help for next year's middlers, juniors and seniors.

This financial aid initiative provides the background of the differential tuition increase that I mentioned a few moments ago; since first-time students will be the biggest beneficiaries of

the new policy, we have assigned a significantly higher tuition increase to freshmen than to upperclassmen; indeed, the upperclass tuition increase of 4.9 percent will be the lowest since the early 1970s.

The effort to improve our graduation rates will require much more than a modification of financial aid policies. We shall need, fundamentally, to deliver more effectively than we are currently doing on our promise of being a student-centered university, both in the delivery of our academic programs and in the work of our administrative offices. I was pleased to see, in the proposals submitted by the colleges, interesting initiatives to improve our students' experiences, including a plan from the College of Criminal Justice to enhance the freshman year, and a series of initiatives by the Office of Student Affairs, including new leadership development and mentoring programs.

I want to mention one other initiative related to enrollment planning. I have asked Edna Seaman, the director of the new Office of Planning and Research, to coordinate an effort to determine enrollment goals and associated resource requirements for each of the colleges over the next five years. This critical consultative process, which will drive future planning for both admissions and budgetary allocation, will begin this spring and be completed next fall. Dr. Seaman will work with a university-wide committee of faculty members, administrators and students, and each of the colleges will be asked to provide input to the process.

Strengthening Our Educational Programs

A second major theme of the intensification process involves the strengthening of our academic programs at all levels. There have been several parts to this activity. Each college has been invited to submit budgetary requests for items that are particularly important to their future development, and, as [Chart 8] indicates, we propose to allocate over \$1 million in continuing funds for these new academic initiatives, supplemented by one-time expenditures from this year's anticipated surplus.

The colleges have also been asked to develop plans for the greater utilization of instructional technology to provide a basis for future investments in our telecommunications infrastructure; this process is being led by Provost Baer and should result in the completion of collegiate plans by the end of the spring quarter. The budget also provides a significant increase for expenditures on telecommunications technology to support the continuing expansion and modernization of our computing capacity.

Two task forces have been working since October on critical aspects of our academic program that need special attention: our graduate offerings and cooperative education. Both of these activities are proceeding on schedule. The graduate review committee, led by Vice Provost Hedlund, has been enormously productive and conscientious, and will complete its review of all our graduate programs by the middle of March. The Cooperative Education Task Force, led by Vice Provost Pantalone, will complete its work by the end of May.

The most significant step we need to take in our academic program is designing new curricular structures that fully integrate the three dimensions of education at Northeastern: professional studies, liberal learning and co-op. I am convinced that the time is right in this country for an approach to practice-oriented education that fully exploits the synergies between liberal and professional studies and between classroom-based and co-op-based learning. I am also convinced that Northeastern's opportunity to assume a position of national educational leadership is tied to our success in crafting programs that truly achieve this three-way integration. No other university is as well-positioned as we are to break through the old molds that have isolated these educational experiences from one another. No other aspect of our work so clearly offers us an opportunity to make a distinctive contribution.

We are already doing a number of things that point toward the kind of integrated program to which we aspire. The most far reaching of these is the Academic Common Experience, which is calling upon each of the colleges and departments to link both the major and co-op to general education. A second is the effort, arising out of the strategic planning process, to build closer ties

between the classroom and co-op experiences of our students. I was gratified to see among the collegiate proposals for supplementary funding several projects to enhance the curriculum through closer association with co-op. A third is the effort, being pursued actively in the colleges of Arts and Sciences and Computer Science, to promote dual majors that cut across disciplinary lines, particularly ones that link a professional major with an arts and sciences major.

The challenge to our academic leaders, especially to Provost Baer and the college deans, is to coordinate all of these activities to make truly integrated curricular offerings widely available to our students in the immediate future. This must become a signature of education at Northeastern that we proclaim in all our literature and admissions outreach efforts. Working out the specific programmatic structures that embody this broad principle must be done college by college and department by department, and I ask the faculty and our academic leaders, deans and department chairs, to engage fully in this effort under the provost's leadership. The appropriate vehicle for this activity is the planning for departmental goals that has already begun; I would expect to see included in each of the departmental plans reference to how that unit intends to move toward the three-way integration within their own discipline. Meanwhile, we will proceed with arrangements to award this spring the first Presidential Scholarships, which will symbolize Northeastern's commitment to a fully integrated curriculum by recognizing 12 middlers who excel in professional education and liberal education and co-op.

Scholarship, Research and Professional Service

A third focus of the intensification process has been our scholarly work in research and professional service. Strengthening these areas will reinforce the underpinnings of instruction while making an independent social contribution of great value and proclaiming to the world the significance of Northeastern as an intellectual resource. I recognize, of course, that different departments will emphasize different kinds of

research and some, indeed, will give more emphasis to research than others; such variety is appropriate in a large university. But within our diversity of approach there must be central emphases that convey our special character as a practice-oriented university, and a strong emphasis on research that aims directly toward technical and social progress must be one such theme. I urge each dean and department, as you work with the provost's office to define more precisely the roles and responsibilities of faculty members, to consider ways in which the practical applications of scholarship can be incorporated in your statements of departmental purpose.

I mentioned in my inaugural address my intention to create eight endowed chairs to bring nationally distinguished scholars in various fields of practice to Northeastern in order to symbolize and project our commitment to excellence in practice-oriented scholarship. Over the next three years, each of the colleges will have the opportunity to recruit for at least one such appointment, which might be housed in a single college or department or shared between two units. The first round of recruitment will involve three colleges - engineering, business and arts and sciences - and will begin during the spring quarter. I anticipate that the first appointments will be made next year and that recruitment for a second set of appointments will begin next fall or winter.

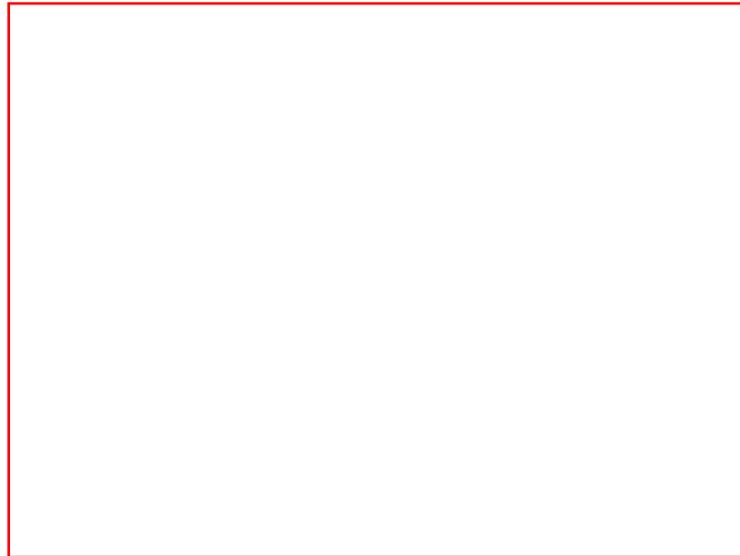
A task force under Vice Provost Hedlund has been at work since October to design the institutional steps we must take to provide more effective linkages between the scholarly activities of our faculty inside the walls and the extramural settings - corporate, non-profit and governmental - in which new ideas are put to work. The task force has recommended establishing a Technology Transfer Office within the Office of the Provost charged to promote communication between Northeastern and non-academic consumers of knowledge. I embrace this recommendation wholeheartedly, and I will move quickly to establish the new office for which provision has been made in next year's proposed budget.

Our work in the community is a natural extension of our commitment to the applications of scholarly work as well as a

central expression of our character as an urban university. To make sure that both we and the community receive the maximum possible benefit from our urban engagements, I have charged an urban outreach council, led by Professor Dukakis and Dean Hall, to develop a framework for coordinating our work in this area. The new council has been meeting regularly and has already completed a statement of principles that will provide the basis for future planning and decision-making.

Conclusion

So that is where we are with respect to a wide range of activities that are moving us toward the 21st century and with respect to a budget for next year that will take us a step closer to our long-term aspirations. Let me come back to the budget one last time here at the end to be sure that you have a complete view of our proposals.



As [Chart 8] indicates, beyond the items I have already mentioned and a critical allocation to maintain progress in achieving gender equity in athletics, the remainder of the \$23 million in incremental resources available to us for next year must go to cover a variety of unavoidable facilities and support costs, such as inflation in utilities charges and interest on borrowed money. I am acutely aware that the list of budget increases I have mentioned does not fully address our needs, especially in library support, laboratory equipment and facilities

renovations. I am hopeful that we can provide some help in these areas out of this year's surplus, and I am committed to attending to these important matters in future budgets.

Let me also draw attention to the fact that this budget calls for us to meet some of our needs through the reallocation of existing dollars. Reallocation should be a regular part of our budget process and is a critical aspect of the kind of fiscal discipline we shall need to remain financially stable in the years ahead. Times are better than they were, but we have not entered an economic promised land. That said, I am pleased that the budget I shall be recommending to the trustees is the best budget this university has enjoyed in years, and I am thrilled that we have been able to allocate significant sums to ease the financial pressures on our faculty and staff as well as our students.

In closing, I want to emphasize my awareness that the activities I have discussed today represent a small fraction of work accomplished at Northeastern this fall and winter. The beating heart of this university lies, of course, in the myriad interactions of faculty, staff and students in the classroom, laboratory and library, in advising sessions, on co-op, on the playing fields, in our many clubs and activities, in our administrative offices and with the external community. If I have a frustration as president, it is that my responsibilities so often carry me away from direct contact with these activities. Yet I am intensely aware of them, and I want to thank each of you for the individual contributions you make every day of the week. I am proud of this university chiefly because I believe that, on balance, we work very hard to make each of these interactions count for our students; and I am ambitious for Northeastern chiefly in my belief that we can heighten the quality, intensity and learning power of these activities through a sustained shared effort.

My own role and that of other senior administrators is to provide as much encouragement and support for you in carrying out your responsibilities as we can while directing our collective attention to those areas where we most need to improve in order to make institutional progress. The intensification process has been the vehicle through which we have proceeded this year to define future directions in these most critical areas. After six

months of working with many of you, I am more convinced than ever that Northeastern University has a role of national significance to play and that our students and our community will be well-served as we pursue these possibilities aggressively. Let us do so: with optimism in our spirits and joy in our hearts - even in February.

Thank you very much.

Other addresses:

1998

- [State of the University Address](#), October 8, 1998
- [Address to the Northeastern Corporation](#), May 21, 1998

1997

- [Remarks before the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education](#), November 7, 1997
- [Centennial Convocation Address](#), October 16, 1997
- [State of the University Address](#), September 29, 1997
- [Address to the Northeastern Corporation](#), May 28, 1997
- [Remarks to the Boston Chamber of Commerce](#), April 4, 1997
- [Inaugural Address](#), January 17, 1997

1996

- [State of the University Address](#), September 30, 1996
- [Acceptance Remarks to the University Community](#), May 29, 1996

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