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Co-op for the twenty-first century

The Power of Experience

Flash back a few decades to a typical conversation about Northeastern. Invariably, someone would say, "Oh, isn't that the co-op school?"

That's because "Northeastern" and "co-op" went hand in hand, a time-honored pairing as intertwined as "bread" with "butter."

These days, though, Northeastern's movers and shakers are trying to get a slightly different message across: Co-op, introduced at the university in 1909, remains the yang to Northeastern's yin, but it's been augmented by several other forms of experiential learning.

The idea, university officials say, is to offer students a broader palette of real-world experiences. [MORE >>](#)

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Northeastern's focus on experiential learning aims for higher ground—for students as well as the university

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By Karen Fledscher - Illustrations by Laurie Luczak

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The idea, university officials say, is to offer students a broader palette of real-world experiences.

"Northeastern has embraced a larger set of ideas regarding experiential learning that integrate what happens in the classroom with what happens outside the classroom," says Jack Greene, CJ'73, the dean of the College of Criminal Justice and, currently, the interim director of central co-op services.

"Co-op is just one form of the experiential focus the university is emphasizing," agrees longtime co-op coordinator Stephen Kane, LA'65, MS'68, EDD'81, who, like Greene, has experienced co-op both as a student and as an administrator. "The university has

grown beyond 'education that works.' It really firmly believes in experiential learning as the frosting on the cake of an education."

Executive vice provost for undergraduate education Susan Powers-Lee says,

"Co-op is our area of strength and expertise—our rock. But the rock needs to grow. Co-op provides a great core on which to build additional ways for our students to carry out experiential learning."

She adds, "In many ways, our students brought us to this. They started doing different sorts of things, and we encouraged them. And then we decided, let's make this work better."

To get a handle on the university's fresh take on experiential learning, you need only look as far as its new website on the topic. Hit the link on the Northeastern homepage labeled "Experiential Learning and Co-op," and the first thing you see is the university's assertion that "experiential learning, anchored by our signature cooperative-education program, lies at the heart of a Northeastern education."

Click deeper, and you see beautiful photo essays on individual students who exemplify the best in experiential learning. In voice-overs, the students detail how much they've learned on co-ops and in Northeastern's three other experiential arenas—research, community service, and international engagement.

Cooperative education is still the biggest fruit on the vine. But now it has some appetizing company, to lure even more students out of the classroom.

The real world, new and improved

For many years on Huntington Avenue, "real-world experience" meant co-op and co-op alone.

It meant getting a local job in business or engineering, or maybe at the Boston Globe, a government agency, or a hospital. That's where the bulk of the jobs were.

Now, thanks to new ideas about how to design an effective program of experiential learning, there are a host of options for students. And there's a stronger push to understand—and improve—what learners take away from this kind of education.

Co-op students from twenty or thirty years ago would notice other differences, too. Today, students have fewer and longer experiential stints than before, a result of Northeastern's switch in fall 2003 from

a quarter to a semester calendar. Job searches are easier than ever, aided by computer databases. International co-ops are more plentiful, and students are encouraged to do at least one.

Last fall, university officials adopted a new core curriculum that requires all incoming students to undertake some form of experiential learning during their college career. Freshmen now take courses that introduce them to co-op and the world of work. As seniors, they complete a capstone course that allows them to review all their academic and real-world experiences.

And the university is working hard to make sure every real-world experience it offers is sound. Each year, some 20 percent of co-op jobs are shed to make room for new and better opportunities, says

Provost Ahmed Abdelal.

Organizationally, co-op has achieved new status as a full-fledged partner in the academic endeavor. Years ago, co-op coordinators worked within a Division of Cooperative Education. That division is now defunct, and the coordinators are housed within the individual colleges, signaling the university's desire to have experiential learning mesh closely with academic experiences.

The university is also recommitting itself to producing research about experiential learning. "We want to be not just practitioners of experiential learning, but thought leaders who provide the intellectual rationale as to why this model works well," says Abdelal. "And we want to persuade higher-education leaders and policymakers that this is, in fact, a more effective model for learning."

Smorgasbord of offerings



In the early 1960s, when Stephen Kane arrived on campus as a biology major, he didn't have to prepare a resumé to look for a co-op position. Nor were there any job-opening databases to hunt through. "Your co-op adviser would call you in and say, 'I have a job for you. You start next Monday,'" he remembers.

Jack Greene's co-op experience was similarly free of structure. He recalls, "You got a job, you did the job, and you came back and went to class. There wasn't a connection between co-op and the classroom. Luckily for me, I had mentors who pushed on this a little bit."

Now, Greene says, "I can see the real value of having an active learning model, which really engages the student to think about all their educational experiences—not just wait till the day they get the degree and say, 'Oops, now what do I do?'"

Kane's first co-op was at Lahey Clinic, in Burlington, Massachusetts. He jokes,

"I didn't realize I was going to be marooned on the urine bench for six months, testing samples." His salary? Fifty dollars a week, good money back then.

University officials acknowledge that even the healthiest co-op salaries no longer make big dents in tuition costs. At the same time, they emphasize, co-op's academic and experiential benefits are worth more than ever.

"When I was in my Northeastern years," says Mary Ryan, LA'79, chair and CEO of Thompson Steel, in Canton, Massachusetts, "the

two biggest reasons to do co-op were to pay for school and to prepare yourself for the real world. Today, the financial aspect is not meant to, nor can it, pay for school.

"But," Ryan continues, "the importance of having that competitive edge—doing

co-op instead of mowing lawns in the summer—is a huge step up. As an employer, I'd much rather hire someone who has actually tried the job they're seeking."

In 2005–2006, roughly 5,800 students went out on co-op. Take-charge students no longer have to wait for co-op coordinators to dole out positions. They can find them on their own, or develop them. And, although employers still look for co-op students for "traditional" positions in business, engineering, health care, communications, and criminal justice, a whole host of new opportunities—paid and unpaid, in research and community service, often scattered around the globe—have emerged.

A scan of the new experiential-learning website provides a glimpse into the depth and breadth of opportunities Northeastern offers.

Take the research experience of Matthieu Newton, BHS'07. Currently a doctoral student in the field of physical therapy, he spent time as a senior researching ankle muscle fatigue. His goal? To attend medical school, and become an orthopedic surgeon. "I never thought of myself as a researcher, but I'd love to do it again," he says in his website voice-over. "That was something new I learned about myself."

Or the international experience of Elaine Volpe, BA'06, who had a marketing stint at a multinational company in Scotland, dealing with people from around the globe. The job made her feel more capable than she ever thought possible, she says. It was great for her resumé, too. "Having an international co-op brings you to a level that employers look for," she explains.

Junior Kelley van Ness declares her traditional co-op as a communications intern for the New England Revolution comes with "a lot of pressure. It's competitive, and the work is challenging." But, she adds, "no matter how hard the work is or how long the day is, it's totally worth the experience."

"There's only so much you can learn from a textbook," says Erika Sanchez, AS'07, a sociology major who traveled outside the United States for a service-learning experience. "In Mexico, I was able to learn about and see street children, domestic violence, immigration and migration, AIDS. These were real-world examples of my academic studies. It was a great learning experience and a great growing experience."

Managing new directions

In addition to expanding experiential-learning offerings, the university is running the co-op program differently from the way it has in the past.

Last fall, when the university's longstanding Division of Cooperative Education was officially eliminated and co-op coordinators started reporting to the academic deans, each college named a coordinator as its director of co-op, a position Abdelal describes as akin to that of department chair.

The organizational changes had actually started years before. In

the late 1990s, under then president Richard Freeland, the university instituted a dual reporting structure for co-op, whereby coordinators reported both to the co-op division's vice president and to one of the college deans.

Earlier, during the administration of John A. Curry, LA'56, MEd'60, H'96, tenure for co-op coordinators was eliminated, leading to complaints that the university was minimizing the research some of the coordinators conducted.

University officials have maintained that the restructuring efforts, while sometimes painful, were necessary to boost co-op's academic underpinnings and help the program run more smoothly.

Under today's structure, says Abdelal, "the co-op coordinators are fully integrated into the academic side of the

university, both intellectually and physically," allowing every college to run its co-op program its own way.

"Each college has a different set of disciplines," the provost says. "How you do cooperative education in each need not be the same model. You want to let the faculty coordinators and the academic faculty establish the details of their own model. It shouldn't be a religion. It should be organic, developed from the learning in each particular discipline."

University officials are also redoubling their efforts to assess the benefits of experiential learning. Jack Greene, in particular, has been overseeing the assemblage of much of this data, such as the percentage of students participating in co-op and the average salaries of recent Northeastern grads compared with the national norm.

Other assessments are more subjective: How students rate the quality of workplace supervision. How well co-op experiences are integrated with classroom learning. How co-op affects students' personal and professional growth. How it improves such job-related skills as teamwork, technology and research proficiency, and writing. To what extent co-op jobs meet students' expectations. And what percentage of students would recommend a co-op education.

In the past, says Greene, though there was plenty of data collection, it was fragmented among different offices. "We're trying to create usable metrics," he says, "and make sure there's agreement among participants regarding the importance of these measures."

According to recent data, co-op remains very popular among students, he says. "Overall, they really like it. Because of co-op, they see themselves growing professionally and personally."

With the university's more sophisticated approach toward co-op, it's no longer enough to just send students out on jobs and hope for the best.

Instead, officials want to make sure a student is ready for a co-op job, monitor that experience, and assess its success. It's why students are required to take a

freshman-level course that prepares them for co-op, and to engage in some form of "reflection" after each co-op is over.

In some parts of the university, students have engaged in such

co-op integration for decades, says Mary Kane, director of co-op at the College of Business Administration.

"Now, a lot of these best practices that were not university-wide are being done throughout all programs," she says. "It's been an evolving process over the last five or ten years. We've looked at what makes us successful and distinctive from other colleges and universities, and institutionalized those practices."

Everyone agrees a big strength for Northeastern over the years has been knowing how to maintain very close connections with employers.

These days, Fred Hoskins, senior director of employer relations, may work with companies to develop new jobs, particularly on the international front. He's available to help companies maneuver the university's new co-op organization. And he strengthens channels of communication among the co-op coordinators in the different colleges.

Northeastern has the employer-relations piece of experiential learning down pat, says Mary Ryan, who calls the co-op students she's hired at Thompson Steel "bright and accomplished."

"I don't think [the co-op] programs at other schools are as in-depth, and they don't have the same commitment," Ryan says.

The energy devoted to fostering good relations with employers and keeping students focused on how their co-op jobs connect to their studies, in Mary Kane's view, makes Northeastern stand apart from all other schools that offer versions of experiential learning.

"Employers tell me that what makes us different is our 'high-touch' approach," she says. "We work with the students to prepare them. We work with our employers. That makes it expensive. But that's also what makes it successful."

Arts and sciences' co-op connection



Nowhere is the university's refreshed dedication to co-op more evident than in the College of Arts and Sciences. Used to be, dean James Stellar admits, arts and sciences faculty had a rather negative term for co-op: "no-op."

A natural fit in the professional colleges, co-op presented challenges for some arts and sciences students. Philosophy majors, for instance, could have trouble finding relevant jobs. "It worked easily for journalism or architecture students," recalls Stellar, "but not for others."

Attitudes today have changed. "Co-op has become deeply integrated with arts and sciences," says Stellar. "And now that co-op is housed in the college, we're more committed to it than ever."

He continues, "We don't require co-op per se, but there are lots of other things kids can do: study abroad, research, service. There's a long menu. We sell it. Give me five minutes, I can talk you into experiential learning."

As a pilot project, the college has instituted a "concurrent reflection process," in which students come to campus for periodic dinner-and-discussion groups while they're out on co-op. "They talk about things like, What do you do on

co-op? How do you feel about it? How does it relate to your major? The kids like one another, and they like food," says Stellar, smiling. "So it's a positive-affect event. We do it every month they're on co-op.

"The idea," the dean explains, "is to reflect on your co-op experience while it's happening, in an environment of your peers. And the unstructured nature is designed to promote reflection. We think reflection may be the key to enhancing the co-op experience, especially in arts and sciences, where you have to work a bit harder to make sense of it all."

Arts and sciences administrators continue to develop more and more co-op jobs for hard-to-place students. In addition, like their peers, arts and sciences students are more involved than ever in creating their own experiential programs. Stellar reports the college actively promotes outside-the-box thinking when it comes to creating real-world experiences.

Global reach

One real-world idea attracting students from across the university is the opportunity to work and learn abroad.

Ketty Rosenfeld, who last year became the director of international cooperative-education programs, is working to expand co-op opportunities around the globe. She says she hopes international experiences will become "a signature of a Northeastern education."

When Northeastern began offering international co-op in the mid-1980s, participation was low; only a handful of students went abroad each year.

This fall, Rosenfeld's office helped sixty-one students work outside the United States, in forty cities scattered among twenty-six countries. And those numbers don't include the fifty-eight students working abroad through the bachelor of science in international business program.

"It's fantastic," Rosenfeld says of the level of participation. Ultimately, she'd like to see five hundred students a year have an international experience. Why is it so important? "Just look at the world," she says. "Everything is going global."

President Aoun agrees. "Globalization is breaking down the barriers of time and distance," he said in his inaugural address last spring. "Our students should be as comfortable in Shanghai, Johannesburg, or Mexico City as they are here in Boston."

He added, "We will continue to expand the reach and scope of international co-op until our students can be found in all corners of

the world."

Rosenfeld says an element of her job is simply planting the notion of international co-ops in students' heads. "A small chunk of students think about the advantage of an international experience," she says. "But for most, it's not part of their thinking. After all, it's taking a risk, getting out of your comfort zone."

Students who do venture out to work in another country bring back a great deal, she says: "They tend to have an amazing sense of self. They're highly independent, highly motivated, and have a high maturity level."

A search for meaning



The university's first order of business is to help students find and learn from first-rate experiential opportunities, says Provost Abdelal. But it must also be prepared to share the benefits of experiential learning with the world.

Toward this end, he encourages all Northeastern faculty to conduct research on experiential learning, an activity once relegated to the tenured or tenure-track co-op coordinators.

"We want all faculty to be involved," Abdelal says. "We want faculty to assess learning, as well as work on the cognitive aspects of experiential versus nonexperiential learning."

Widening the lens of experiential-learning research builds on the efforts of Joe Raelin, professor of human resources management and Asa S. Knowles chair, who, since 2002, has sought to understand some of the more elusive benefits of co-op as director of the Center for Work and Learning.

"Clearly, there are economic benefits," says Raelin. "Early studies looking at co-op students versus non-co-op students found our students received higher salaries and more-frequent raises and promotions, and experienced lower turnover, among other benefits."

Experiential learning speeds career development, too. "Co-op has produced students who are very good at pursuing a particular field," he says. "They make better career decisions. They know what they want. Their job search is more efficient. They tend to obtain a high-quality position after graduation. And they make smoother school-to-work transitions."

But there's more to look at beyond the well-understood economic and career gains, Raelin says. For instance, he's interested in something called work self-efficacy, the level of confidence an

employee brings to the workplace. Co-op may heighten this sense of efficacy, by asking students to negotiate real-world situations day after day.

In doing so, students learn how to handle pressure. Deal with coworkers. Navigate political currents within organizations. Listen empathetically. Take criticism gracefully. Build relationships. Shoulder responsibility. Tolerate ambiguity. As well as other amorphous yet critical work and life skills.

"We're looking for [co-op's] long-term impacts on students' learning, and on the value they bring to the organizations that employ them," says Raelin.

"That's a deeper kind of understanding."

Sharing the secret

Sometimes when alumni hear the phrase "experiential learning" used at Northeastern, they worry co-op is getting watered down.

Not by a long shot, say officials.

"We need to migrate the language," explains Jack Greene. "It doesn't do injury to our important hundred-year history with cooperative education. But it gives a little more room at the table for other experiential programs that can aid students in making choices about majors, or careers, or what their life is going to look like."

"We're framing co-op as part of experiential learning, because that's a term everybody understands," says Abdelal. "Not everybody understands what cooperative education is. When you talk to the world, you want to use vocabulary that's universal. But we are making sure to say that co-op is the cornerstone, the hallmark, of our experiential-learning program."

Thompson Steel's Mary Ryan applauds the new focus on "experiential learning" as opposed to just "co-op." "It tries to inject a little more meaning into the process," she says. "For me, yes, I wanted the experience. But I also wanted a paycheck. It was much more pragmatic. Today, it's much more about the educational aspect."

Greene wholeheartedly agrees: "We have to point out to people that this experiential component is not just to make a salary for a certain period of time or to have a job, although those things are important. Instead, the value added is students' structured exposure to the field they think they're going to work in or the career they want to pursue."

"If you read the literature of what students really want from college," says James Stellar, "what they want is somebody to help them figure out who they are and what they want to do."

"They've chosen their major with the hope that they're correct," Stellar says. "And we offer them a chance to practice it and see if they're right. We have a secret we need to break open, which is the power of co-op and other forms

of experiential education tied to academic excellence. We've done it for a hundred years, and this moment in time is our moment."

The truly distinguishing characteristic of Northeastern's experiential-learning program isn't its vigor or reach, says Greene, though these characteristics are undeniable. It's that the university

is always on the lookout for larger meaning.

"As President Aoun has said, we cannot just be the leader in placing students all over the world," Greene says. "We also have to be the intellectual leader for experiential learning."

Karen Feldscher is a senior writer.

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Nothing Better Than the Real Thing

Portraits from the four corners of Experiential Learning

By Karen Feldscher

Talk to any Northeastern student. Or any Northeastern professor.

They'll tell you there's nothing like being in the thick of things. That experiential learning teaches what textbooks can't by putting young people into challenging, unexpected, and exhilarating situations: at the workplace, in the lab, among the community, or thousands of miles from home.

Today's Northeastern students have more choices than ever when it comes to experiential learning. There's co-op. Research. Service learning. Or study and work abroad.

And professors couldn't be happier to see students step away from the classroom. Because they'll be even stronger students when they step back in.

Just ask these voices of experience.

Co-op Calls



Ethan LaRochelle, junior. Asher Hensley, junior. Chris Noyes, senior. Masoud Salehi, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering.

Since July, Ethan LaRochelle, Asher Hensley, and Chris Noyes have spent their workdays tucked away in a small Forsyth Building lab, trying to improve the latest cell-phone technology. Although the trio of engineering majors are working on campus under the

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Photography by John Soares and Craig Bailey

supervision of associate professor Masoud Salehi, they're actually on a co-op with BAE Systems, a British defense contractor. The job has them taking apart all sorts of cordless phones, and using computers to measure and characterize their signals. The goal: Enhance phone performance by modifying how signals travel through the airwaves.

MASOUD SALEHI:

"The students are working with state-of-the-art equipment and systems, and gaining hands-on experience. Five years from now, we may all be buying cell phones with this new technology."

CHRIS NOYES:

"I'm learning firsthand how these phones work. There's a big difference between working with technology and learning about it in class."

ETHAN LAROCHELLE:

"Before, I didn't know much about this technology. Now I'm much more interested in what it can do."

ASHER HENSLEY:

"I'm getting a lot of experience in working with [programming language] MATLAB, a very powerful tool for system analysis. Now I know I want to keep studying communications and signal processing."

Catching the Research Bug



Rebeca Rosengaus, assistant professor of biology. Rhamy Zeid, senior.

Biology major Rhamy Zeid and assistant professor Rebeca Rosengaus have been studying termites together all year, examining the behavioral, biochemical, immunological, and social adaptations that help these hardy little bugs thrive. Combining evolutionary biology behavioral and chemical ecology, immunology, and genetics, Rosengaus's termite research promises to be a valuable milestone in the emerging field of socioecoimmunology. Zeid, who is planning to graduate in December, hopes to go on to medical school.

REBECA ROSENGAUS:

"Rhamy is learning about social insects, immunology, ecology, and evolution—and he's experiencing how scientific inquiry results in interesting discoveries. Performing research, participating in professional meetings, and publishing his results in peer-reviewed journals will certainly increase his probability of entering medical

school."

RHAMY ZEID:

"Doing hands-on research requires an extra set of science skills you can't get from the classroom. It's vital to understand science on paper, but that takes you only so far in the research world. Learning how to run experiments really takes trial and error."

Caring for the Community



Susan Lowe, associate clinical professor of physical therapy. Abbey Kole, junior.

In the spring, Abbey Kole—a busy student in a Bouvé program that leads to both a bachelor's in rehabilitation science and a doctorate in physical therapy—ran Friday-afternoon exercise classes for women living in Smith House, an apartment complex for seniors in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood. Completing this kind of service learning is required of all physical-therapy students, says associate professor Susan Lowe, because it helps them see patients as people.

SUSAN LOWE:

"Abbey thought she was going to go in there like gangbusters. She found it took some time to develop relationships with the women. Even though they were living with a variety of impairments, like arthritis, the women came to exercise, encourage each other, and have fun. I think Abbey was a little amazed at how much they were willing to do, despite the things they had wrong with them. Ultimately, she gained a sense of leadership—going in and working with a group of people she hadn't worked with before, and making a little bit of difference in their lives."

ABBEY KOLE:

"It takes a great deal of communication and encouragement to truly bring some people out of their shells. Knowing this will help me make my patients feel more comfortable, and help me do a better job from the get-go. There's a huge difference between practicing in a lab on fellow students versus interacting with the community. Even though it takes a larger, time-consuming commitment, working with various populations is extremely beneficial."

World View



Lisa Elavsky, senior. Denis Sullivan, professor of political science, director of the Middle East Center for Peace, Culture, and Development.

A criminal justice major with a minor in Middle East studies, Lisa Elavsky went on a Dialogue of Civilizations trip to Egypt led by political science professor Denis Sullivan this summer. The Dialogue of Civilizations program takes Northeastern students to cultures around the world, where they meet government leaders, community organizations, and peers, and discuss such topics as politics, the arts, popular culture, human rights, and gender issues. After graduation, Elavsky plans to continue her Middle East studies at the University of Cairo and pursue a career in international human rights.

DENIS SULLIVAN:

"At the beginning of the program, I worried that perhaps Lisa was overwhelmed by Egypt, which can be a pretty daunting place. But she immersed herself fully in the educational as well as the cultural aspects of our program. By the end of our five weeks in Egypt—we visited Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor, and the Sinai—Lisa proved to be one of my strongest student leaders. I will watch with admiration as she continues her lifelong learning about the Middle East and the role of the United States in that region."

LISA ELAVSKY:

"The Dialogue trip to Egypt was one of the best things I've ever done. Not only did I get a great introduction to a terrific country and learn a ton, I met great people and a great mentor. I learned quite a bit about myself as well. I had never left the country before, and I found out that traveling, studying, and maybe someday working abroad really is for me."

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Top Gun

Admiral Mark Fitzgerald, E'73, counts the ways he's a lucky man. And remembers the early experiences that launched his dreams skyward.



By Karen Feldscher

January 1991. Commander Mark Fitzgerald is streaking through the dark night sky toward Baghdad in an A-7 attack plane.

He's the first U.S. Navy pilot airborne in the first air strike of Operation Desert Storm. He and eighty-three other A-7s are flying behind the F-117s, the stealth planes that did the initial bombing round.

It's 700 miles from an aircraft carrier in the Red Sea to Baghdad, and A-7s can go only about 400 miles before refueling. So, in the middle of the night, the planes—all eighty-four of them—have to rendezvous with flying tankers. Traveling at 300-plus miles per hour, the fighter planes link to the huge supply aircraft's hoses for the five to ten minutes it takes to fill each tank.

Risky enough during the day. Plenty more risky at night.

The refueling is only the first hard thing. Next comes Baghdad. Even from a hundred miles out, Fitzgerald can see what's in store for his squadron. In contrast to the surrounding desert's blackness, Baghdad is ablaze with artillery fire and the explosions of

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surface-to-air missiles.

Fitzgerald and his fellow pilots have two assignments: provide cover for the A-6 bombers as they attack Baghdad-area airfields, and bomb radar dishes.

"It was incredibly tense," recalls Fitzgerald. "First thing that happened was one of the F-18s [which can attack both aerial and ground targets] got shot down by a MiG. I'm in my A-7, which does not have much air-to-air capability. Primarily, we've got all these big air-to-surface missiles. So I'm ducking and weaving."

His plane carried three missiles for bombing radar sites. "I shot the first two off," he says. "Then, on my radar scope, up came a '6.' It was blinking. I had never seen this display before. I probably hadn't studied as hard as I should have. So I wasn't sure what this really meant.

"I was looking down at it," Fitzgerald says. "And finally I look up, and I see a missile coming right at me. Then I realize what the 6 is. It's trying to tell me, You've got a missile coming at you."

Fitzgerald shot his third missile while trying desperately to avoid the Iraqi missile hot on his tail. "I'm doing these high-G turns," he says. "And I look down to see my missile go straight down and hit the site I was aiming for."

Incredibly, it was the radar dish that was controlling the missile trailing him. "After that," he says, "the missile went over the top of me and kept going."

Close one.

Just one step left: Fly back to the Red Sea and land aboard an aircraft carrier in the middle of the night.

How do you do that, Fitzgerald is asked. "Pretty carefully," he says with a smile.

After years of flying Navy fighters this coolly and successfully, Fitzgerald was a natural prospect for promotion. He started moving up the ranks. And up. And up.

Today, he's NU's highest-ranking alumnus in the military: a four-star admiral. One of only ten in the U.S. Navy.

Fitzgerald has two roles: He's the commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, and the commander of Allied Joint Forces Command, Naples.

The latter role—one of three regional NATO commands in Europe, reporting directly to the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General John Craddock—means Fitzgerald oversees NATO operations in the Balkans, Iraq, and the Mediterranean.

"The Kosovo piece will be directly under me," he explains. In addition, "there's some police force training in Iraq. There's also a piece called the NATO Response Force, a group of forces available to do immediate contingency operations in the event of some sort of disaster."

In short, he says, "I will be working with all the NATO nations. It's a great command, and a lot of responsibility."

As commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, Fitzgerald will oversee operations in Europe and Africa, just two steps down from the

Secretary of the Navy in the chain of command.

These responsibilities ask Fitzgerald to work on many of the most pressing military and political challenges facing the United States and NATO. "Like, what do we do with Kosovo when the UN mandate runs out?" Fitzgerald says. "Does it become a separate nation, or become part of Serbia? How much does NATO continue to do in the Mideast? In Afghanistan? In Iraq? How do we engage with Africa and start getting stability and nation-building down there?"

"These are huge issues, and I'm right in the middle of them."

"That was not in the game plan"



If you'd told Mark Fitzgerald, E'73, back in his Northeastern days that he'd wind up a four-star admiral, he would have laughed. He knew he wanted to fly planes, but become an admiral?

"I'm sure I would have said, 'Yeah, right,'" he says.

Fitzgerald still laughs when he talks about it. "I never dreamt I would make it this high up," he says.

"You always try to do the best job you can," he explains. "You set your goals high. When I first came into the Navy, my goal was to get my wings. Then I got my wings, and my goal was to fly jets off aircraft carriers. But I never had the goal of being an admiral. That was not in the game plan."

Fitzgerald may have a quartet of stars, but those who know him insist he's as down-to-earth as they come. His wife, Barbara, calls him easygoing and fun. His assistant, Barbara Welch, says Fitzgerald is "one of the nicest guys you could ever work for." Talking with a visitor in his Pentagon office, he has a decidedly laid-back manner, jokes around a lot, and is quick with a smile.

His call sign—the name he uses when in radio contact with other pilots—is Lobster. It was inspired by what used to be a pronounced New England accent (pretty much gone now) and a notoriously bad sunburn he got years ago, which earned him a thorough ribbing from his buddies.

For many years, flying was a big part of Fitzgerald's job. "The fact that I got to do it for so long . . . I count my blessings," he says.

But, without his really planning it, Fitzgerald kept getting promoted, too. Three years ago, he got his third star when he was named a vice admiral, one of thirty in the U.S. Navy. In December 2006, he became director of Navy staff, overseeing a wide range of

operations, including personnel, education and training, naval intelligence, materiel readiness and logistics, and communications.

Pretty important stuff. "That's what they tell me," he says, chuckling.

In July, the Pentagon announced Fitzgerald had been nominated to become an admiral. The promotion, which added a fourth star, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on September 28.

Even before the latest promotion, Fitzgerald says he'd sometimes wake up in the morning, remember he was a three-star, and feel a little thrum of shock.

And what's it like to be a four-star admiral? As usual, his first response is lighthearted: "They talk about the top of the pyramid. Now, there's no place else to go!"

Then, on a more serious note, he says, "This was something I'd always hoped for, and I'm very happy it came through."

Friends and colleagues are not at all surprised at Fitzgerald's success.

"The fact that he made it to admiral doesn't surprise me in the least," says Richard Tambini, E'73. "This guy is so capable, he could have gone on to be a CEO of some corporation. He has very powerful powers of deduction. You feed him a little bit of information—it's amazing what he can do with that."

Phil Collum, who served as Fitzgerald's chief of staff when Fitzgerald was commander of the Second Fleet from 2004 to 2006, praises his former boss's integrity, clarity of vision, and humility. He was always calm, Collum says, even when situations were tense.

"You often see this among people who have been combat leaders," says Collum. "Things that get everyone else all upset and worked up are almost simple matters for people who have been through combat."

He adds, "He's a guy I would trust with my life."

From the Army to the Navy



Fitzgerald comes from a Winchester, Massachusetts, family for whom "serving in the military was sort of an obligation of being a citizen," says his friend Jack Madden, E'73. "We didn't even think anything of it. It's just what you did."

His family had a Northeastern connection, too. Fitzgerald's father, John, MEd'58, had earned a graduate degree at night. Older

brother John Jr., E'62, had gotten a bachelor's in chemical engineering and served in ROTC. Since John had had a good experience, Mark opted for a similar route, majoring in electrical engineering and joining ROTC.

Northeastern "was kind of the logical choice," Fitzgerald says. "We were not a very affluent family, so Northeastern was one of the schools we could afford. Plus, the co-op program was very appealing from two angles—because of the money, and because of the work experience."

Like many others of his generation, Fitzgerald commuted to school (in his case, via the E Line). In his off-hours, he'd go out drinking with friends. He played pranks on fellow members of Scabbard and Blade, the military fraternity. A rangy kid, he pitched for the varsity baseball team.

He says he had a great time at college. Eventually, he became president of Scabbard and Blade, and had, as he puts it, "awesome" co-op jobs.

On the side, he got to take up flying. Through a U.S. Army program, he was able to fly a civilian airplane on weekends at Hanscom Air Force Base, in Lexington. It was an amazing learning experience for an ROTC kid. Everything was clicking, Fitzgerald recalls. "What could be better than going to college, making money, working great jobs, and, on the weekends, going flying?"

By the time Fitzgerald was an upperclassman, the Vietnam War seemed to be winding down. He planned to go on active duty with the Army for three months, then spend six years in the reserves. After that, he figured, he'd find a civilian job, probably in the computer industry.

Just before graduation, though, the situation changed. The Navy had reduced its forces in 1971, thinking the war was about to end. By 1973, Navy officials realized they had overshot the reduction. Now they were hurting for pilots. So they went looking to recruit Army folk.

"They dangled this carrot in front of me," says Fitzgerald. "They said, 'We'll let you go direct commission into the Navy and fly our airplanes if you pass our test.' It appealed to me because of my engineering background—this was pretty high-tech stuff, leading-edge. So I thought about it for a week or so, then said, Okay, let me see if I can pass the test."

He did. His mother wasn't too thrilled. In the Vietnam era, being a Navy pilot was high-profile risky business. "Most of the POWs were Navy and Air Force pilots who'd been shot down," says Fitzgerald. "So it was not an incredibly popular decision at home. But it was something I wanted to do, and they accepted it."

After graduation, Fitzgerald headed down to Pensacola, Florida, for flight training. Before he left, though, he got married. He and Barbara had their

"honeymoon" in Pensacola. She laughs, remembering those days. "I was just kind of going with the flow," she says.

By 1975, Fitzgerald had been designated a naval aviator and earned a

master's degree in aeronautical-systems engineering from the University of West Florida. (He would also spend a year

during the early 1980s at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, studying the history of war as well as strategies for preventing conflict.)

Quick departures



"Going with the flow" was the operative phrase for the Fitzgeralds over the next three decades. Mark and Barbara had three children—Mark Jr., Julie, and Elaine, now all in their twenties. As Fitzgerald moved up the ladder, the family moved around the world. In addition to Florida, they've lived in California, Maryland, Rhode Island, Belgium, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

Fitzgerald spent many years as a landing signal officer, the person on an aircraft carrier who helps guide pilots in. He also helped train other landing signal officers. He worked on a series of U.S. ships: the Kitty Hawk, the America, the Forrestal. His first squadron command came in the early 1990s aboard the John F. Kennedy, the same carrier that received a grand goodbye this past March in Boston, her last stop before being decommissioned.

Ironically, just before Fitzgerald began that command, he was convinced his career had run aground. As he cruised toward New England on the Kennedy, he was expecting to take command of a squadron of spanking new F-18s. At the time, A-7 pilots were being transitioned over to the latest-model fighter plane.

"Instead," he says, "they gave me the last A-7 squadron." He was, he recalls, disappointed to be stuck with the "clunky old airplane," not the sleek new one.

Once he docked in Boston, Fitzgerald was expected to transition his twelve-plane, 250-person squadron to F-18s. He knew after he'd taken his crew through ground training, the Navy would most likely move him somewhere else.

This was July 1990. In early August, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

Seeking a carrier that could quickly deploy to the Middle East, Navy

brass focused on the Kennedy.

"I had already started some of my pilots training on F-18s," Fitzgerald recalls. "We'd started trading in our

A-7s. But the air group commander called me and said, 'We want you guys to go. Can you get your squadron together?' So we had five days to get all our airplanes back, and all our maintenance team back, and get our pilots out of F-18 training and back into the A-7. We had these furious five days, then off we go over the horizon.

"So," he continues, "here we are, with the oldest fighters in the inventory, and everybody said, 'You'll be home by Thanksgiving.' But four months turns into five months, six months. We're sitting out there in the Red Sea the whole time, just waiting for things to happen."

Then came January 17, and the order to invade. As Fitzgerald zoomed north toward Baghdad, Barbara was home with the kids, worrying. She didn't know for sure, but she had a strong hunch Mark would be one of the leaders of the air strike. The phone rang again and again, with calls from other military wives anxious about their husbands. In the living room, the children sat huddled in front of the television, watching the Iraqi invasion in tears.

Back then, when a mission was over, there was no quick way for carrier-based personnel to let their families know they were okay. No phones, no e-mail. Only snail mail, which, depending on how often the mail planes came, could take weeks.

Says Fitzgerald, "The only way you knew your husband was okay was if nobody was knocking at the door." Neither he nor his wife recalls how much time passed after his harrowing flight into Baghdad before they were able to speak to each other.

On watch the world over



Fitzgerald's next assignments weren't quite as dramatic. He served in command roles in Europe in 1993, helping monitor the skies over Bosnia and air-drop supplies to civilians.

In 1994 and 1995, while overseeing eight squadrons and seventy-plus airplanes on the USS Carl Vinson, he helped enforce a no-fly zone over southern Iraq, part of Operation Southern Watch.

From 1996 to 1998, he was executive assistant to General Wesley Clark, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe from 1997 to 2000.

Fitzgerald was promoted to rear admiral, a two-star position, in

September 1998. As deputy commander for the

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, he served as a middleman between Navy brass in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean and top Navy officials stateside.

Then, in 2000, he was put in charge of handling the aftermath of the bombing of the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen.

Speaking about that time, Fitzgerald's smile fades, and his voice turns serious. A tough assignment, he says. Very tough.

Seventeen sailors died after a terrorist bomb struck the ship. Fitzgerald was responsible for getting the victims' bodies off the Cole, taking care of the surviving crew, overseeing the investigation of the incident, and managing the removal of the damaged ship.

"We'd already gotten all the ones who'd been hurt out of there," he recalls. "But we still had the seventeen who were killed entombed in the ship. And then there were all these other kids—the crew was almost three hundred people—who hadn't slept for two days. And it was hot. And the ship stunk, because of the rotting food. The bomb had gone right into the mess deck.

"Getting the bodies off the ship was a really hard thing for the crew," he says, "because every time they'd bring a body off, the whole crew would come to attention while they put it, with full honors, onto the airplane. It was really taking a lot out of everybody. When we finally found the last body—we had some Navy divers and the FBI working together—the crew was at an all-time low."

Amid an often-tense atmosphere, Fitzgerald tried, gently, to lighten the mood. "A couple of times, I had to get in there and break the ice a little bit," he says. "You can't be a goofball, but you've got to get a little humor in there so people don't get so bogged down."

After 9/11, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, Fitzgerald commanded a carrier group deployed with the USS Theodore Roosevelt battle group, based off the coast of Pakistan. It was a particularly long deployment, 159 days, but necessary, because the carrier was the closest base from which U.S. planes could fly into Afghanistan.

Fitzgerald says the length of time became a point of honor with the crew: "Usually you don't go more than a month without pulling into port. The previous record was something like 143 days, from the 1980s, during the Iranian hostage crisis."

When the assignment was over, Fitzgerald returned to Washington to serve as director of air warfare. Then he was promoted to director of naval warfare, in charge of the Navy's \$100 billion budget.

In October 2004, he was named commander of the Second Fleet, which put him in charge of all Navy ships on the Atlantic. In this role, Fitzgerald headed up Striking Fleet Atlantic, a multinational force aimed at deterring aggression and protecting NATO interests. He also served as director of Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Center of Excellence, an effort to coordinate and improve the naval expertise of countries around the globe.

Frequent flyer



For most of Fitzgerald's career, the United States has been at peace. But military personnel are obliged to keep themselves in a constant state of readiness. And so, he flew.

He loved it. "Think of flying in a civilian airliner, looking out that little window," he says. "Now think of sitting on the tip of an airplane with nothing but glass around you.

"And not just taking off and flying around at high altitude," he continues, "but flying at low levels, where you'd be down at 100 feet, flying through mountain canyons and other places where few people have set foot. We'd fly through the Sierra Nevadas, over Mt. McKinley, through the desert, through the Grand Canyon. There's nothing more fabulous than that. It was just spectacular."

Fitzgerald eventually did get to fly the F-18. "It was worth the wait," he says. "There was nothing better than flying the best airplane in the military."

To stay sharp, says Fitzgerald, he and his fellow pilots would "yank around the sky," flying in formation, practicing mid-air battles, and perfecting aircraft-carrier takeoffs and landings.

They are all complicated maneuvers. When you fly from a carrier, cables slingshot your plane into the sky. When you land, a hook attached to the plane must catch on a wire strung across the carrier deck. Landings can be especially tricky if it's nighttime or the ship is rolling in bad weather.

Pilots get graded on every landing, Fitzgerald says. "In the ready room, there's this thing called the greening board. If you flew a really good pass, you get a green. If you flew an average pass, you get a yellow. If you flew a bad pass, you get a red. The object of the greening board was, obviously, to get a lot of greens."

He smiles. "I got a lot of greens."

Pilots are also rated on how well they fly and how they fare in simulated dogfights ("Do you end up shooting the other guy, or does the other guy shoot you," Fitzgerald explains). And they're judged on how close their bombs get to their intended targets.

What about that 1991 bombing mission in Baghdad, the one designed to knock out the radar sites?

"All I can tell you is, when we got to Baghdad, every radar was up," Fitzgerald says. "We could see them. And when we left, and for the next forty-three days, we saw no radar. Did we get every one of them? No. But, given our mission, we felt very successful."

Still having fun



Pilots who fly off aircraft carriers count every landing. The 1,100 or so landings he has under his belt, Fitzgerald says, put him among the Navy's top twenty pilots, at least.

For much of his life, he had almost an addiction to flying—he wanted to do it every day. Today, he's fine with his job responsibilities keeping him more earthbound and out of the clouds, he says. "Between your eyesight and your reflexes, it really is a young man's game. I'm to the point now where I'm at peace with not flying."

He sees his life as a pilot as a gift, to be sure. Likewise his ascension in rank. But even more than that, he appreciates the men and women he's worked with over the years. "The people we get in the Navy are just so dedicated," he says. "It's probably a worn cliché, but it's absolutely true."

He continues, "I have always said I'll do this till I'm not having fun anymore. And I do have fun—always."

Even the big brass, he's happy to report, come in for their share of good-natured ribbing. In May 2006, during New York City's fleet week, the lead actors in the movie *X-Men: The Last Stand* made an appearance on the

USS *Kearsarge*, where Fitzgerald introduced the celebs to the sailors. Cast member Halle Berry wasn't feeling great, so she rested for a while in his cabin.

"That night," Fitzgerald says, "she told David Letterman on national TV that she got sick and had to sleep in the admiral's bed.

"I caught some flack on that one."

Karen Feldscher is a senior writer.



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Animal Attraction

A Fortune 500 co-op convinced M. Faulkner Besancon, AS'93, where his real return lay: veterinary surgery



By Karen Feldshcher

It wasn't until he was out on a splashy co-op at a big Fortune 500 company that M. Faulkner Besancon—Faulk, to those who know him best—realized he didn't want to be a businessman at all.

At first, the job was pretty cool. At nineteen, Besancon got to wear nice suits and travel across North America, sporting an expense account. "I was out there doing audits with the guys, flying to Chicago and Toronto," he says. "But after six months of it, I realized the guys I was working with were always away from home, they never got to see their families, and they hated what they were doing."

It was, he says, epiphany time: "I thought, I don't want to get up and do this every day."

So he switched his major to biology and started pursuing a career he thought he'd love: veterinary surgery. Working today in a veterinary-specialties practice just outside Albany, New York, Besancon, AS'93, operates on dogs, cats, and the occasional bird or ferret. Once he even worked on a Bengal tiger.

"It's spectacular," he says. "I do kidney transplants, hip replacements, brain tumors—everything they do for people."

Besancon was the lucky beneficiary of one of co-op's often-cited benefits: helping students find out what they don't want to do. Once he switched to biology, he says, "it was like a light went on."

His grade-point average leapt. He found co-op jobs that honed his biology skills: doing cardiovascular research at the Harvard School of Public Health and immunology research at Tufts–New England Medical Center.

Shifting his sights from business to veterinary surgery was less of a

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sea change than it might appear, says Besancon. He'd developed a love for animals during his youth, when he lived on a farm. "As a child, I always thought being a veterinarian would be a great job," he says.

Still, getting into vet school would be a very high hurdle. There are just twenty-seven veterinary schools in the nation, offering only about 2,300 first-year slots each year. In contrast, medical schools open about 20,000 slots per year.

"I know people who've applied four or five times to vet school and have not gotten in," says Besancon. Fortunately, he says, biology professor Gwilym Jones helped him navigate his major: "He sat me down when he found out I'd transferred out of business and asked me what I wanted to do. When I told him, he said, 'All right, let's do it.'"

Besancon adds, "I remember the day I got the acceptance letter from Iowa State—I walked into the middle of one of his classes to show it to him."

After completing four years of vet school at Iowa State, Besancon did two internships—one for a year, the other for two years—followed by an orthopedic fellowship at Iowa State, then a three-year residency. Now board-certified in small-animal surgery, he's been in private practice for three years.

On a typical day, Besancon checks his overnight patients and sees new patients, then performs surgeries, perhaps two or three a day.

Besancon may excise a tumor, fix a bad knee, or, often, remove a stray object from a digestive tract. He says he's pulled a dizzying array of things—knives, corncobs, balls, rocks, string, watches, rings, coins, socks, underwear—from animals' stomachs.

"Some stuff that seems bizarre really doesn't surprise me a whole lot anymore," he says. "Anything and everything you can physically put in your mouth, animals will eat."

Besancon's most unusual surgery? A thoracoscopy on a Bengal tiger at the San Francisco Zoo. He stuck a tiny camera into the big cat's chest to get a picture of an esophageal tumor. Close second? The time he mended a bald eagle's broken leg.

He went into veterinary medicine, he says, thinking it would be easier to work with sick animals than sick people. There would be less conversation, for sure, and maybe less emotion.

But Besancon discovered being a vet is a people profession after all. Many owners treat their animals like their children—sometimes even better—and can get plenty emotional when their dog or cat gets sick. As a result, vets need top-notch communication skills to do their jobs well.

Especially when animals die. "Anytime you lose a patient, those are the most difficult days," Besancon says. Recently, a Yorkshire terrier named Misty was brought to him for routine surgery on a knee. After Misty was anesthetized, she stopped breathing.

"To try to explain to the owner why that happened . . . those days I think, This isn't fun," says Besancon. "Occasionally, animals die, for reasons we know or reasons we don't. When they don't make it, I always remember the case vividly. Hopefully, those cases make you a better veterinarian. And I try to remind myself that, for every one of those animals that doesn't make it, there are five hundred

that do great."

Settled into a career he loves, he remains incredibly grateful for co-op, including the business job he didn't cotton to.

"There are a lot of people who don't like what they're doing and have to go back to school when they're in their thirties," Besancon says. "But at Northeastern, people figure out sooner what they want or don't want. Northeastern was a huge stepping-off point for me."

Nor was that Fortune 500 stint just a watershed experience. It taught him skills he still uses, he says. "While vets aren't known for their business acumen, I think I have a very good head for business because of my background at Northeastern.

"I wouldn't change the route I took."

Karen Feldscher is a senior writer.

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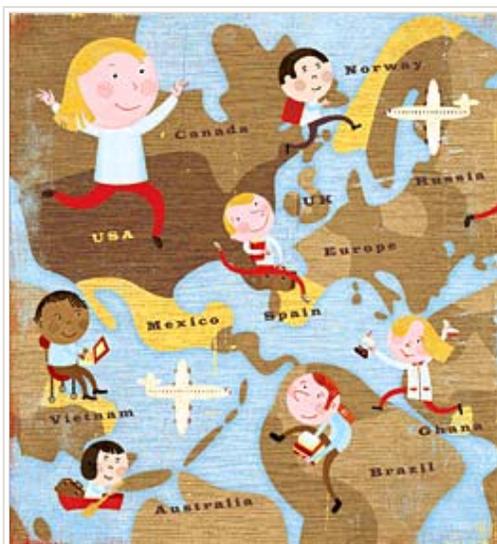
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The Known World

When students study and work overseas, boundaries collapse. And lives expand.



By Elaine McArdle

Jay Cinq-Mars, an honors major in history and Spanish, spent months at Northeastern studying the Soviet Union's espionage efforts during the Spanish Civil War.

But it wasn't until this past spring, when he traveled to the Spanish city of Salamanca, that his understanding really took off. The middler got to pore through dozens of boxes of original documents, and even lived with the family of a Spanish policeman, who spent hours explaining the complicated history of Spain's various police forces.

"I learned more Spanish history and life skills in six weeks there than I would have in two years in a classroom," says Cinq-Mars, who plans to become a college history professor. Not to mention: "My Spanish-language ability just exploded over there."

With the help of his Northeastern mentors, associate history professor Jeffrey Burds and modern languages professor Stephen Sadow, Cinq-Mars created his own study program in Spain, funded by a provost's grant for undergraduate research. It turned into something so invaluable, he says, he can't wait to get back. He also plans to live in Russia next year to further his minor in Russian and Eastern European studies.

Northeastern is known internationally as a hotbed of experiential-learning opportunities—with an infinite number of experiences to choose from, including the chance to make your own. It's no surprise this variety and diversity extend to international experiences as well.

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Students can design their own independent research abroad, as Cinq-Mars did. Participate in other kinds of study abroad. Volunteer for a worthy cause, an option known as service learning. Or mix-and-match these experiences as they see fit. There is also a program known as Dialogue of Civilizations, through which students live in a foreign country and take courses on local politics and economics.

Intercultural immersion is vital for young people today, university officials believe. "It's become trite to say it, but the world truly is flat," explains senior director of employer relations Fred Hoskins. "It's increasingly important for people in the United States to think globally, to be aware of other cultures, and to be comfortable in other parts of the world."

In fact, says James Stellar, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, encouraging students to live and study in other countries is the university's "social responsibility."

"It's self-evident," Stellar says, "that, with America as a world leader, we have to have a populace that understands the world. There's no better way to do that in a college population than by having an abroad component."

Sadow, who helped Cinq-Mars get the research grant that sent him to Spain, sees students come back from time spent abroad with new reserves of intellectual and emotional maturity.

"Students quickly learn to be more self-reliant and more assertive," he says, "including asking for help when it's needed. They quickly learn to adapt to the unspoken rules that regulate life in the other country. They adapt to new schedules, new means of getting around, new currencies, new cuisines, new kinds of entertainment. They learn to deal with unfamiliar situations, occasional crises, and even culture shock."

As graduates, says Sadow, students who have been abroad "will find it easier to work with or manage colleagues who come from other cultures. They will be open to other points of view. Those who had business experience in the other country might have contacts and opportunities for the future. If they attain a reasonable level of fluency in a foreign language, they will have significant advantages over, and earn more than, those who remain monolingual.

"Taken together," he says, "these skills help students become more flexible, more accepting of other ways of living, and more capable of problem solving."

The perfect blueprint for any career, in other words.

And any life.

"It really opened my eyes"





Scarlett Trillia

Midler, human services major

Studied the realities of ecotourism in Mexico through the Dialogue of Civilizations program

Growing up in Berkeley, California, Scarlett Trillia learned the value of ecoliteracy firsthand when her junior high school worked with famed restaurateur Alice Waters to create and grow an organic garden, then study—and eat—the fruits, vegetables, and grains it produced.

After this early foray into experiential learning, Trillia was determined to find a university that valued the approach. Choosing Northeastern offered her something else she wanted, too: access to service-oriented programs that give back to the communities in which they're based.

So, for six weeks last summer, through the Dialogue of Civilizations program, the twenty-year-old lived in Mexico, took a Spanish-language immersion course, and studied the political, economic, and social conditions in which local human-services organizations operate. Adding to the service angle, Trillia and her sixteen fellow students volunteered at children's organizations, to understand the real-world angle of what they were studying.

"It's probably one of the most important things I've done since I came to Northeastern," says Trillia, who's planning a career as a nonprofit-organization administrator. "It really opened my eyes. I've traveled a lot before. But to travel with structure and a goal—studying the language, staying with a local family—those are all things you wouldn't get if you were traveling independently."

The Mexico program involves a week of cultural and language preparation in Boston, followed by three weeks in Mexico: living with a host family, taking courses, and doing volunteer work. Trillia, funded by a provost's grant, was able to stay on an extra three weeks, to travel around the country and evaluate how the reality of ecotours stack up against how they're promoted. She's now writing a paper on what she witnessed.

"I traveled as if on a student budget," Trillia says. "I went to see what was available, what was being advertised, how the tours matched up with how they were being presented, and how Mexican tours match up with American companies."

Her unexpected experiences were among the most valuable, she says. Once, she and a companion found themselves in Oaxaca during the one-year anniversary of a teachers' strike that had led to the deaths of a number of protesters.

She remembers, "The day before, we'd done an ecotour, and they said, 'We can't take you tomorrow. The Mexican people are thinking about citizens getting killed by police.' They were like, 'You Americans, you want to go hiking, but we're going to take care of our own eminently important social issues.'"

Dialogue of Civilizations experiences are open to students in any major. In addition to the program in Mexico, there are programs in Egypt, Thailand, Northern Ireland, Australia, Turkey, the Czech Republic, and Israel, among other sites. Most take place during the summer (a Niger program is available during the winter months). Students—who meet with local leaders and peers, and participate in lectures, site visits, and cultural events—receive eight credits by studying such themes as the environment, conflict resolution, politics and the economy, or communication.

For anyone worried about the cost of the Dialogues of Civilization program, Trillia has great news: You spend little, if any, more than you would if you were studying on campus.

"We paid one cost, and it covered everything, including airfare, the home-stay families we stayed with, and the cost of bus trips," says Trillia, who has just started a co-op doing fundraising for youth groups in Boston's Hyde Park neighborhood. "It even paid for us to do horseback riding.

"I was amazed it worked out like that. It was a really, really well-designed program."

"Yes, this is my bag"



Nick Fortier, AS'06

Philosophy and religious studies major

Did field studies in Buddhism through a study-abroad program in Vietnam

For Nick Fortier, witnessing the actual practice of Buddhism in Vietnam was a revelation.

"I get a kick out of people talking about Buddhism being the greatest religion," says Fortier, who spent more than three months studying and traveling in Vietnam, and plans to return next summer. "Sure, it's easy to say when you've done nothing but read about it. I was one of those kids for a while. But seeing it, the human aspect of it, once you get there, for me was extremely cool."

Fortier came away with a deep respect for Buddhism. And he developed a connection to many people he met, including the monks with whom he lived for over a week at a monastery in Da Lat, in south-central Vietnam.

But seeing any institution up close, even a religion, has a way of replacing an idealized notion with the grittiness of truth. Shortly after arriving in Vietnam, Fortier saw a Buddhist father beat his young son, which surprised him—Buddhism is considered a nonviolent practice. He met a monk who owned expensive and sophisticated electronic equipment, dashing Fortier's preconceptions about Buddhist asceticism. "I thought, This is a Buddhist monk?" he says. "Come to find out, he has two PhDs, one in Buddhism and one in political science."

On another occasion, Fortier was told by a monk to lie, albeit under circumstances involving someone's safety. He learned, he explains, "that there are certain tenets of religion that people don't necessarily live by all the time." It's a lesson he says he deeply values.

Fortier went to study Buddhism in Vietnam with a certainty that, "yes, this is my bag," he says. "There's a quote by Mark Twain that sums up how I feel: 'I've never let my schooling interfere with my education.' Because, in essence, there are certain things you learn only by doing and experiencing. You can read all you want about Buddhism, you can read texts on how to meditate, but until you go to where it is practiced, you won't understand it."

His study-abroad program began with six weeks of language immersion, history, and cultural-studies courses. While in Vietnam, he lived with a local family in Ho Chi Minh City. He was there for the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of Saigon. He traveled to the site of the My Lai massacre and to the monastery of the monk who set himself on fire to protest the Vietnam War, an action captured in a much-published photograph that turned many Americans against the war.

"Overall, it was the single greatest history lesson I've ever gotten in my life," says Fortier, who in September began a master's program in philosophy and aesthetics at the State University of New York in Stony Brook, with plans to become a college professor. "It was stuff I hadn't heard of, or maybe had heard of but didn't know much about." Upon his return, he wrote a thirty-five-page paper on his Vietnam experiences, focusing on his monastery stay, and his subsequent reflections on Buddhism.

Last year, he traveled to Nepal and Tibet, also great opportunities, he says.

"Experiencing things and having to fend for yourself while trying to learn and engage in the culture is, I feel, priceless," Fortier says.

"We can't just have a bunch of people who know only how to take tests, especially with the world shrinking as it is."

"A whole different side of things"





Katie Feeling

Senior, civil engineering major

Did a co-op in Norway in underwater-landslide research

Katey Feeley is a co-op fanatic.

"I've loved all my co-ops," says the civil engineering major, who plans to study structural engineering at the graduate level. "I think co-ops in general just give you a whole different side of things.

"They motivate you to see that things you learn in the classroom might apply to the real world," Feeley continues. "But you also learn a whole new set of skills you can actually use when working."

Feeley's most recent co-op is her favorite so far. Why? "I got to travel overseas," the Billerica, Massachusetts, native says. She spent two months at the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, a consulting company in Oslo that researches offshore foundation systems, avalanches, landslides, and tsunamis.

As part of her co-op, Feeley worked at the International Centre for Geohazards, which researches natural hazards. She focused on submarine landslides, which can lead to tsunamis, examining the landslides' causes and locations, as well as the kinds of tests and studies that have been performed on them to date.

Now back in Boston, she's writing a paper on her findings. "It's everything you'd want to know about submarine landslides," she says, with a bright laugh.

Feeley started her research in the United States before arriving at the institute, which employs scores of interns and volunteers from Norway and around the world. In Oslo, she lived in an apartment with another American student and a young woman employee of the institute. On the job, she analyzed soil parameters using statistical data, and helped her local mentor set up equipment.

The simple fact of living in a foreign country was itself a learning experience, she found, although, in many ways, Norway reminded her of Massachusetts.

"Norwegians can seem very cold and rude from the outside," explains Feeley, "but once you get to talk to them, they are very warm and inviting, and will do anything for you—kind of like New Englanders. I definitely liked learning a little bit of the language, and understanding the culture and the holidays they celebrate."

As Feeley applies to graduate schools—she has her sights set on Stanford or the University of California at Berkeley—she believes her co-ops will give her a substantial edge over other applicants, and a boost in academic preparation, too.

"The co-ops with working companies were great because I got to see what the work will be like," she says. "And I got paid. But the research really helped because now I know what grad school will be like."

"I knew I was addicted"



Abby McIntyre

Middler, cultural anthropology major

Went to Ghana on a co-op to administer a health clinic she helped found

"I knew even when applying to Northeastern that I'd want to do an international co-op at some point," says Abby McIntire.

Well, of course. Long before college, McIntire had filled her educational career with real-life learning. At just thirteen, she took a school trip to South Africa and Swaziland. It made her want to return to Africa, not as a tourist but as someone deeply involved in the community.

In high school, she volunteered with the Hopi Nation in Arizona, where she enjoyed her first home stay. "It was my first time being shown an insider's view of a culture different from my own," she says. "And, though I didn't put a name to it right then, I knew I was addicted."

After graduating from high school in 2004, McIntire took a gap year and traveled to a small village called Nsanfo in Ghana to teach English. While there, she worked with her home-stay father, Moses, to found a medical clinic that would serve more than seven hundred people who had previously had no access to health care.

She went back in 2006, working with her host father to have the clinic officially recognized by the Ghanaian government, which then placed a certified nurse on-site. AlKatie Feeley is a co-op fanatic.

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As Feeley applies to graduate schools—she has her sights set on Stanford or the University of California at Berkeley—she believes her co-ops will give her a substantial edge over other applicants, and a boost in academic preparation, too.

"The co-ops with working companies were great because I got to see what the work will be like," she says. "And I got paid. But the research really helped because now I know what grad school will be like." Though McIntire's interest is cultural anthropology, not medicine, she studied midwifery while there and became a certified birth assistant to help with patients.

At Northeastern, McIntire searched for a way to return to Nsanfo on a co-op. With the help of her co-op coordinator and two members of the international

co-op office, she returned to Ghana in July as her own employer (her work is being monitored and evaluated by a Ghanaian friend).

On her co-op, McIntire manages the clinic's budget—bolstered by the \$5,000 she just raised, adding to the \$2,000 she collected earlier—and works to add a new building, which was scheduled for completion by November. That's the month, by the way, she was slated to be honored as "Queen Mother of Nsanfo" for her work with the clinic.

In all, McIntire will spend about eleven months in Ghana, including a semester taking African studies courses at the University of Cape Coast.

So many aspects of her experience have been unforgettable, she says. Like a birthday celebration that coincided with the funeral ritual for several recently departed villagers.

First came a dinner with her extended host family that involved a speech given by Moses, libations poured for the gods, and a big communal bowl of fufu—"mashed cassava and plantain, a blob with the consistency of Play-Doh," McIntire explains—and fish stew. Later on, she says, "my friends and I went swimming at sunset in

the village swimming hole, then ended the evening with dancing in the center of town, led by the funeral deejay."

McIntire is currently connecting her two worlds by coordinating a volunteer visit by a Northeastern grad student in nursing at the clinic this winter. Undergrad nursing students are also welcome to volunteer at the clinic for a full-credit co-op.

"I am especially excited for this aspect of my co-op," McIntire says. "To introduce someone who is new to this place and make her feel welcomed and comfortable."

Though she hasn't yet decided on a career path, McIntire says she may want to lead students on semester-abroad programs, similar to the ones that have shaped her life.

"I have always been motivated to learn by knowing exactly how something can be applied in real life," she says. "It is why I chose Northeastern. Though attending classes and learning the facts and the history are vital, I've also found that firsthand experience is just as important. If not more so."

"Beyond anything I ever did in the classroom"



Jay Cinq-Mars

Midler, history and Spanish major, honors student

Through a provost's grant, did independent research in Spain on Soviet espionage during the Spanish Civil War

When Jay Cinq-Mars arrived in Salamanca, Spain, last April and began sifting through documents at the Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española, he knew he'd been well guided during the two semesters he spent getting ready for this moment.

Working with three Northeastern offices—the history and modern languages departments, and the honors program—Cinq-Mars had developed a research project on the Spanish Civil War, which he got funded through a provost's grant. The project would chart the transfer of men from an established Spanish police force to a newly created arm of the KGB, headed by a Soviet master spy. Throughout the three weeks he was in Salamanca, Cinq-Mars immersed himself in his work, digging into boxes, copying more than five thousand documents.

A fortuitous meeting with a young Spanish university student led to even more information. After the student invited Cinq-Mars to stay with his family for a week, the American was thrilled to find his new

friend's father was a member of the Spanish national police—a group whose predecessor had been created at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, which lasted from 1936 to 1939, and whose members had joined the Soviet police force Cinq-Mars was studying. The police veteran and Cinq-Mars spent hours discussing these organizations' complex roots.

"He gave me the history of the police force and described how it is structured," says Cinq-Mars. "So he was a great help, in addition to being a great friend and putting up with me for a week."

Cinq-Mars, who plans to begin a PhD program in Russian history, perhaps at Northeastern, as soon as his undergraduate studies are complete, knows the benefits of firsthand research.

"Experiential learning like this is terrific for my field," he says.

While in Spain, Cinq-Mars spent six weeks traveling to many of the country's most beautiful cities: Madrid, Córdoba, Seville. When he returned to Salamanca to continue his research, he experienced a frustrating but not uncommon twist: Three days before he was supposed to return to the United States, he discovered another cache of invaluable documents.

"I'm told it's a typical archival experience—the best is always saved for last," says Cinq-Mars, who was able to extend his visit a bit to explore his find.

Now back at Northeastern, he's writing a junior/senior honors thesis on why Stalin got involved in the Spanish Civil War. The Soviet leader sent not only munitions and materiel to the Republican soldiers but also agents, including that master spy who created the new police force.

Cinq-Mars says the war then became a training ground for the Soviet secret police, who developed a number of tactics they used later during purges at home.

"It's absolutely fascinating," the young historian says.

Elaine McArdle is a freelance writer who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In the Spring issue, she profiled Northeastern's first class of Torch Scholars.

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Co-op for the Twenty-First Century: Transforming New Generations



Cooperative education has defined the Northeastern education for nearly a century. Over the years, so many of you have relayed to us how co-op changed your lives. It helped pay for college. It gave you a head start in your career.

Today, co-op is still changing the lives of our students. Now, by building on co-op's strengths, this powerful model of experiential learning is being translated into other opportunities—in student research, service learning, and global experiences. And so this issue of Northeastern University Alumni Magazine examines not just the university's continuing commitment to co-op, but our current goal—to create a transformative academic and experiential-learning program that has no borders.

The breaking down of borders begins in the classroom. In the following pages, you will read how traditional delineations between academia and practice are being crossed on both sides of the classroom door. Inside the classroom, faculty members find innovative ways to weave their students' experiences on co-op and in research, service, and study abroad right into the curriculum. Outside the classroom, students draw upon all aspects of their academics when they're on the job, in the lab, and out in communities worldwide.

Experiential learning's geographical borders are likewise disintegrating. Our students now have access to more than two thousand co-op employers in thirty-eight states and fifty-two cities worldwide. It's entirely reasonable for a business student to land a job running a marketing campaign in French for a major company in Paris. Or for a budding fashion retailer to conduct research on Egypt's textile industry. Or for a team of engineering students to build a water-supply system in Honduras. Such international experiences (and those described in "The Known World," page 48) aren't just travel adventures; they're indispensable ingredients to a global education.

Central to our expanded model of experiential education is the idea of service learning. In an increasingly global society, Northeastern's long commitment to civic engagement in Boston is stronger than ever, reaching now far beyond city lines to communities spanning the globe. Service learning—locally and globally—is about more than just service, though. It's a dynamic built upon partnerships and an ongoing exchange of ideas and expertise between our students and people from around the world. It acknowledges and leverages the fact that we are many cultures with a shared destiny to fulfill.

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Your commitment in words and in deed to co-op's ongoing success has helped keep Northeastern on the forefront of innovation. As we work to expand the co-op program to include other forms of experiential learning, I hope you will lend your support to our students and spread the message about the transformative power of experience.

Sincerely,

Joseph Aoun

President, Northeastern University

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Urban Engagement

Poster Children

Information design gets real for middle-school and college students.



By Karen Feldscher

Quick: Explain the Fibonacci sequence to an eighth grader.

Can't? It's a mathematical sequence discovered by Leonardo Fibonacci eight hundred years ago that's present in the branches of plants, the curve of waves, and the spirals of seashells.

And it's just one of the complex ideas that, every year, Northeastern students figure out how to explicate simply—through posters.

Since 2002, students in the Information Design course taught by associate graphic-design professor Julie Curtis create posters that explain a scientific process to eighth graders who visit Northeastern from inner-city Boston and New Bedford public schools.

Besides the Fibonacci sequence, topics have included evolution, the structure and function of cells, weather forecasting, the conversion of wind energy to electrical energy, and the path drinking water takes to get to your faucet.

The half-day program benefits both college students and middle schoolers, says Curtis. The college students get a sense of how well their posters convey the intended information. And the eighth graders get to see how college students tackle a complicated project.

Just learning the Northeastern students spend weeks designing the posters "inspires wide-eyed astonishment" among the youngsters, Curtis says. "These are kids who find two rounds of written edits

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painful."

They also see how the college students use interdisciplinary research, writing, drawing, photography, digital skills, and typography and design to create their posters.

The college students have their own moments of astonishment as well.

"Sometimes there's a brief frenzy of proofreading by the younger kids, or a pointed question about whether they may give the NU students grades," says Curtis. "One student said, 'I'd better get a job the minute I graduate, if you guys are going to be my competition!'"

Midler Lauren Lesser participated in a mid-April poster critique with a group of New Bedford Global Learning Charter School eighth graders. Lesser says working with the kids was the best part of the information design course.

"I was surprised with how much they picked up on," Lesser says. "They could tell us what worked and what didn't work. In one poster, for example, a word was spelled wrong, and that was one of the first things they pointed out. We're so concerned with design, sometimes we overlook simple things."

The younger students were also quite impressed with the university's graphic-design computer lab. As one eighth grader, Lea Anthony, says, "They have such high-tech resources for making posters."

It's easy to see why Curtis is enthusiastic about the two levels of mentoring the program accomplishes. "My own students become conscious of integrating all aspects of their education," she says. "And the younger students, seeing how hard the older ones work, understand how important their education is."

"When that happens, it feels like a gift—like you've offered lessons for life."

Karen Feldscher is a senior writer. "Urban Engagement" spotlights the university's commitment to addressing urban issues, a cornerstone of the Academic Initiative.



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Front and SportsCenter

Michelle Bonner, AS'94, scores a high profile on ESPN.

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By Paul Perillo

If you're a typical sports fan, you look forward to the quality time you spend horizontal in a comfy chair watching ESPN's SportsCenter.

And maybe once or twice on a Saturday night, you've done the mental equivalent of a double take, stared hard at the screen, and thought, Why on earth does that anchor look so familiar?

Well, if you're in your thirties, it may not be a simple crush, or that glass of beer you had with dinner. It's possible you sat next to her in literature class.

Since 2005, Michelle Bonner, AS'94, has been working a dream gig, presiding over the SportsCenter desk for several late-night shifts every weekend.

How did she wind up in such a

coveted role at ESPN's Bristol, Connecticut, studios? Sports reporting is notoriously tough for women to break into. Nobody just falls into that job, right?

Bonner pretty much did. When she arrived at Northeastern in fall 1989, she had a clear idea of her intended career path: major in English; go to law school. A life in sports broadcasting? Not on her docket in any way.

"I had some co-ops at different law firms and was trying to decide which avenue of law to pursue," Bonner explains. "During my junior year, my roommate, who was a journalism major, asked me if I ever thought of becoming a sportscaster." She hadn't, she says,

mostly "because I had no idea how to even go about it."

But Bonner, who had lived in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and southern New Hampshire, was a passionate sports fan, especially where the Red Sox and the Celtics were concerned. She was intrigued by the suggestion, even if she didn't have a clue how to pursue it.

Fortunately, her roommate, an intern at Boston's WCVB-TV Channel 5, did. She arranged for Bonner to interview for an opening in the station's sports department. Bonner got it, and was instantly hooked.

"I loved the idea of being around sports all the time," she says. "I took as many related classes as I could and met great professors like Professor [Charles] Fountain [in the School of Journalism]. I logged games, labeled tapes, did some editing, and even went out to do some postgame interviews.

"Soon," she says, "I was producing some morning segments on the weekends, and I decided to make a resumé tape of standups to send out."

At this point, Bonner's path starts to resemble that of other budding broadcasters. She had jobs at television stations in Charleston, West Virginia; Bangor, Maine; and Manchester, New Hampshire—jobs that allowed her to rack up the big annual salaries, \$15,000 to \$19,000.

She advanced to larger markets in Houston and Los Angeles. Along the way, she won, in 2001, the Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Journalism for a feature she did on Marlin Briscoe, who in 1968 became pro football's first black starting quarterback. Eventually, she returned to Channel 5 in Boston to work on the weekly football show Patriots All Access.

Her old stomping grounds didn't hold her long. Less than two months later, she made the big leap to the national stage, joining CNN in 2003 to become an anchor for "Headline Sports." She stayed there for about a year before she found what she calls her "perfect job."

"CNN was just not the right thing for me," she says. "Sports was not a priority at the station, and I was looking to do more. Luckily, my agent called ESPN one morning, and they offered me a contract about eighteen hours later."

Bonner signed a four-year deal with ESPN and hasn't looked back. Her duties include serving as a SportsCenter anchor—she often does the one a.m. shows on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays—as well as working a couple of days a week at ESPNNews.

Having Wednesdays and Thursdays off makes for a bit of a crazy schedule, Bonner says. "It's not exactly ideal for having a personal life. But being such a diehard sports fan makes it a lot easier to handle."

Maybe Bonner spent much of her academic career preparing to argue cases, not introduce highlight reels, but she still looks back fondly on her time on Huntington Avenue.

"I honestly can say I loved college—everything about it," she says. "I loved being in Boston. I can't say anything negative about the entire experience."

"It's so good to hear so many positive things about the school lately," she adds, "and it makes me very proud to say I went to Northeastern."

Call it mutual. As Bonner's own visibility rises, Huskies are doing plenty of bragging about her, too.



Like Your Coverage Live?

Dave Pierce, AS'96, hadn't seen any Huskies volleyball or men's soccer action since his days as a Northeastern News cub reporter until he watched both teams play live on September 18.

From his living room in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Pierce is one of the early subscribers of GoNU.TV, a new online pay-per-view service that lets Huskies fans watch games and archived video features on their computers.

Launched August 28 by the Department of Athletics, GoNU.TV is modeled on successful pro-sports websites, such as Major League Baseball's MLB.TV and the National Basketball Association's NBA.TV.

"It's not that long ago I had to search through the tiny print in the sports pages to find any information about some Northeastern teams," Pierce says. "The fact that I now can sit here with a laptop and watch a soccer game at Parsons Field or a volleyball game at Cabot Gym is pretty unbelievable. It's definitely giving me a chance to follow the teams like never before."

Last season, Northeastern experimented with live webcasts for football, hockey, and basketball games. According to Mark Harris, assistant director of the fan-focused Husky Athletics Club, the response was very strong.

"We quickly learned the more [live] events we could put out there, the better," Harris says. "It's been a big hit with parents who want to watch their kids play and alums who have left the area but still want to follow our teams. We're trying to do as many events as we can."

Northeastern has teamed with Pack Network, a start-up founded by K. J. Cardinal, AS'03, in an attempt to make the webcast productions more closely aligned with traditional television.

"When you watch sports on TV, there are certain elements of a broadcast you take for granted, like the score and the game clock being on the screen at all times," Cardinal says. "With most of the college webcasts out there these days, you lose those elements. You also usually only have one camera. For the Northeastern webcasts, we've tried to incorporate the elements fans are used to seeing, and multiple cameras and angles, to make a better experience for the viewer."

With students serving as production crew and the voices of Northeastern radio broadcasters providing audio, the university has already engineered live webcasts for football, soccer, volleyball, and field hockey this fall, and plans to cover all home basketball and hockey games this winter. Select additional events in the works include swim meets and perhaps even crew races.

Those wishing to view the webcasts must have a high-speed Internet connection and Apple's free QuickTime Player. A GoNU.TV subscription costs \$59.95 for the season, or \$4.95 per event. All the events are archived, allowing subscribers to log in and watch them again or cue up a key moment in a game.

During the first two weeks after the site launched, almost a hundred people purchased a season pass, Harris says. The service has also been a success with opposing teams' fans. When the Northwestern State football team from Natchitoches, Louisiana, visited Parsons Field, some fifty of its fans paid \$4.95 to watch the game, says Harris.

To complement all the live event coverage this season, GoNU.TV plans to introduce a coaches' show and begin offering highlight clips as well.

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New World Raga

A pitch-perfect collection about Indian expats in America.

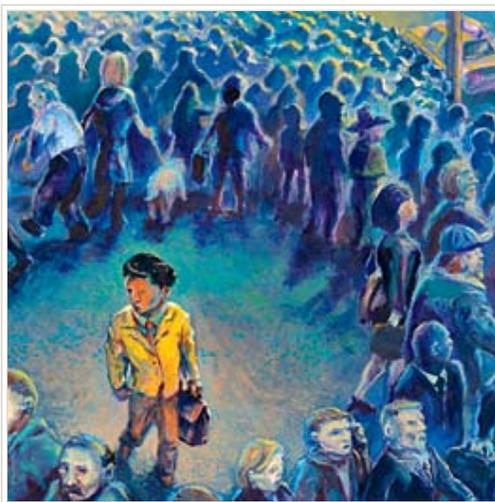
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Karma and Other Stories, by Rishi Reddi (Harper Perennial; New York; 2007; 240 pages; \$12.95)

By Magdalena Hernandez

Good artists hold a mirror up to nature, to reveal the contradictions of the human experience. Great artists know how to let the contradictions be, resisting the urge to whitewash or resolve them.

Straight out of the gate, short-story writer Rishi Reddi, L'92, demonstrates a great artist's understanding in *Karma and Other Stories*, a confident, expressive debut collection.

Many of Reddi's stories explore the dilemmas faced by Indian immigrants in America. Her characters have come to the United States—in many cases, the Boston area—to seize bigger opportunities. Under the author's gaze, they both advance and lose in their pursuit of happiness.

The plots revolve around a number of conflicts: between East and West, men and women, the generations. Repeating themes underscore the isolation of individuals, the impossibility of knowing others. Again and again in the book, protagonists find themselves unmoored in America.

Testament to Reddi's imagination and empathy, the strongest stories often boast characters least like her—a teenage boy, for instance, or an elderly man. Though the author spares none of her characters, detailing each with a sharp yet sympathetic eye, the follies and fates of all are compassionately chronicled.

Inevitably, some perish in their new land. Others hit serious dead

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ends. The title story's description of migrating birds sums up the pervasive uncertainty: "Whole flocks get confused when they see city lights. Some die quickly when they slam into the sides of buildings and towers. Some spiral slowly down into the lighted area, lose their way, and are trapped among the buildings when daylight returns."

In addition to the exhausting confusions of immigrant life, the stories expose a basic disconnect between ordinary people. To suggest community, some of the stories are loosely linked—two characters from different stories are students of the same dance instructor, for instance. Even so, a sense of separation is the constant backdrop.

"Karma" contrasts siblings "as unlike each other as any two brothers could be." The elder, Shankar, is a struggling ex-professor just fired from a convenience-store job. His younger brother is a successful cardiologist. With the gap in wealth, in a reversal of cultural norms, the younger sibling is the head of household. When Shankar is cast out of the shared family home in Lexington, he and his wife struggle to stay afloat, until a penchant for rescuing injured birds leads him to a job that helps him atone for an earlier wrong.

The first story in the collection, the mordantly humorous "Justice Shiva Ram Murthy," offers another nuanced study of isolation. A seventy-year-old judge from Hyderabad, a recent arrival in Boston, thinks he's ordered a bean burrito at a Back Bay fast-food joint. Instead, he bites into a tortilla filled with beef.

Outraged—he's Hindu and therefore forbidden from eating beef—he considers suing the restaurant. As he stubbornly searches for legal redress, he comes to realize how little he knows about a childhood friend, a more experienced Indian émigré who had been his lunch companion that day.

Make no mistake: The self-absorbed judge is granted no epiphany or radical transformation. Reddi (who was herself born in Hyderabad—she now lives in Brookline with her husband and daughter) is too smart a writer to conjure such an easy ending. The close is less definitive, and more satisfying.

Other stories show other Indian Americans struggling against the mainstream. In "Devadasi," teenage Uma, the child of a former Raytheon v.p., visits India for the first time to attend a wedding. Uma may be an outsider, but she enjoys an enviable position in the social order of her parents' native country. Nonetheless, her culture shock is deep. By the end of the tale, Uma is unsure about her place in either world.

"Lord Krishna" follows another teen, Krishna, who isn't fitting in at an elite Wichita prep school. Ignorant football players label him "towel head." The pretty girls pay him no mind. He's falling short of his successful father's expectations.

Then one of Krishna's teachers seems to intentionally disparage the boy's namesake, a Hindu deity. The upset boy announces to his parents that he wants to change his name, causing his angry father to reassess his privileged position in Wichita society: "[H]e was a self-made millionaire; he belonged to the second-most exclusive country club in town; he lived in the same neighborhood as Henry Stone, president of Stone Industries, a Fortune 500 company. Why hadn't all this money protected his family?"

Ultimately, Krishna figures out how to respond to his teacher. His resulting act of rebellion against his father is a lovely note, with none of the pat certainty a less-gifted writer might have dressed it with.

Reddi started writing fiction before attending law school at Northeastern. Even as a lawyer at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, she would write at home in the mornings before leaving for the office. Reddi kept working in environmental law for ten years until she decided to quit the day job to devote more time to finishing this collection.

The resulting stories are immensely readable. Reddi is a gifted storyteller who knows how to construct compelling narratives. And every character detail rings true. From one character's favorite snack to another's cheap sandals, the pitch-perfect elements flesh out three-dimensional people.

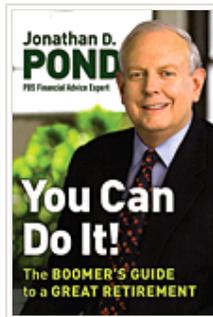
We're gratified when some of these characters break through their isolation to find a degree of redemption in their unfamiliar surroundings, by empathizing with those who are unlike them in background, perhaps, or by dancing, connecting with the natural world, or remaining true to their beliefs.

Reddi weaves all outcomes with a light hand, so that the reader never feels lectured or preached to. And the universality of the narratives is unmistakable. As is true for the best art, we can return to these stories over and over, to find new truths that startle, new issues to contemplate.

It's a supremely entertaining book. What more could we ask of an artist?

Magdalena Hernandez, MBA '02, is a senior editor.

Bookmarks



You Can Do It! The Boomer's Guide to a Great Retirement, by Jonathan D. Pond; HarperCollins; 2007

Every stage of the baby-boomer lifecycle thus far has been painstakingly documented. Why should retirement be any different?

From Jonathan D. Pond—a former lecturer in finance at Northeastern—comes this valuable handbook for people preparing for retirement, especially those born between 1946 and 1964. This cohort, the oldest members of whom turned sixty last year, accounts for about 26 percent of the U.S. population. The calendar and demographics are creating a perfect storm of reasons *You Can Do It!* may just fly out of bookstores.

Pond, a respected financial-planning expert, covers a great deal of ground, tackling such subjects as making investments, handling real estate,

paying for escalating health-care and college-education costs, and other age-appropriate matters.

Older readers may want to focus on the chapters about critical pre- and postretirement choices. Younger boomers will zero in on

sections about retirement plans, investing, and preventing financial fiascoes.

Refreshingly, Pond emphasizes how to maximize your economic position, regardless of your salary level or 401(k) balances. Through this book, filled with worksheets and examples, he offers himself as a coach who can take you from good to great fiscal shape.

Less scolding than many other gurus in the personal-finance market (we're looking at you, Suze Orman), Pond covers the essentials in a straightforward manner. Boomer readers will no doubt benefit from this user-friendly, upbeat guide.

It may even light a fire under Generation X. But perhaps that's a topic for another book.

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As an undergraduate, Angela Hedley, MEd'02, had her career path mapped out: major in economics, minor in marketing, get a job in fashion merchandising and buying.

Then a summer job showed her a better fit. Today, Hedley is an award-winning Boston high-school teacher who recently helped develop curricula for the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, in South Africa.

"After my junior year at the University of Buffalo, I took a job at a summer Bible school, working with kids six to twelve years old," she says, remembering her change in course. "I was the assistant director and taught arts and crafts, and sports."

Education was her true passion, the Bronx native decided. She completed her economics degree, then came to Northeastern for graduate school, drawn by its focus on urban education. As a student, Hedley taught history part-time at the Health Careers Academy, a charter school housed at Northeastern that helps ninth through twelfth graders prepare for college and a health-professions career. The focus, Hedley explains, is to "reduce the disparity of minority representation in health care."

Once she had earned her master's in education, she became a full-time faculty member at the Health Careers Academy, teaching U.S. history, modern world history, and an African American studies elective. In 2006, she was honored as one of Boston's Teachers of the Year. Soon came another recognition: getting tapped to work with teachers hired for Oprah's academy.

This past February, Hedley traveled to Oprah's school, in Henley-on-Klip, just south of Johannesburg. "I did some professional development there on closing the achievement gap," she says, "and demonstrated models of teaching that can be used in any classroom."

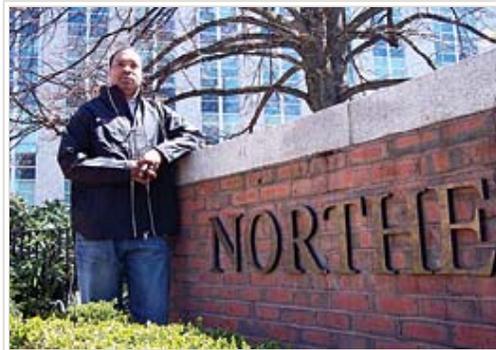
Now, to broaden the impact she can have in the world, Hedley is completing a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in

administration at Simmons College. "There is only so much change you can make from the classroom," she says. "You can make a larger change as an administrator. My mission is to allow urban students to receive the same kind of education their suburban counterparts do."

— Katy Kramer, MA'00

Enhancing student outcomes through experiential learning is one of five defining themes in the Academic Initiative.

The Good Sport



It's simple. "You just translate the competition," says former Husky football captain Antwaine Smith, BPH'97. As a defensive back, he knew how to solve any challenge—something he still does in his work heading the Baltimore office run by the Center for the Study of Sport in Society.

"Many people think being an athlete is different from being at work," says Smith, a Baltimore native who returned to his roots for the post. Not so. "My competitive spirit makes me good at what I do."

His job is tackling social problems before they get a foothold by bringing a message of nonviolence into the city's troubled middle and high schools. Through awareness-raising sessions and longer workshops, the youngsters hear straight talk about date rape, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and appropriate behavior. Sometimes the workshops are taken on the road, to educate high-profile college basketball and football teams.

The regional outpost replicates the programs offered at Sport in Society's headquarters, located on the Northeastern campus. After working there for seven years, Smith—who's married to Anika Deshields Smith, BA'94—became the Baltimore office's first regional manager, in 2005.

Smith recently partnered with the Baltimore Housing Authority in an effort to reach even more underserved youth. "The program offers an alternative to what they see in their lives," he says. "It creates hope and the potential for cultural change. They can relate to me because I'm from here."

He hopes to be an aspirational model for kids, Smith explains. "I want them to say, 'I can do that. I can graduate from high school, go to college, graduate from college, and go on to become a professional.'" There's an even bigger challenge he has in mind, too. "Ultimately, my goal is to create jobs," he says, "so people who don't have, have an opportunity to earn."

Smith understands how important caring support is for kids: "There wasn't a person I was connected to when I was younger. Now I am that person."

Touchdown.

— *Katy Kramer, MA'00*

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A Moving Experience



At his final Northeastern co-op, Matthew Kurtzman, BA'07, had to forget about midafternoon runs to Starbucks. Coffee breaks meant chowing down on coconut, peanuts, and fried sweet potatoes.

Welcome to Lagos, Nigeria.

The change in scene was just what he wanted. The Charleston, South Carolina, native, who had already worked stints at Tyco Healthcare and Bose Corporation, had been eager for an international experience.

After countless e-mails and phone interviews with the Pepsi-7UP Bottling Company in Nigeria, he landed a post as a transportation analyst, studying the efficiency of trucks departing the Lagos bottling plant for distribution centers around the country.

Kurtzman spent June through December 2006 in Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria and one of Africa's most populous urban areas, second only to Cairo. Even the climate in the country, located on the West African coast, offered business-logistics lessons.

"The first three months were their rainy season," he says. "It rained torrentially a couple hours each day. There were enormous puddles in the roads, and every time it rained you would have to reroute your trip." After the deluge months came the dry season, when daily temps reached into the 80s.

Infrastructure proved no less challenging. "I had to learn how to accomplish goals with few of the normal resources," says Kurtzman. "Much of the country is in a state of dilapidation, including the roads and the legal system."

It was, in retrospect, enviable training. "I learned how to motivate people when you don't know the language, the culture, or how business takes place," he says. Such lessons will no doubt help him fast-track at his postgraduation gig, working as a senior transportation analyst for the office-products supplier Staples in Framingham, Massachusetts.

Even now, Kurtzman admits, beverage containers and transport have their place in his life, though in a slightly different way. When he's not rock climbing or biking, he likes to build ships in bottles.

— *Katy Kramer, MA'00*

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Sometimes, when I need to catch my breath, I look out my third-floor window in the U.S. Capitol Building and think about how I got here. To say it's been a whirlwind is a bit of an understatement. I've been the press secretary for Dick Durbin, a U.S. senator from Illinois and the assistant Democratic majority leader, since March.

And I just graduated from Northeastern in May.

My not-so-normal college experience was hectic from the start. Deciding to row varsity crew meant my day began with a 5 a.m. wake-up call and a van ride to the Henderson Boathouse. The daily workouts on the Charles and in the gym left me with little free time outside class.

When I first entered Northeastern, I majored in communications—for a week. Then an interesting American government elective persuaded me to change my major to political science. Now, I thought, I had five leisurely years to discover what I wanted to do after graduation, and my co-op adviser and I discussed future internship possibilities in Washington, D.C.

My first co-op was at a Boston law firm, Stoneman, Chandler & Miller, where I learned office skills like copying and filing. I also found extraordinary women role models at all levels of the firm, from young lawyers to accomplished partners.

Though I was qualified to leave town for my next co-op, I was determined to finish four years of rowing, a year-round sport. So I traveled as far as I could, all the way across the Charles River to the U.S. Department of Transportation in Cambridge.

This was actually one of the more challenging periods of my college career. I'd wake up at 4:45 a.m., bike across campus, get a van (I was a certified Northeastern van driver by now), pick up my teammates, and drive to the boathouse. We'd row on the Charles for nearly two hours. The moment we got back to the dock, I'd

jump out of the boat, grab my things, and hop onto my bike. No time to shower—I had to do that at my office's gym.

On the job, I could relax into my research projects on major infrastructure projects across the country. After work, I'd squeeze in a second workout before dinner. Then I'd prepare for the next day and go to bed. Even now, I look back on those four months to remind myself what I'm capable of.

Finally, I was ready for a Washington co-op. Since I'm from Illinois and admire both our senators, I applied for internships with Barack Obama and Dick Durbin.

On the Fourth of July 2006, I moved into my new Washington apartment for a six-month stint at Senator Durbin's office. The co-op involved giving tours and doing routine office tasks. Still, I found, working in the Capitol can make even handling documents on federal tax law seem exciting.

One highlight was the month I worked on Tammy Duckworth's congressional campaign. Tammy is an Iraqi war veteran who lost both legs when her Black Hawk helicopter was shot down. At Senator Durbin's urging, she decided to run for the U.S. Congress as a Democrat in a Republican stronghold, the sixth district of Illinois.

I served as a campus coordinator, recruiting Chicago college students to work for Tammy. It was everything a campaign should be: headquarters in a suburban Chicago strip mall; long hours; no sleep; networking; finding friends for life; pizza for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

My coordinator colleague and I basically started from scratch. In just a few weeks, we had hundreds of college kids giving up their weekends to knock on doors for Tammy. I developed lasting relationships with many people from Senator Durbin's office, as well as other Hill staffers. In the end, Tammy lost by a percentage point, which was heartbreaking. But my campaign experience was amazing.

I was back at school just two months when, incredibly, I was offered a job as Senator Durbin's press secretary, starting immediately. The next few months were a blur. I packed up my things. In March, I started my job. I finished my Northeastern coursework from Washington and graduated with my friends in May.

Just like I'd planned when I enrolled in college, I've ended up in communications. As press secretary, I'm involved in nearly every issue that affects Illinois, or at least the issues the press is interested in.

I might be working on a press release about Amtrak, get a phone call about health care, and have to become a semi-expert on it in a matter of minutes. The daily press machine is an adrenaline rush—something I must be addicted to after all my years of rowing. The hours are long, the work really hard, the pace lightning-fast. But I'm enjoying everything.

Looking out my office window on the Fourth of July 2007, a year after I'd first moved to the capital, I was admiring the Washington Monument as the fireworks began. I could almost make out the figure of Abraham Lincoln—a fellow Illinoisan—in the Lincoln Memorial just over to the right. My heart was racing. Tomorrow, I

knew, I'd watch the Senate at work and maybe play a role in making history.

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Back in the less-enlightened 1970s, nervous male chauvinists might have assumed these uniformed women were plotting world domination. Not so. They're actually newly minted ROTC cadets, looking over a standard topographical map and operating the same kind of two-way FM radio the U.S. military used to coordinate troop movements.

In 1973, only two Northeastern women took ROTC courses—and they couldn't officially enroll in the all-male officer-commissioning program, despite the fact that they planned to join the Women's Army Corps after graduation.

But by 1974, after ten U.S. institutions ran test programs, Army ROTC finally accepted women into its ranks. Across the country, women cadets participated in field maneuvers, classes, and social activities alongside their male counterparts. At Northeastern, twenty-four women cadets donned their ROTC uniforms, complete with skirts.

As any student today could tell you, the key is having a choice of experiences.

— *Magdalena Hernandez, MBA'02*