



Northeastern University

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# Northeastern Voice

Electronic edition, Vol. 1 No. 26, July 23, 2008

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**Report emphasizes role of manufacturing in economy**

**New library hours allow flex-time for studying**

### Featured Article

**Report stresses economic role of manufacturing**



A Northeastern research team, headed by Barry Bluestone, dean of the School of Social Sciences, in collaboration with the Boston Foundation, released a new study that emphasizes the importance of manufacturing as a forceful part of the regional economy and its role as a catalyst for future growth.

### **New library hours allow flex-time for studying**

Anyone wondering why University Libraries rolled out a massive extension of its hours, offering 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week access to its study labs on the first floor beginning July 7, need look no further than students like chemical engineering sophomore (this fall) Michelle McNeilly.



Like so many of her hard-studying classmates throughout campus, McNeilly often finds herself hitting the books when others are hitting the hay.

### In the media

- The Boston Globe [quoted John Kwoka](#), professor of economics, in an article about the rise in airline ticket prices of flights in to and out of Logan International Airport.
- An article in Medical News Today [features a paper](#), written by Theresa Osypuk, assistant professor of Health Sciences, on regional hypersegregation.

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### Report emphasizes role of manufacturing in economy

As the last recipients receive their economic stimulus checks in the mail, a new research study commissioned by the state's 2006 Economic Stimulus bill has been released by the Center for Urban and Regional Policy (CURP) at Northeastern University in collaboration with the Boston Foundation. The report emphasizes the importance of manufacturing as a forceful part of the regional economy and its role as a catalyst for future growth.



Barry Bluestone

The report, titled *Staying Power: The Future of Manufacturing in Massachusetts*, reviews the history of manufacturing in the state, from before World War II through recent decades of decline and renewal. In addition, surveys of more than 700 businesses were completed and separate interviews with more than 100 business leaders in the sector were undertaken by the research team, headed by Barry Bluestone, dean of the School of Social Science, Urban Affairs and Public Policy and director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University, and Don Walsh, a senior research associate at CURP. Lauren Nicoll and Chase Billingham, CURP research associates, also contributed to the writing of the report.

"This research invites all of us to reboot our thinking about manufacturing," said Bluestone. "We have moved far beyond the shoes and textile mills that put Massachusetts at the center of the American Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, and this information calls us to address the challenges we face if we are to maintain this important sector. That includes finding ways to lower the cost of doing business in the Commonwealth and securing the skilled and trained workforce manufacturing needs to thrive. It may not be as sexy as nanotechnology, but manufacturing is a powerful economic engine for Massachusetts."

Their findings track overall employment in the sector, which has declined since the high-water mark of 1943, when the military efforts connected to World War II pushed employment above 800,000. Today, employment stands at just under 300,000. That time period included a decline in low-tech manufacturing of more than 50 percent, including textiles, leather products and other items associated with state history. So-called high-tech manufacturing, including computers, electronic equipment and appliances, declined at a far slower rate. Recently, this overall decline mirrors changes in the increasingly global economy, which has seen important declines in manufacturing through the country.

Partners in the publication included the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development and

the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in addition to the Boston Foundation.

"In Massachusetts, this highly productive sector employs almost 300,000 people in thousands of companies across the state. And while that represents a significant decline from job levels in the 1940s, the Commonwealth's manufacturing output has increased over the last decade to stand at close to \$40 billion," said Paul S. Grogan, president and CEO of The Boston Foundation.

"Yet here, as elsewhere in this country, manufacturing often is perceived as emblematic of an 'old' economy. Not true. As this report makes clear, manufacturing continues to be a dynamic and healthy part of our economy, offering solid, well-paying jobs. According to the Boston Indicators Report, the average weekly wage for jobs in manufacturing is \$1,273, much higher than many jobs in other sectors. Nationally, manufacturing jobs pay on average 25 percent more than other jobs."

Amongst the many recommendations included in the report, it is suggested that as Massachusetts becomes a leader in "green" building and energy technology, the state's manufacturers should not be forgotten.

"Subsidies," the report notes, "in the form of grants or tax credits, that encourage the greening of manufacturing facilities to reduce emissions and capture more renewable energy in the form of solar and geothermal systems should have a substantial impact on the ability of manufacturers to lower costs and stay in business."

The report also details that, with nearly half the current workforce aged 45 or older, finding and training a replacement workforce is critical to the future of this sector. Manufacturers would like to see the state put much more emphasis and many more resources into vocational education, workforce training programs, and community colleges. They feel that all the state seems to talk about is making sure our universities and colleges remain the best in the world, while the workers they need are usually trained in other kinds of institutions.

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Anyone wondering why University Libraries rolled out a massive extension of its hours, offering 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week access to its study labs on the first floor beginning July 7, need look no further than students like chemical engineering sophomore (this fall) Michelle McNeilly.

Like so many of her hard-studying classmates throughout campus, McNeilly often finds herself hitting the books when others are hitting the hay.

"Many students on campus study just that hard," said McNeilly, vice president for academic affairs, student government association. "It's a fact of life for today's college student, lets face it."

Involved as she is with studies, classes, a volunteer position on the student government association, and myriad activities, McNeilly represents today's student: one who doesn't tuck in to a childhood bedroom for study time.

Changing campus demographics, which has redefined the former commuter college into a residential one, has increased demand for quiet study space outside residential space on and off campus, said Will Wakeling, acting dean, University Libraries.

"Our students were asking for this, and with the support of the provost's office, we're happy to report that we are one of the few university libraries in the area that can truly say we're 24/7," Wakeling said. "Being open 24 hours is a really big deal for us."

With the rollout, some 420 seats on the first floor of the library will be available, said Lesley Milner, associate dean of the library.

With this, students will have access to computer labs, study space, and food through the Cyber Café, which was created in 2001. "We've had quite a steady stream of students who were looking for this level of availability," said Milner, noting that as the chief customer service representative of the library, she is pleased to now see a steady stream of "thank you" notes in her computer e-mail.

"Student study patterns have changed with the times," Milner said. "When once they commuted from their parents' homes, and studied there, they now live on campus and require a quiet space to do their homework."

Milner added, "Our students are up very late now. Often they have part-time jobs, or in class for most of the day, so their studies come later in the day."



Will Wakeling

And, with the Internet, there is always somebody, somewhere in the globe, who is up working on something that may help a student here with his or her studies, she said.

Susan Powers-Lee, executive vice provost for academic administration, underscored the provost's office commitment to ensuring round-the-clock library access.

Speaking in praise of the student government association, which identified extended library hours as a high priority for students, and the collaborative work between students and senior leadership to develop a budget for it.

"This 24/7 access will allow our students more flexibility in how they plan their studying and also more opportunities to utilize the library resources," Powers-Lee said.

For McNeilly and her fellow late-night studiers, the extended hours are just what they needed. "A lot of us prefer not to study in a dorm, and need to be in a quiet place where there are not distractions," she said. "My study hours typically go from about 9 p.m. to 2 a.m., and now that hours are extended, it gives me and my fellow students even more options."

— Susan Salk

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