

NORTH EASTERN UNIVERSITY

Disorientation Guide!



TUITION! MONEY! EATS! CAMPUS LIFE! ACTIVISM! etc.

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An Alternative Education

Thoreau had it going on when he wrote *Civil Disobedience*. By the end of your stay here, you'll have practiced a lot of it, we hope. Your school and your community will thank you...eventually. Thoreau also spent a hell of a lot of time in the woods practicing the very Emersonian philosophy of self-reliance. Fed up with the pleasantries and other futile workings of society, he packed it up and turned to nature to discover the meaning of his life. And so can you.

You're already well on your way. What are you here for if not discovery of purpose? Career training? Sure...but nobody comes to school with dreams of a soulless 9-to-5 job. Betterment through education? Of course, but what does that even mean? Let's be real, you have dreams of fulfillment, meaning and self-discovery. Teachers, parents, society has told us that for the low price \$50,000 dollars a year, you too can be "educated" into an enlightened, functioning member of society.

It's not true.

Rely solely on Northeastern University (or any institute of higher learning) for your education and four (or five) years later, you'll leave thoroughly uneducated, diploma in hand. Sure, you'll have the credentials to get a fairly decent job...maybe. But is that what you really, in your heart of hearts, desire? To be a well-molded wage slave? What about a sense of fulfillment, direction, and real world intelligence? What about the knowledge that with the skills you possess, you will never ever have to worry about your security? You don't get that from formal education.

I'm not saying don't get an education. Quite the opposite, get more of an education. It shouldn't be about career preparedness or resume building. It's about building yourself, your strengths, your skills, your intelligence. So when it comes down to it, you don't have to rely on employers or the economy or that pay raise you'll be praying for. You've got yourself.

So do it. Educate yourself. Use Northeastern's

spectacular resources, but don't rely solely on them. Research what you find interesting. Become an expert of your own accord. Explore, cherish, and thrive in your community. Thoreau had Walden Pond, but you have the jungle of Boston.

Some useful resources include:

Corvid College - a free (or extremely low cost) college founded to promote learning for those who love to learn. Classes are held by professionals and people who just know a lot about a certain topic. Check em out! <http://corvidcollege.wikidot.com/>

The Lucy Parsons Center - a radical, collectively-run bookstore and info-shop. 518 Centre Street in Jamaica Plain

Hi-5! - an awesome zine detailing radical and cheap events in Boston. Frequently lists free lectures at Harvard and MIT, film screenings, etc. Pick up a copy at the Lucy Parsons Center!

Papercut Zine Library - a library full of zines! Every topic you could ever dream of. 226 Pearl St, Somerville

Countercultural Compass - a monthly flyer of all the great underground music happening in Boston

Tight on cash? Eat free vegetarian food through **Food not Bombs** Fridays 3 to 5 at the Park Street T stop, and Sundays 3 to 5 at Central Square

There's cheap bike assistance at **Bikes not Bombs**: 18 Bartlett Square, Jamaica Plain for shops and repairs, 284 Amory St, Jamaica Plain for the main office.

Participate in a study at MIT for some extra cash. Got to <http://mitbrl.sona-systems.com/default.asp> to sign up. Other studies are done through the Harvard and NU Psychology Departments, the Harvard Business School, and the Kennedy School of government. Local hospitals also recruit healthy (and unhealthy) volunteers for research studies. Check out bostonclinicaltrials.com for more info.

And above all, just explore! It'll just take a few hours to walk around. You have no idea what you'll uncover.

Top Classes to Take Before you Graduate

- Arabic (ARAB 1101) Shakir Mustafa
- Budgeting & Taxation (POLS 2335) Bruce Wallin
- Business, Global Poverty, and the Microfinance Revolution (ENTR 2219) Dennis Shaughnessy
- Critique of Capitalism (ECON 3405) M. Shahid Alam
- Developmental Psychology (PSYC 3404) Karen Spikes
- Environment and Society (SOCL 1246) Daniel Faber
- Environmental Anthropology (ANTH 2330) Mary King
- Global Markets and Local Cultures (ANTH 2305) Jeffrey Juris
- Health Policy and Politics (POLS 7321) Michael Dukakis
- Introduction to Law, Policy, and Society (LPSC 2301) Edward Kammerer
- Law and Literature (LPSC 3306) Edward Kammerer
- Organic Chemistry (CHEM 2311) Mike Pollastri
- Philosophical Problems of Law and Justice (PHIL 2301) Patricia Illingworth
- Public Policy and Administration (POLS 3307) Michael Dukakis
- Social Entrepreneurship (ENTR 2206) Dennis Shaughnessy
- Social Movements (SOCL 1268) J. Matthew Judge
- Social Policy, Advocacy, and Activism (HUSV 3550) Lori Gardiner
- Social Psychology (PSYC 3402) Karen Spikes
- Sociology of Violence (SOCL 1241) Jack Levin
- Television Studio Production (COMM 3650) Michelle Carr
- Transnational Activism in a Global Civil Society (INTL 3460) Denise Horn

The recent wave of student suicides related to hateful rhetoric and bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity are a tragic reminder that we, as citizens, have not fulfilled our obligation to protect young people and ensure they feel safe. It is a tragic reminder that we can, and must, do more for students of diverse sexualities and gender identities; and we need to start on our own campus. According to a 2009 GLSEN Survey, more than 84% of non-straight youth were verbally harassed, and more than 40% were physically harassed because of their sexual orientation. No student on the NU campus should have to feel marginalized, in danger, or alone. And as members of the NU community, it is our duty to ensure that vulnerable populations have safe places on campus to go.

Given the importance of a safe community space, NU students have been campaigning for a resource center to serve the sexuality and gender diverse population of our school. The proposed Sexuality and Gender Diversity Center (SGDC)

would be a place where students could gather to talk about issues they may not feel comfortable speaking about in other places on campus. It would be a place to seek information, support, and to hold dialogues about sensitive topics, and would foster education for issues that have to do with our identity as students at NU and our role in our community. In this way, the SGDC would operate like other cultural/resource centers on campus including: The African-American Institute, Hillel, Spiritual Life, the Latino/a Student Cultural Center, The Asian American Center, and the Islamic Society.

If a student at NU needs a safe space to talk about a personal issue, such as coming out or harassment they have experienced, they currently have nowhere to go. The student organization NU Pride has a room in Curry Student Center, but it's run by a transitional group of students due to co-ops, study abroad, and graduation. Therefore, it is only open

a few hours a week, with no full-time staff to meet students' needs or direct them to appropriate resources.

NU's undergraduate admissions website lists six cultural communities to reflect our University's commitment to diversity and to drawn in applicants. All the communities mentioned have a resource center on campus and a minimum of one staff person who works at the center. The only exception is the listing of 'gay, lesbian, bisexual, & trans community' which lacks comparable resources to those provided for the other five diversity communities.

Northeastern faces problems with major disconnects between various LGBTQ-focused communities and groups. Through creating a SGDC, a full-time staff person could help manage communication between those existing groups and support their progressive initiatives. The SGDC would also be an important resource for faculty and staff. Recently, there has been

a "mass exodus of sorts" of staff with diverse sexualities and gender identities. Since the summer, four known queer/allied staff have left NU, due to feeling a lack of support from the wider administration. And sadly, some NU faculty, staff, and students are afraid to be "out" at Northeastern, because they believe with valid reason that it could hurt their reputation or even their career.

This is unacceptable, and we need a center on campus that will work to improve the climate of NU. Students, staff, and faculty who want to express support for the creation of a Sexuality and Gender Diversity Center can write to nupride.info@gmail.com to sign a petition, write a letter of support, or otherwise get involved in this campaign. Faculty and staff who want to support the sexuality and gender diverse community at NU can contact Campus Activities about joining the NU Pride Committee.


LET'S GET CENTERED:
Gender & Sexuality
on Campus

Joining a Student Group: HOUSE RULES

1. Volume

16 oz. Make sure you check out all sorts of groups. You can hear about different ones by asking new friends what they have tried. You can buddy up and go to one meeting with them and ask them to go to a meeting of a club that you're interested in with you.

9 oz. People are always coming and going at Northeastern. Student groups are built to accommodate you and your many plans. Don't get overwhelmed by the "commitment". Any group will be excited to have you and your enthusiasm. Just don't try to commit to too many at once, until you are comfortable in your role at each.

2. Set Up

Triangles. Class – Friends – Clubs. Do they have to be exclusive? Try to get involved right off the bat. Don't be intimidated by the older members or Northeastern's red tape. Whether you go to Relay for Life, take No Limits dance classes, or step up and take on a full volunteer role with Peace through Play, you are putting yourself in a place to get to know other people and start to enjoy the unique qualities of each club.

3. Order of Play

Eye-to-Eye. Ask as many questions as you want. Everyone will appreciate your willingness to get involved and you will get all the info you need.

Returns. Try to make it a priority to show up. Get on the mailing list, read the emails, and GO! Who doesn't need a study break?

4. Offense

Call the Shot. It is hard to distinguish the motivated members from those who aren't. Prove that you are interested and able to help out and you will be golden.

5. Defense

No Distractions. Once you're in, try to really be in. If you picked the right places to be, it should be fun to hang out in this group with these people who have the same interests. Student involvement does not have to be all about resume building.

6. End Game

Don't let the thought that you won't be on campus in two semesters or the fact that you have a part-time job get in the way of stepping up. Once you have found your favorite student groups, help them out. If they are going to stick around, they will need you to contribute your sick skills.



Administrators' Top Ten Stalling Tactics

1. **PRETEND YOU DON'T EXIST:** You receive no response. They fail to even acknowledge your demands or meeting requests.
2. **SEND IN THE PUPPET:** The decision maker refuses to meet with you and they send someone in to pacify you who has no decision making power. It is this person's job to make you feel like the university is engaging your concerns, while never actually committing to anything.
3. **DENY THE ALLEGATIONS:** They deny the allegations and tell you about all the other great things they are doing to address the issue.
4. **THE COMMITTEE WILL LOOK INTO IT:** They form a bureaucratic and infrequently meeting committee to further research and discuss this issue. They will often give students a seat on this committee, but structure it so you have very little power and then stack it against you.
5. **WE'LL SCARE AWAY THESE KIDS:** They threaten you, either with academic consequences or legal action, often for some irrelevant triviality.
6. **WE AGREE IN PRINCIPLE BUT...** They say that they agree with you in principle and want to work closely with you on this issue but that they have a number of questions about what you are proposing. They will work really hard to make it look like they are working with you and if you just provide them with more information and hang in there, things will move ahead.
7. **THE IMPOSSIBLE CONTINGENCY:** They say they will implement proposed changes after such and such is figured out (such and such is nearly impossible) or defer it to legal council for weeks upon end.
8. **LOOK AT THE UNIVERSITY'S NEW INITIATIVE! a.k.a. MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF NOTHING:** They come up with and tout their own initiative to address the issue, an initiative that clearly does not address the fundamental issue you are campaigning around.
9. **DIVIDE AND CONQUER:** They agree to only a portion of your demands in hopes that you will settle.
10. **FOOL THE PUBLIC:** They give you something close to what you want, spin it in such a way that it looks like what you want to the public but in actuality it is missing core components.

A Rich Guy and His Cat

(and David Horowitz)

Situated smack dab in the middle of campus is Northeastern University's newest and perhaps most beloved statue: *A Man and a Cat Named Yitz*. It perplexed the student body upon its initial installation in the spring of 2011 and prompted a number of bros milling about to scratch their baseball-capped heads and inquire, "What the fuck, man?"

Over time, the statue became an endearing site for cat ladies and normal people alike. Still, very few have stopped to think about the background of the statue and what such an addition might represent.

The statue is an homage to Dr. Robert J. Shillman, a major university donor. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Engineering from Northeastern University and his Masters in Science and PhD from MIT. In 1981 he invested his life savings of \$86,000 into his company Cognex Corporation. Cognex was one of the first companies to apply machine vision to commercial products, and today it is one of the leading suppliers of machine vision and industrial ID products worldwide. To be succinct, Dr. Shillman makes bank — a whole lot of it.

Along with being academically and economically influential, Dr. Shillman also wields a certain amount of political influence. In May 2008, George W. Bush asked Shillman to accompany him to Jerusalem for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel, and he was also appointed as a member of the Honorary Delegation for the occasion. During this trip, Shillman and Bush discussed the promotion of the strategic U.S.-Israel alliance and also collaborated with the Israeli government on their anti-terrorism campaign in the Middle East. Shillman, a staunch Zionist, serves on the boards of organizations such as The Friends of the Israel Defense Forces and The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous.

But Dr. Shillman's most telling donations are in the form of the substantial annual funding to the David Horowitz Freedom Center. The Freedom Center is a conservative



David Horowitz

While Shillman's funds have certainly been used towards growing Northeastern's campus, one must wonder how he feels about the actual academic conversations occurring inside his eponymous building. After all, this is the same man donating

At what point will "academic shareholders" like Robert Shillman demand that only certain ideologies are taught in their recipient universities?

money to a foundation dedicated entirely to altering the political tone of academia. In our neoliberal economy, the university system is becoming increasingly privatized. Schools are run more like multinational corporations than educational institutions, with large university donors expecting to be treated as shareholders in the university product. At what point will "academic shareholders" like Robert Shillman demand that only certain ideologies are taught in their recipient universities? Essentially, where is the line between cat statues and forced conservative ideology, and have we crossed it?

So when a statue like this goes up at Northeastern, take a second to read up on its background. Become aware of where the money that funds your education comes from — and what that might mean for yourself and others.

foundation that seeks to expose "the political radicalization of popular culture...because [culture is] a battleground, but after 9/11, it is clear that freedom itself is under assault from the new totalitarianism of terror." One of the Freedom Center's most important battlegrounds is academia. Their offshoot organization, Students For Academic Freedom serves to monitor a suspected hostility towards conservative thought in the university setting. The Freedom Center also publishes *Heterodoxy*, a newsmagazine that seeks to expose "the excesses of political correctness on college and university campuses across the United States."

THE OFFICIAL 2011 What Sucks @ NU POLL & SURVEY RESULTS!

From March through May, the NU Students for a Democratic Society conducted the **What Sucks @ NU 2011** survey at various spots around campus. A total of 291 students participated from across every school in the university, representing a little under 2% of the total undergraduate student body. The students were asked to choose from a list of known issues what concerned them about the school, and what they'd like to see changed. The results may shock you (or not)...

#1 PROBLEM: TUITION IS TOO HIGH! I HAVE TROUBLE AFFORDING IT ~ 74%

Tuition, room, board, and fees are set to top \$51,362 a year during the upcoming semester. On a list of the most expensive colleges in America, this would push Northeastern's position up from 98th to 54th. If the extra \$2,000 for student health insurance is included, it further pushes NU all the way up to 4th place. A majority of NU students will have difficulty paying this and several respondents have said the cost isn't worth it. Nonetheless, the administration continues to increase tuition while cutting scholarships.

#2 PROBLEM: STUDENTS HAVE NO MEANINGFUL VOICE ~ 66%

Two thirds of the respondents stated that they were angry over students having no meaningful say in how the school is run or how our tuition dollars are spent. This further demonstrates that democratizing our university is an overwhelming priority for many students. Students want a voice, and dislike being treated like children by this institution.

#3 PROBLEM: DORMS ARE TOO EXPENSIVE ~ 58%

Over-enrollment, university housing policy, and a dorm shortage have together massively increased the cost of on-campus housing. This forces many students to live off campus who otherwise don't want to, and makes it all the harder for any sense of community to exist. It also angers residents of surrounding neighborhoods, as landlords increase their rents to cater to the affluent student population, forcing out native residents.

#4 PROBLEM: INCOME DISPARITY ~ 48%

President Aoun lives in an \$8.9 million house on Beacon Hill, and has a salary of over \$900,000 per year. Even while tuition is rising, his income continues to grow exorbitantly. Meanwhile, grad students, TAs, and some adjuncts are paid below the poverty line. This forces some professors to teach at multiple universities, leaving them ever more exhausted and drained.

#5 PROBLEM: NO SENSE OF COMMUNITY ~ 47%

Between student voicelessness, co-op, and the number of people forced to live off-campus, many students feel alienated. There's no deeper sense of community here, no sense of being part of any meaningful whole. For many students, Northeastern has become a place where they come, go to class, and leave. Most of the non-freshmen dorms are particularly alienating, with most students never meeting, let alone knowing, any of their neighbors. It has made simple loneliness a major unaddressed problem at NU.

FULL RESULTS

1. Tuition is too high! I have trouble affording it ~ 74%
2. Students have no meaningful voice in how our school is run or how our tuition is spent ~ 66%
3. Dorms are too expensive ~ 58%
4. Adjuncts, TAs, and other staff earn poverty wages, while Aoun makes \$900,000 a year ~ 48%
5. There's no sense of community! ~ 47%
6. Not enough printers around campus ~ 43%
7. They cancelled the football team! ~ 27%
8. President Aoun doesn't care about student concerns ~ 23%
9. Offices aren't open long enough ~ 23%
Major offices of concern here are the Financial Aid office, Registrar, RD's, Ryder Hall, Co-op advisors, Academic advisors, CPS offices, Housing, Community Service, Student Employment, the Box Office, and the Math and Engineering Departments
10. Other ~ 22%
11. Defense contractors who defrauded the government on the board of trustees ~ 19%
12. Dorms not good quality ~ 16%
13. Professors not accessible ~ 16%
14. Racism at this university ~ 13%
15. Homophobia/Transphobia at this university ~ 12%
16. Sexism at this university ~ 11%
17. Don't offer desired major ~ 11%
Desired majors currently not offered include Nutrition, Social Justice, a Masters in Finance, Broadcasting, Video Production, Biomedical Engineering, Pre-med, Biotechnology
18. Unsafe campus ~ 11%
19. None of the Above, the school is perfect ~ 1%

SOME STUDENT COMMENTS FROM THE POLL

"One of my required courses for graduation has not been offered for the past three years."

"In spite of the tuition being this high, I've yet to be impressed with the quality of education at this school."

"Grad students are paid below the poverty line. And the university is not allowing us to unionize."

"President Aoun and the administration manipulate the Faculty Senate"

"There is a significant lack of funding for the School of Architecture. The ceiling is falling down, we have no plotters [basic architecture tool], and the facilities suck."

"OSCCR: Guilty until proven innocent!!"

DON'T TAKE THE T-SHIRT!

BANKS, CREDIT UNIONS, AND YOU

Every year, at the fall Activities Fair, Bank of America sets up a table. They'll have pretty decorations, good looking signs, and more free stuff than all the other tables combined -- refrigerator magnets, flashlights, key chains, t-shirts, you name it. They'll urge you to open a bank account, and congratulate you on your "financial responsibility" when you do. And with the free gifts, what could possibly be the problem? Everyone needs a bank account, right?

What Bank of America doesn't tell you is that you're more likely to get divorced than change your bank -- and they know that. They know that if they can recruit young new members, those members will likely stay reliable customers, no matter how much they get screwed over.

And Bank of America will screw you over, even if you don't realize it yet...

The thing to remember about Bank of America (and Countrywide, Sovereign Bank, and the rest) is that they are for-profit. Their main goal is to make money. They don't care about you, they don't care about your family, and they most certainly don't care about what's best for your financial security. Bank of America sees you as an object, who can be easily turned into a profitable asset. And the other for-profit banks aren't any different.

Consider this: Bank of America, Countrywide, Citigroup, Wells Fargo, and JP Morgan Chase are all currently facing class-action suits for modern-day redlining, having steered Blacks and Latinos towards predatory loans (even

when they qualified for decent loans), and charging minorities higher interest rates than Whites. You would think they'd be ashamed, but they aren't. And as of yet, no bank has apologized. Remember, a for-profit bank is not in the business of morality. It's in the business of making money, no matter how great the pain they cause. And racism is profitable.

Credit Unions, (or CU's) on the other hand, are different. CU's are non-profit, member run financial organizations. Their main institutional goal is to provide the best level of service possible, not to maximize shareholder profit. In fact credit unions don't even have shareholders. Rather than being owned by companies on Wall Street, credit unions are owned and governed by their own members. And in contrast to banks, where you typically have no control over how the bank is run, credit unions usually have a leadership elected by their members, and are sometimes even run by a volunteer board. And you can almost always get all the same financial services you could get at a regular bank: credit cards, debit cards, mortgages, auto loans, student loans, and certificates of deposit.

The fact that Credit Unions are non-profit, translates into several tangible benefits for its members. Most notably, lower interest rates on loans, and higher interest rates on savings. While a credit card loan from a profit-seeking bank might have interest rates in the 20-30% range, credit cards from a credit union have a national interest rate cap of 18%, set by the National Credit Union Association (NCUA). Meanwhile,



Banks in the end only care about rich assholes (that is to say, themselves).

an October 2009 study from the Pew Charitable Trust revealed that credit cards from the 12 largest credit unions nationwide had interest rates 20% lower than cards from the 12 largest banks. And every single one of those dozen for-profit banks were found in violation of the new credit card reform laws recently passed.

Well (you might be thinking), that's all well and good for those who want credit cards. But what if I don't want a credit card? Why shouldn't I join a major bank if it's so convenient?

One word: Fees.

Believe it or not, banks don't actually make most of their money off interest or loans; that merely covers operating costs. For for-profit banks, their largest single source of profit is a massive number of user fees, most of which simply do not exist in non-profit credit unions.

Consider that Bank of America account again. A recent look at Bank of America website revealed at least 33 different types of fees in Massachusetts, with often

multiple fees in each category. If you set up that account, realize that Bank of America will charge you between six and fifteen dollars a month if your account balance ever falls below \$750, another five dollars a month if your savings dips below \$300, \$8.95 if you set up direct deposit and don't use it, three dollars every time you transfer money from one share of your account to another, and another two dollars every time you use a non-Bank of America ATM, even if you don't withdraw money. On top of that, you might also have to deal with "Excess Withdrawal Fees," charging another three bucks for every withdrawal or transfer if you make more than three per month. And of course there are the charges for new boxes of checks or replacement cards.

At my credit union, I only pay a \$30 fee if I overdraw my account, and overdraft protection is free. I pay \$12 once every two years for a new box of checks, and whatever fee an ATM owner charges. That's it! On top of that, over 4,300 credit unions nationwide are connected to the Credit Union Service Network, where you

continues >

CREDIT UNIONS, CONT'D

can walk into any shared branch and make deposits or withdrawals from your account, even if you're not a member of that shared branch directly.

Above and beyond all of this, one thing you will find in a credit union that you won't find in a regular bank is stability. While thousands of banks collapsed or went out of business after the 2008 Economic Crash, only two credit unions nationwide went under. Credit unions have been an island of steadiness in the financial world, and (with those two exceptions) did not gamble their member's money in the stock market. As a credit union member, you'd be able to expect that same level of confidence. And the same way bank deposits are insured by the FDIC, credit union deposits are insured by the NCUA.

The only drawback to many credit unions is that their membership tends to be restricted to certain workplaces or residential areas. But as Northeastern students and Boston residents, there are actually three local credit unions you can join. And the best thing ~ you can be members as long as you want, even after you finish school or move.

College Student Insurance

Just bought a new computer or smart phone? Worried you'll drop it and have to pay for expensive repairs? You're not alone. Accidents are a rare but possibly expensive occurrence. And considering how most warranties (including Apple Care) don't cover accidental or screen damage, students should know that there is a relatively lower cost insurance option out there.

College Student Insurance (or CSI) is a company that provides personal property insurance for students, and only for students, at a number of schools across the country. Plans that covers up to \$2,000 will typically cost students \$70-80 (a bit less than the cost of Apple Care), and covers all types of accidental damage ~ something Apple Care doesn't do. All one has to do after an accident occurs is send in a copy of the repair bill and proof of ownership, and CSI (like most other types of insurance) will send you a check for the replacement cost minus your deductible.

Students in the past have used this insurance policy in the past to replace items lost accidentally, and to buy replacements for defective parts. It's quite possible that students prone to breaking things might end up getting more out of this insurance company in benefits than they pay them in premiums. So if you're tired of walking around with a cracked smart phone, CSI might be something worth considering. Check them out at <http://www.collegestudentinsurance.com>.

CREDIT UNIONS AROUND NORTHEASTERN

Medical Area Federal Credit Union (MAFCU)

Locations: 221 Longwood Ave, 2 min walk from Longwood stop on Green Line. Other locations in Brookline and Dorchester

Website: <http://www.mafcucreditunion.org/>

Membership Requirements: Students can become members by going to the online application, saying they're students at NU. MAFCU will make a donation on your behalf to the Greater Boston Sickle Cell Association, to qualify you under an affiliate group

Services Offered: Checking, savings, checks, debit cards, credit cards, mortgages, IRA's, CD's, and Personal, Auto, Boat, Student, and Home Equity Loans, MMA's, and various services for businesses

Pro's: On the CU Service Network, walking distance from NU

Con's: None

How to Join: Follow links at MAFCU website to online application

Minimum Deposit: \$25

Northeastern University Federal Credit Union (NUFCU)

Location: 129 Cullinane Hall

Website: <http://www.nufcu.neu.edu/index.htm>

Membership Requirements: Open to all Northeastern students, staff, and faculty

Services Offered: Offer's checking, savings, checks, debit cards, IRA's, CD's, and Personal, Auto, and Home Equity Loans

Pro's: On-campus location

Con's: Doesn't offer credit cards, and not on the CU Service Network

How to Join: Visit NUFCU in person, or download and mail in forms from the website.

Minimum Deposit: \$10

USAliance

Locations: 1960 Massachusetts Avenue, 5 min walk from Porter stop on Red Line. Other locations in New York, New Jersey, and Eastern Massachusetts

Website: <https://www.usalliance.org>

Membership Requirements: Members must live, work, or worship in Barnstable, Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, or Worcester Counties in Massachusetts. Northeastern students automatically qualify (NU is in Suffolk County, MA)

Services Offered: Checking, savings, checks, debit cards, credit cards, mortgages, IRA's, trusts, HSA's, MMA's, CD's, various services for businesses, and Personal, Auto, Boat, RV, and Home Equity Loans

Pro's: On the CU Service Network, large number of branches, largest amount of services available

Con's: Closest branch is a bit far away

How to Join: Online application, or can download forms and mail them in

Minimum Deposit: \$20

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRESIDENT

Meet Joseph Aoun, the current president of NU. You might see him walking around campus from time to time. And since he always talks about how much he loves interacting with the students, here are some questions about the man that would make for great conversation starters.



- Why do you earn \$912,983 a year, while TAs, some adjuncts, janitors, cafeteria workers, and security guards earn poverty wages?
- Why are you living in a \$9 million mansion on Beacon Hill while tuition goes up and student homelessness remains a problem?
- Why has your income gone up by more than \$300,000 since you first took office?
- Why has the school debt exploded to \$815 million during your tenure?
- Why do you continue to take your salary when the school is \$815 million in debt?
- Why do you continue to expand NU into surrounding neighborhoods, despite community opposition?
- Why have alumni donations continued to stagnate during your tenure?
- Why have dorm costs not gone down, despite the increase in the number of dorms?
- According to page 18 of NU's 2008-2009 tax documents, former NU President Richard Freeland is still earning \$229,690 annually for 10 hours of work per week. That comes out to an hourly wage of \$478.52. Why does he deserve that much money for so little work?
- A janitor that earns \$400 a week after taxes earns about \$10.00 an hour. Your hourly income comes out to \$475.52, over 47 times as much. Why is an hour of your time worth 47 times that of a janitor?
- Would you be willing to tell a janitor to their face that your time is 47 times more valuable than theirs?
- Why have you refused to give a straight answer to any of these questions?

Ripoff 101: The Causes of & Solutions to Overpriced Books

Every semester, thousands of students resign themselves to being gouged by the bookstore. Textbooks cost students an average of \$900 a year, not a small expense in an era of rising tuition, growing debt, and declining financial aid. But many students resign themselves to high prices, wondering what can one student do against an entire industry?

The time has come to break through that powerlessness. Students should never be forced to choose between academic success and financial security. But thankfully, if one can understand why textbook prices are so high to begin with, one can discover how to fix this situation, and finally end this scam.

Textbook prices are high due to three main parties: Textbook publishers, the bookstore, and the university administration. Neither of these three cares about student financial worries; their interests lie elsewhere.

Publishers publish textbooks for the money. They want profit, and as textbook publishing has consolidated, this trend has only increased. Five major companies control most of the market with little outside competition. But even with oligopoly, publishers know they won't make a profit off a textbook for very long, since after just one semester, used books and online editions start cutting into their market share.

The end result, according to the research group SPIRG, is that publishers do three main things to increase their profit margins: They introduce new editions very frequently (once every 3.8 years on average), they bundle books with certain

add-ons and increase the price, and they charge American students on average a fifth more for the exact same texts sold overseas.

Bookstores could fight the publishers on a lot of these practices but most don't since they're in it for the money as well. Book chains like Barnes & Noble, which our college bookstore store is a franchise of, take already expensive books and add a significant markup. Additionally, not only does our bookstore bundle books on its own, but (according to a 2009 interview with the bookstore manager) it also has special agreements with major publishers to sell predominantly their books, thus cutting out smaller and cheaper companies. Thus, big publishing and big retail collude to push prices up.

But the worst bookstore abuses come from their manipulation of used book sales. According to an anonymous source in the bookstore, our bookstore keeps but does not sell some of the used books it buys back, despite unmet demand. Their reasoning: the fact that they get more profit off a new book than a used one. On top of this, our bookstore artificially makes books and classpacs difficult if not impossible to return, and doesn't even allow students to buy or sell older and cheaper editions, even if they're almost identical to new ones.

Bookstores have remained willfully ignorant of the concrete harm they cause students, with the National Association of College Stores pathetically focusing on changing the "perception of price," rather than actual costs. To them, student financial worries are simply cases of

incorrect thinking. It has not occurred to them that overpriced books can be a major financial burden.

One would think that the Northeastern administration do something about this, but we the students don't control our administration. Our administration is run by people more concerned with university image than students' finances. Thus, they typically fail to put in place any policies that could be construed as "anti-business." At some colleges, the administration goes even further, colluding with the bookstore to take a portion of the profits for scholarships in return for minimal oversight. And given the lack of transparency from our current administration, we cannot conclusively state that such collusion isn't happening here.

Thus, students are trapped in a very profitable web, helping Barnes and Noble bring in over \$1.58 billion in profits in 2008 alone, according to the SEC. And this is profit, our money above and beyond the cost of labor and raw materials that goes straight to executive pay and shareholder dividends. Meanwhile, book prices will keep rising – at four times the rate of inflation and growing.

But thankfully, there are things that can be done. Students can begin by boycotting the NU bookstore, and buying their textbooks more cheaply online. A great website called Deal Oz (www.dealoz.com) is quite useful for this, as it searches Amazon, Ebay, Alibris, and numerous other sellers simultaneously.

Meanwhile, students at Northeastern can demand that the our bookstore put people ahead of profits, by doing the following:

- **Make all classpacs refundable**
- **End in-store bundling**

- **End the hoarding of used books**
- **Allow the buyback and repurchase of cheaper older editions**
- **Disclose any agreements between it and the university administration**
- **Disclose any agreements between it and publishing companies, including information sources, original prices, markup, and profits margins**
- **Provide cheaper, lower frills copies of books as an alternative to traditional textbooks**
- **Source from cheaper alternate publishers, and**
- **Expand the use of printable e-books**

Ultimately, there is a fundamental conflict of interest here between the demands of the students and the demands of the Barnes and Noble shareholders. They want profit, we want cheap books. This conflict of interest can be eliminated by following in the footsteps of other universities, and turning our bookstore into a student-run cooperative. Students helping students.

In the meanwhile, several organizations will be working on the textbook problem over the upcoming months. Before the end of this school year, the NUSDS hopes to open a student textbook exchange, and also create a manual for professors on what they can do to lower textbook costs. Meanwhile, we (the NUSDS and other groups) also intend to create a campus-wide set of purchasing guidelines, spelling out how cheaper books will be made available for future generations of students. We hope that such guidelines will be voted on by the student body in a university-wide referendum.

Until then, we urge you to join our campaign, and help make the desire for cheaper books a reality!!



The NU We Care Program

EMERGENCY RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Imagine: You've just gotten that great out-of-state co-op you've been dreaming about. You've made all the plans, and saved up the money. You move out of your dorm, start driving into the sunset...and then get into a colossal car crash in the middle of the interstate. The EMT's tell you you'll be alright, but you mind races: *What will I do? Where will I go? And how on Earth can I pay for all of this?*

Or picture this: You're at school, struggling to pay your bills as is. Then your parents give a call informing you that they are in foreclosure. Suddenly the college fund disappears, your bill for next semester's housing is coming due, and you realize you can't pay it. You start wondering to yourself – *Will I have to sleep in the library?*

Like it or not, we might find ourselves in the midst of an emergency. And for students (especially independent students) with limited means, these emergencies might very well make a student fall through cracks. And unfortunately, student homeless does exist – there are students for whom the library is their home...

If you find yourself in an emergency that seriously jeopardizes your well being, there are some little-known resources available at this school, the foremost amongst them being the We Care program, run out of the Student Affairs Office in 104 Ell Hall. The program consists of an integrated staff from departments across the school, including financial aid, housing, spiritual life, and the health center. For students in dire financial straights, they have been known to offer free meal passes to the dining hall, emergency advances on student loans, housing for students in need, and contact with students in the hospital. The exact services offered, of course, vary depending on the case.

It is a sad fact that in today's rough economic times, real emergencies do occur, and should know that there are resources available. And while the We Care program might not help everyone, if a true emergency happens to you, come on down to 104 Ell. You might be very glad that you did.

College Students & The Food Justice Movement

As college students in a city, typically without kitchens and backyards, we can be limited to dining halls, take-out restaurants, and convenience/grocery stores for our food. These limitations prevent us from directly choosing where the food we eat comes from, how it is grown, and what effects it may have on our society and environment. Our supermarkets are overflowing with corn-dominant processed foods, factory farmed meat, and chemically tainted produce. The majority of these foods also travel thousands of miles to reach our plates. The current state of our food system negatively impacts our health, our environment, and our communities in ways that must empower us to call for food justice. Here are some helpful definitions for those of us new to these concepts:

WHAT IS FOOD JUSTICE?

Food security provides safe, culturally acceptable, and nutritionally adequate foods through sustainable means for all residents of a community. Food justice work goes beyond food security by questioning why food insecurity currently exists, examining the social and economic inequalities that it. As this honest quote from Ian Marvy, co-director of Added Value in Brooklyn, puts it, "Food justice involves local people from seed to sale. It educates, organizes and mobilizes new social relations around food. It touches hands, hearts and pockets."

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO FOOD JUSTICE?

GMOs

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are what they sound like: artificial seeds produced in a laboratory. These seeds are made with high tolerances to pests and chemicals to allow large industrial farms to maximize their crop production, while using heavy doses of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides.

GMOs encourage intensive farming practices and monocultures (growing only one kind of food, such as corn), both of which involve toxic chemical use. GMOs also put natural, or organic, crops at risk of contamination. GMOs are widely used in staple crops like soybeans, corn, and rice, and in processed food are almost in everything offered in today's supermarkets. Given that they threaten our food's biodiversity, ecological stability, and public health, they should be better regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). But they currently aren't.

Monocrops

A monocrop (another word for monoculture) is the planting only one type of crop in one area. GMOs have played a major role in encouraging massive monoculture in the current agriculture system, an example of which is much of the corn currently grown in Iowa. Use of GMOs, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, have allowed most of Iowa to grow enormous amounts of corn, but ironically, this corn lacks real nutritional value. The practices used for this corn production also causes soil erosion, water pollution in near and distant water sources, and the increase in our country's dependence on corn-based food products. These monocultures hinder opportunities for sustainable, organic food systems while also facilitating our dependence on cheap foods produced by cheap and exploitative labor. In addition, they increase the risk of a modern-

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS!

NU - Wednesdays
Copley - Tuesday, Fridays
Prudential - Thursdays
Brookline - Thursdays
Somerville - winters on Saturdays
www.massfarmersmarkets.org

day Irish Potato Famine. For monocrops (by design) do not typically reproduce sexually, making most crops genetic clones of one another, and meaning a virulent-enough disease can wipe out an entire monocrop species. The modern, ubiquitous Cavendish Banana (another monocrop) is already facing extinction.

CAFOs

Otherwise known as a factory farm. In a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO), animals are crammed by the thousands or tens of thousands, unable to breathe fresh air, see the light of day, walk outside, peck at a plants or insects, scratch the earth, or eat a blade of grass. The confined environment makes the animals more prone to disease and encourages the use of antibiotics for the livestock. These large operations produce huge amounts of waste, environmental degradation, and abusive, unhealthy lives for the animals.

Food Miles

Since most food is grown in highly concentrated areas—corn in Iowa, fruits in California, oranges in Florida—there are many miles attached to the foods that end up on our plate. Food miles factor in the oil consumed for the production, packaging, processing, and transportation of the particular food. It is easier to calculate the food miles of whole foods, such as Chilean grapes transported

by ship from Chile to California and then by truck to Des Moines, produces 7,270 miles of travel. To calculate processed foods is a whole other challenge. The oil consumption needed for food production is directly related to environmental concerns of climate change. If you are not growing and eating the food within your state, your community, your home, or even right in your dorm room, then your food consumption is creating a much bigger carbon footprint than you may realize. Try to calculate your food miles by using formulas found here: www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/files/foodmiles_030305.pdf

HOW ARE THESE FOOD ISSUES RELEVANT TO COLLEGE STUDENTS?

Our current industrialized global food system depends on the above concepts that are deteriorating our environment, society, and health. As college students, we have the power to vote with our fork and hand together to create real change in this distorted food system.

We can continue to demand more local, organic, fresh, and healthy foods in our dining halls. Northeastern has taken some admirable strides in this department, but can always do more. This past summer International Village introduced a display of potted plants that are growing tomatoes, peppers, and herbs that will hopefully be included in our dining hall meals. Although this is an exciting start, we need to push our university to be more innovative and efficient with these new initiatives. Why don't we utilize the incredible vertical space on the windows? Why not develop an on-campus garden space on our constantly growing campus? Why don't we create more relationships with local and urban farms? Or maybe even have more students involved in growing food?

For more information on how you can grow your own food, check out the NU Disorientation Guide website, at:

<http://nudisorientation.blogspot.com/>

RESTAURANTS, CAFES, STORES!

Some recommended restaurants & stores that provide a variety of delicious, healthy, & real foods (no GMOs):

Clover - cloverfoodlab.com

Veggie Planet - veggieplanet.net

Bgood - bgood.com

The Otherside Cafe - theothersidecafe.com

Haley House - haleyhouse.org

City Feed & Supply - cityfeedandsupply.com

Harvest Co-op - harvestcoop.com

Clear Conscious Cafe - c3cafe.net

Espresso Royale Cafe - espressoroyale.com

Lineage - lineagerestaurant.com

Social enterprises are on the rise globally and locally. What is a social enterprise, you ask? Good question! A social enterprise is when a business sets out to make a wider impact on society, not just make a profit. While a typical business seeks to maximize returns for its owners/shareholders, social enterprises are there to make a positive difference in society. And while they're typically run with just enough profit to sustain themselves, profit does not overtake its other, more important goals.

Take Haley House for instance. Operating as a soup kitchen and a bakery café with live-in affordable housing for community members, Haley House is one innovative place. The soup kitchen and live-in community are located in the South End, while the Haley House Bakery Café is in Dudley Square, right down Melnea Cass Boulevard. The soup kitchen provides home-cooked meals to hungry individuals, with a daily menu planned by the live-in community members as well as neighbors, local college students, and soup kitchen guests. After-meal dialogue is encouraged, as well as communal clean-up. At the Bakery Café, you can find affordable, healthy, and locally sourced food items, ranging from breakfast burritos and grits to sandwiches, soups, salads, and baked goods (Try the giant chocolate chip cookies!) The best part is that Haley House is a non-profit, so all money raised through the Bakery Café and

other programs goes right back to financially sustaining the services Haley House offers. Haley House provides on-the-job training for those seeking to become financially independent, including those recovering from homelessness or recently released from jail. They also provide cooking classes to young people, showcasing the power of cooking from scratch and making healthy life-style decisions. All in all Haley House is a very powerful force in building communities and connections across barriers, all while serving a delicious array of food.

Then there is iCater, a unique catering social enterprise based right in the South End. Menu items are fresh, including handcrafted sandwiches, fruit platters, and freshly baked goods. Besides great quality food and prices, iCater has a social mission as well. All of its proceeds go towards food service training programs at the Pine Street Inn, located on Harrison Avenue in the South End. The Pine Street Inn offers permanent supportive housing, job training, emergency shelter and street outreach to over 1,300 homeless men and women every day. The food service training program specifically works with homeless

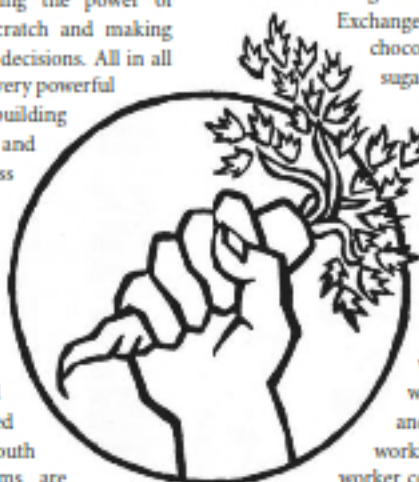
men and women to give them work-life skills to help them move towards self-sufficient lives.

Equal Exchange is another food-related social enterprise with a unique twist. It is a cooperative, meaning workers are also owners and key decision-makers, voting on how the company functions at its West Bridgewater headquarters. Equal

Exchange sells coffee, tea, and chocolate, as well as cocoa, sugar, almonds, bananas,

and olive oil. Another great aspect of Equal Exchange is that they source their products directly from other democratic worker co-operatives around the world, working directly with coffee, cocoa, and banana farmers. By working with democratic worker co-ops, Equal Exchange

fuels the power of farmers joining together to share resources, such as farming equipment. They also pay a fair price for the products they purchase, as well as indirectly nurture a better quality of life in the communities they source from. As an added bonus, all of Equal Exchange's products are delicious, especially their coffee, tea, and chocolate. Local stores such as Shaw's on Huntington Avenue and both City Feed and Supply stores in Jamaica Plain sell Equal Exchange coffee, and you can often find them present at local farmer's markets as well. They operate a café in the North End near the



By working with democratic worker co-ops, Equal Exchange fuels the power of farmers joining together to share resources, such as farming equipment.

TD Bank North Garden, too!

Business isn't always a bad thing, especially when enterprises recognize that their mission is a social one. And a new legal classification, the "B Corporation," is helping with that. Certified B Corporations have written into their by-laws that social and environmental impact are main priorities, not just maximizing profit for owners. All "stakeholders," including the employees, consumers, community, and environment, are taken into account. Also, to become a "B Corporation," a business must pass a set of social and environmental benchmarks and keep monitoring their progress. This scorecard can be seen by all online at the B Corporations' website, bcorporation.net, offering utmost transparency to their certification method. There are currently 439 Certified B Corporations in the US, with 13 located in Massachusetts. The fair-trade fashion company Autonomie Project is one based in Boston, offering stylish clothing, footwear, and accessories that are sweatshop-free, use no animal products and locally-sourced materials, when possible. You can find their products at Greenward and Sudo Shoes

continues >

Conscientious Social Enterprises in the Boston Area (cont'd)

in Cambridge, as well as for sale online at their website, autonomieproject.com.

How you can help:

Delicious Haley House cookies, baked by members of the Transitional Employment Programs, are for sale on campus in On The Go, located on the lower level of the Curry Student Center. The Northeastern student group Northeastern Students for Giving (NS4G) started this as a result of the Strategic Philanthropy and Nonprofit Management, where students go through needs assessments and grant proposals, and eventually fund local programs.

If your student group is looking to have an event catered, make sure to give iCater a call at 617-892-7775. Supporting local social enterprises is a great way to engage with the greater Boston community.

Want to go for coffee and branch out from the Dunkin' Donuts that occupy every corner? Take a trip to the Equal Exchange Café, a coffeehouse and storefront for Equal Exchange products, located on Causeway Street right next in the North End next to the TD Bank North Garden.

Buy fashionable footwear and clothing from Autonomie Project, with two stores in Cambridge selling their wares! You may even catch them manning a booth at a local festival.

Northeastern even offers a "Social Entrepreneurship" major in the College of Business, as well as an interdisciplinary minor in "Global Social Entrepreneurship." In the exciting class

Social Entrepreneurship, you can learn how business can be a helpful tool in making a social impact worldwide.

Contact information:

Haley House:

haleyhouse.org

12 Dade Street, Dudley Square, Roxbury
15 minute walk from Ruggles station

Equal Exchange Café:

equalexchange.coop

226 Causeway Street

Closest T stop: North Station on the Green and Orange lines

Autonomie Project:

autonomieproject.com

Local Retail:

Greenward:

1764 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge

Closest T stop: Porter Square on the Red line

Sudo Shoes:

1771 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge

Closest T stop: Porter Square on the Red Line

Want to go for a bike ride?

No matter if you're new to Boston or you have been here a while, you have probably noticed people cruising around on bicycles. For sure, riding bikes in the city is quite popular and more importantly, a fun way to get around.

So why not try it out...

Where to get a bike?

I recommend heading over to Bikes Not Bombs (BNB) in Jamaica Plain. At the shop, knowledgeable staff can help you find a bike that perfectly fits your needs! They have a large selection of refurbished road bikes that you can ride right out of the shop. They have bikes with gears, along with single-speeds, and you can pick up a helmet, a lock, a bell, and anything else you'd need to get started. Overall, a great place for beginning Bostonian bicyclists. The shop is at 18 Bartlett Sq., Jamaica Plain.

If you know a thing or two (or more) about bikes, you can probably get a bike on Craigslist for less money. However, if a bike on Craigslist is cheaper than that the same model BNB, it will probably need some lovin', either in the form of repairs or replaced parts. This may be less expensive than buying a new or even refurbished bike but you need to have the know-how and access to tools.

If you buy a bike that needs work, head over to BNB where you can find a good selection of used parts. Additionally, BNB offers "Tool Time" every other Thursday from 7:30-9:00 pm, at 284 Amory St. in Jamaica Plain, open to all BNB members. You can make a beaten-up bike better in no time!

BNB is a great organization! They are a non-profit that runs programs for youth in the Boston area, international development, as well as adult education.



Starting to ride in the city

Hopping on a bike and riding down Huntington is a daunting task. It is best to start out riding on bike paths. The Southwest Corridor is a great path that runs right past Northeastern, you actually cross it every time you walk into International Village. If you head downtown, the path will take you through the South End, but if you go in the other direction it will take you to Jamaica Plain. This part of the path is generally calm and a great place to get comfortable riding a bike.

Once you feel comfortable try getting out on a road with bike lanes. Parts of Mass Ave and Columbus right near our campus have bike lanes. Centre St in JP has bike lanes and the drivers are generally friendly. For a great afternoon adventure, try taking the Southwest Corridor into Jamaica Plain and biking down Centre St. There are all kinds of great shops and restaurants. In no time at all, you will find yourself riding confidently (and carefully) anywhere you want to go.

Safety

Wear a helmet. It is practically the cool thing to do. When riding at night, it is required by law to have a red light on the back and a white light on the front. If you want to ride your bike more than once, lock it up with a quality U-lock; don't waste your money on cable locks. You can find these, along with lights and helmets at any bike shop. *Happy Riding!*

Save the Y!

A Neighborhood leader speaks out about Northeastern University's proposed plan to purchase part of the YMCA's property, demolish the building, and contract with Phoenix Property, a private dorm management company, to build and operate a new NU dorm.

A growing number of citizens are actively opposing Northeastern's plans to demolish the YMCA's landmark gymnasium. Neighbors, community activists, and Northeastern students have joined together to force the school to live up to its prior promises of discontinuing unwarranted community expansion.

Northeastern students may not realize this, but when a university expands into a neighborhood, large amounts of housing and other property are taken off the market, resulting in increased local housing costs. In addition, the character and quality of the neighborhood significantly changes, often in negative ways for local long-time residents, who will remain here long after transitory students graduate.

Currently, Northeastern University and the Phoenix Corporation are trying to purchase and demolish a historic part of the YMCA in order to build a new dorm. What they do not realize is that YMCA is not merely a gym. It's a community, a second home, and a haven to children, at-risk youth, the disabled, elderly, and many others. It is a unique space where mentorship of the young takes place, and demolishing one of the best facilities the YMCA offers threatens that. To paraphrase one of our members: "If the YMCA disappears, the community within its walls will disappear as well."

This is not the first time local universities have run roughshod over our communities. In 2008, Phoenix Properties sought to build another 34-story dorm (known as GrandMarc) on St. Botolph St. This privately run dorm would have been leased to neighborhood universities in chunks, and would have led to increased pollution, noise, and traffic problems for our neighborhoods. Community opposition helped prevent this development. We were aided by a student opposition which cited a 22% approval rating from students who have lived in Phoenix Properties dorms at other universities.

As concerned and engaged neighborhood citizens, we are demanding justice and an effective voice in this process. We stand firmly opposed to the backroom deals that have marked the YMCA demolition plan thus far, and we are determined to take back our power. We will not become sycophants of Northeastern, nor of City Hall, which has violated its own commitments to transparency during this process. And recognizing that nothing happens by itself, we the citizenry must and will act, and demand that institutions in our neighborhood act as servants of the people, and true stewards of our city.

Our message to the Northeastern administration (and elected officials) is that the community expects local preservation and social justice to be a part of public policy, honored by all our institutions, public and private. Building on existing university property is one thing. Continued expansion is something else.

The Dark History of the South End & Northeastern's Threat to Roxbury

When you think of the South End, I am sure images of brownstone buildings, jazz clubs, and beautiful plazas are the vision you see of this well-known area. This area forms part of Northeastern's campus, and is a place with a rich diversity of cultures, art and a strong LGBT community. The South End has gone from being a marshland in the 1800's, an area of architectural wealth in the late 1800's, to an area with a "darkened period of crime" in the 1960's. And officially, this dark period of crisis was resolved with the realization by the area's many middle class and professional residents of the South End's historic architectural wealth...

This story, although true for the most part, is also missing a huge chunk of historic information, that only residents of the South End in the 60's carry around with them. The information I provide in this article is based on informal interviews with local residents and previous Northeastern alumni who were living on Columbus Avenue during the 60's.

Residents will tell you what the history books leave out: that "revitalization project" is another term for unlawful and forced evictions, realtor steering, racial segregation, and murder.

To fully explain the gap in history missing, one must first explain the so-called "darkened period of crime." Many would say that the decline of the South End in the 1960's was due to previous owners moving out of the buildings and turning previously owned residences into rental apartments and leased spaces. This caused property values to decrease and crime rates to increase. But the truth is that most of this emigration out of the area was due to what is termed "white flight", a situation where middle to upper class white Americans desert an area when African Americans begin residing in the area. This is exactly what happened during this time. As more African American residents started to buy up real estate in the South End, more white Americans piled out. As a result, the apartments became unoccupied or leased to other tenants which then started the period of neglect of the South End. Landlords of the tenants did not feel obligated to maintain the buildings, to keep up the front-facing gardens, or repair any wear on the brownstone buildings. As we all know, once an area of a city becomes neglected, it is only a matter of time before crime creeps in to fill the void. And sure enough, in the 1960's the South End entered into the "darkened period of crime."

Now you might be asking, how did an area that was laden with crime, an area that at once deemed as one of the most dangerous areas in Boston, become the affluent community that we know it as today? I am sure many would like to

continues >

The Dark History of the South End (cont'd)

believe that it was all done legitimately, and the process deserves a title like the "revitalization of the South End." Unfortunately, the previous residents will tell you what the history books leave out: that "revitalization" is another term for unlawful and forced evictions, realtor steering, racial segregation, and in some cases outright murder.

Realtor Steering: is illegal in this country but still heavily practiced. This is when a realtor will direct certain families and people either into or away from certain neighborhoods, which then results in residential segregation based on race, finances, age, sexual orientation, living habits, and personal choices.

You see, once realtors, landlords, and business owners saw how much historic architectural wealth had been preserved in this area, they quickly saw a great investment opportunity. Realtors then racially steered potential incoming residents. Basically, if you did not look like "this kind of family" or did not have "this much money" then you were deemed "not a good fit for this community." Business owners took part by buying up land and paying landlords for their property, which then caused many landlords to discontinue leases and evict the tenants that occupied the buildings.

Landlords, by far, were the worse of the two. It was landlords who would coerce, manipulate, and threaten tenants into giving up their leases. Landlords refused to rent their apartments to particular candidates who did not meet the correct racial qualifications. And finally, if forced evictions and threats did not work, then

Landlord Filtering: This is a term denoting when a landlord "filters" out certain tenants. This is actually legal because it is part of a landlord's job to do this for unpleasant tenant applicants. However, it is unethical (and illegal) to use racial prejudices and stereotypes in this process, which was one of the driving factors in the events presented in this article.

there was forcefully burning the residents out. In an interview, a Northeastern alum and former South End resident recalled an instance during the 1960s when he was walking to his car parked down Columbus Avenue, just past Massachusetts Avenue, and saw a person (later discovered to be the landlord by the local papers) throw a Molotov cocktail through an apartment building window. The whole building quickly burst in flames. There was an African American mother and infant caught on the 3rd floor of that building, and the mother had to jump with her infant on top of her from the window.

This story might sound a little outlandish, but the reality is that you can hear more about this type of aggression if you just dig further into the history of the South End. When recapping the 60's in the South End, local representative Bryon Rushing, historian and resident of the South End in the 60's, was quoted in the Boston Globe as saying that there was unwelcomed urban renewal, also known as "slum clearance," during the time. And if you just ask previous residents who lived in the South End in the 60's you will generally get the same response. This dark period of crime was also followed by

a dark period of unlawful and inhumane revitalization projects in the South End, and from there became the area we know it as today.

All goes to show that a community which for 40 years, was steered, pushed, and coerced out of their neighborhoods into the surrounding areas by big business may with good reason be wary and unwelcoming of new forms of big business. Consider Northeastern University and its continuing quest for better college rankings: As many of you know, Northeastern has been expanding its on-campus housing, most recently with the building of International Village (Parcel 18), a 22 story residence hall with over 1200 upper class students residing in it since its opening in the Fall of 2009. As Northeastern further expands into neighborhoods like Roxbury, there still

Parcel 18: In the context of real estate a parcel is a large plot of land. Parcel 18 encompasses the Whittier Street Health Center and the affordable housing community (Whittier Street Apartments). Student plans to bring a farmer's market to the area have recently come to fruition

seems to be a growing disconnect between the local community and the academic community. In fact, some residents of the local neighborhood have openly called Northeastern University a huge threat to the Roxbury community.

If you can imagine a community that has already dealt with one era of steering and the forceful uptake of land and buildings for "revitalization," you can understand the reaction to things like the construction of International Village. In a conversation with a local Roxbury resident at a Boston Public Health REACH meeting, she

described the placement of International Village as symbolic of "Northeastern putting their butt to the community." She justified the claim by pointing out that there are no entrances to the building facing Tremont Street, which overlooks the Roxbury community.

Boston Public Health Commission REACH: The 200-member coalition has met monthly for ten years. The coalition has earned an outstanding reputation in the local and public health community for its work in several areas, including raising awareness of racial and ethnic health disparities, educating the public about health issues that affect the Black community in Boston, and for its credible partnerships with community members, policymakers, faith-based leaders, and academic institutions. The coalition includes community groups, health care providers, business and faith leaders, and academic partners.

As we continue as an academic community to try and increase local community engagement, we must look at the strong resistance by some of the residents with a lens of understanding. As outsiders trying to integrate, we must take into consideration the views of the wider neighborhood. For if our goal is truly serving and improving the local community, we must listen to the voices of that community, even when their answer might negatively affect the plans of our academic institution.

This article is provided by the Health Disparities Student Collaborative (HDSC), a group of students committed to building partnerships between schools, local organizations and communities in Boston aimed at addressing local health disparities. Join us on facebook!

Unions: the folks that brought you the weekend

Have you ever seen this bumper sticker and thought, well yes, one hundred years ago, unions fought for the weekend, and the 40 hour work week, and child labor laws, and overtime pay. But now these things are protected by law -- which means there's no need to fight for them anymore! Or, have you heard this one? Unions are corrupt, bloated, and undemocratic. Union bosses are corrupt and greedy.

Unions have a bad rep, and its not completely undeserved. There have been high-profile cases of corruption. Unions are very bureaucratic. Union bosses do tend to be very wealthy. And yes, the rights that union members fought and died for (don't believe me? keep reading) are now codified as federal laws.

That doesn't mean we can stop fighting back against corporate greed and misbehavior. For one, these companies are not playing nice. They break the rules all the time, and get away with it. They are dodging taxes, discriminating in hiring and promotions, paying poverty wages, providing unsafe working environments, busting up unions, and driving our economy into the dirt. And all the while, corporations' profits are growing and working peoples' real wages are decreasing.

These are huge problems, and I'm not trying to say that unions are the answer for all of them. But the truth is that unions are the most effective structure we have to empower workers and raise standards across the board.

In this country, we have people working minimum wage jobs at places like Walmart, and the fact is that these jobs do not provide for families' basic needs. While paying their employees poverty-level wages, these same companies make millions (or billions) in profits each year for their CEOs and shareholders. If a company like Walmart was unionized, they could provide good jobs that can support a family.

Even on our own campus, companies like Chartwells pay people about \$10 per hour, higher than the minimum wage but still well below a living wage. So, if a Chartwells associate at Northeastern, earning less than \$20,000 a year, relies on government assistance to get by (as many of them surely do), our taxes and tuition payments are essentially subsidizing Chartwells' shitty wages. These companies can afford to pay their workers more, and why the hell shouldn't they?

There are lots of great films and books about the labor movement. Here are a few I like:

WATCH:



Harlan County USA a documentary about the miners' strike in the 1970s in Kentucky. The company hired gunmen who shot at the striking miners.

Made in L.A. about the struggle by badass immigrant women working in Forever 21's Los Angeles sweatshops to receive dignified pay for their work



Occupation back in 2001, a group of Harvard students affiliated with United Students Against Sweatshops occupied the university president's office for 21 days as part of a massive living wage campaign. They won!

READ:

A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn

CONTACT:

Progressive Student Alliance (neu.psa@gmail.com) - we are Northeastern students working to support campus workers, local labor issues, and international labor struggles.

Northeastern Pensions Support Violations of International Law and Human Rights Abuses

The faculty and staff of our university are supposed to embody principles considered fundamental to our role as global citizens and "positive forces of change". Yet, given the lack of transparency, both within our own college and throughout the wider financial sector as a whole, how can we be sure that our university's financial investments reflect these principles?

Because Northeastern does not make investment information accessible to the public there are few ways to know what our university really invests in. However, one way we can assess the integrity of our investments is by examining how the pension funds of university employees are managed.

The majority of pension funds at Northeastern University are managed by the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), one of the largest retirement fund managers in the world and "a recognized leader in the growing ranks of socially responsible investors".¹ However, further research reveals that TIAA-CREF maintains a whitewashed image: disguising their investments as socially responsible while simultaneously supporting companies who blatantly violate international law and universal principles of human rights. The most notable examples of this, and the subject of this article, are those companies profiting from the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem, along with its' multi-tiered system of Apartheid used to enforce Israeli domination over the Palestinian people.

In Spring 2010 Jewish Voice For Peace (JVP), a "US-based grassroots organization dedicated to promoting full equality, democracy and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians," launched their "TIAA-CREF: Divest from the Israeli Occupation" campaign.² The campaign heeds the 2005 call from Palestinian civil society for the world to engage in broad Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. These nonviolent tactics put economic and political pressure on the Israeli state to end its occupation of Palestine and Apartheid rule. The tactics of BDS have been at the heart of historical victories for social justice such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the United Farm Workers grape boycott, and most notably the BDS movement against South Africa. It is from these movements, especially the latter which defeated the system of Apartheid in South Africa, that Palestinians gained the inspiration to initiate a global BDS movement against Israel. The goals of this movement are: equality for all Palestinian and Arab citizens within Israel; ending the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem; and the enforcement of the legal, and universally recognized Right of Return for all Palestinian refugees. As part of the global BDS campaign, JVP's campaign demands that TIAA-CREF divest from five companies operating in the occupied territories who are complicit in the "most significant and egregious" violations of international law and human rights.³ Amnesty International and Human



Rights Watch have condemned many of these violations,^{4,5} and some legally amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁶ The companies targeted in this campaign are:

CATERPILLAR

Profits from supplying armor-plated and weaponized bulldozers used for demolishing Palestinian homes and orchards. These bulldozers are also used to construct segregated settlements for Jewish Israelis only atop ethnically cleansed Palestinian land. In addition, Caterpillar equipment is used to construct the Apartheid Wall which was ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004. A CAT bulldozer was also used to murder Rachel Corrie, a 24 year old non-violent peace activist from Olympia, Washington while she was protesting an illegal home demolition.⁷

NORTHOP GRUMMAN

Profits from supplying the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) with weapons and military technology used in South Lebanon operations from 1995-2006, the 2008-2009 assault on Gaza, the 2010 Flotilla attack, and numerous other campaigns as well. These operations alone have killed thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians.⁸

VEOLIA

Profits from the construction and expansion of illegal Jewish-only settlements by operating settlement landfills, exploiting Palestinian natural resources to serve the settlements, and by contracting for the future operation of an illegal light rail system connecting these settlements with Jerusalem.⁹ Veolia also operates segregated bus services, some by gender, others by ethnicity.¹⁰

MOTOROLA

Profits from communications systems used by the IDF and West Bank settlers. Motorola systems are also used around military checkpoints, military camps, the Apartheid Wall, and around illegal Israeli settlements.¹¹

ELBIT

Profits by supplying drones used for targeted killings and in the 2010 Flotilla attack, along with surveillance systems for the Apartheid Wall and unmanned vehicles used to patrol it.¹²

When JVP launched the TIAA-CREF campaign and introduced their initial petition over a year ago it had 280 endorsements. Since then, JVP has gathered 20,000 endorsements and gained support from prominent international figures such as Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who stated:

"In South Africa we understood that true peace could be built only on the basis of justice and an unwavering commitment to universal rights for all humans...regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, national origin, or any other identity attribute. I encourage TIAA-CREF, whose slogan is 'for the greater good,' to heed the call for divestment, to refuse to profit from

continues >

oppression of a people, and thus to stand on the side of what is right: a safe, secure and peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis".¹³

Boston's JVP chapter collected almost half of those original signatures which include faculty members from Berklee College of Music, Boston College, Brandeis, Harvard, Lesley, MIT, Northeastern, Simmons, Tufts, UMass Boston, and Wellesley.¹⁴ Students and faculty at Harvard, Simmons, UMass Boston, and Wellesley will be launching the TIAA-CREF Divest from the Israeli Occupation campaign on their campuses this fall.

In response to the Palestinian civil societies' call for BDS and in solidarity with JVP and campuses across Boston, Students for Justice in Palestine has brought the TIAA-CREF: Divest from the Israeli Occupation Campaign to Northeastern University. The campaign aims to increase both awareness among academics and the pressure exerted on TIAA-CREF to change its investment policies. Furthermore, we are joining JVP in demanding that TIAA-CREF divest from companies that: directly profit from or contribute to the Israeli occupation of

the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. This includes companies that provide products or services that contribute to the construction and maintenance of the illegal Israeli settlements and the Apartheid Wall, along with products or services that contribute to or enable violent acts that target civilians. We also demand that TIAA-CREF establish investment criteria to exclude any such companies in the future.¹⁵

We, as socially responsible members of the Northeastern community, supporters of international law, human rights advocates, and concerned citizens of the world, must stand up for justice and equality. We can do this by articulating the aforementioned demands, educating the Northeastern community, signing the petition at http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/TIAA-CREF_Divest, and presenting our professors with letters of appeal. The time when Northeastern University employees can unknowingly support violations of international law and human rights is coming to an end. We must tell TIAA-CREF: Divest from the Israeli Occupation!

Students for Justice in Palestine has adopted this campaign as a part of a broader Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign being launched this year. To receive a draft of our letter of appeal to professors and/or find out more about our campaigns, go to the Northeastern University Students for Justice in Palestine facebook page.

(For footnotes visit:
www.northeasternsjp.org)



Why is Northeastern Like This? (And why Tuition is Too Damn High!)

From March to May of 2011, the Northeastern chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society conducted a poll of the undergraduate students. This survey, (aptly named) What Sucks @ NU asked students to list their major concerns and issues at their school, and had space at the bottom for student comments.

Contrary to expectations, everyday annoyances, like printer shortages and offices not being open, ranked much lower than expected. What students were truly concerned about were much bigger and broader: The lack of community, excessive executive pay, the lack of a student voice, and above all, a skyrocketing tuition, and the implications for student debt. Even more revealing were the student comments: tales of administration ineptitude, loneliness, labor rights violations, and even student homelessness. In the eyes of the students, there was something fundamentally wrong with this school, the fact that it had become too expensive, alienating, and unaffordable...

The philosopher Thomas Kuhn once wrote that every paradigm, every way we look at the world, has anomalies - phenomena that don't fit the dominant explanation for how things should work. And in today's world, where we're told education is crucial, the spiraling cost of college is one such anomaly. We're urged to go to university, yet find ourselves going broke to pay for it. We're told "capitalism works," capitalism pushes students into unmanageable debt. And while we're told that college will lead to security, we find one quarter of our age cohort unemployed, including many graduates.

It is in realizing that college is unaffordable that many discover (sometimes for the first time) just how much the status quo falls short. Yet if we ask ourselves why, we can discover something better: an explanation for why things are the way they are. From that, we can hopefully answer a more important question: Where should we go from here?

THE ONCE AND FUTURE COLLEGE

It was the early 1990's, and NU was on the verge of bankruptcy. Successful local activism had led to the Orange Line's rerouting through Southwest Corridor Park, nixing earlier plans for an interstate. This spelled economic disaster for NU, which at the time was a large commuter school. For while the administration had staked the school's future and reputation on becoming the largest commuter school in the country, the Orange Line cost Northeastern its biggest potential asset: easy access from the highway. Suddenly Northeastern was no longer a promising, reachable, commuter school, but rather a tangled, overly large institution, somewhat inaccessible by car. The result: Within a few years of the Orange Line's opening, the school's finances had come to a head.

At this point, the NU administration made a decision: Northeastern would shed its commuter school past. It would downsize, become a residential college, and expand into neighboring communities to build new dorms. A much greater emphasis would be put on things like landscaping and advertising, all to boost the school's image. These measures all meant an astronomical increase in tuition costs (over the objections of alumni), the consequences of which financially strapped students may feel for a long time to come.

The administration could have chosen differently. They could have adopted a different economic model, and there was even talk of Northeastern becoming a public university. As we'll see later, there were and still are alternative ways to run a university, virtually all of which would have made Northeastern cheaper. But these possibilities were ignored as NU was turned into yet another \$40K+ prestige-obsessed college. And one has to ask the question: why?

To understand this choice, one has to put the decision in context. For our administration's choice was part of a much broader shift

in American higher-ed, with expensive repercussions we're still dealing with today.

THE PRESTIGE ARMS RACE, & ITS CAUSES

From the 80's on, young adults faced a very different economy than their protesting-predecessors. Thanks to the broader economic changes, the manufacturing base was in the process of moving overseas. Well-paying jobs were far less available, and the remaining decent jobs required a college education (or at least a college degree; Derber, Schwartz, and Magrass 1990:79-139). On an economy-wide scale, this led to increased demand for higher education, which (given Reagan's hatred for most-things government), was not matched with increased education funding. Higher demand plus a flat supply equaled higher prices.

Why the economic change happened is a long story, (involving falling profits, oil shocks, and the US deficits from Vietnam destabilizing the monetary system...check out David McNally's book *Global Slump* for details), but the short version is this: In the 1970's, the rising tide of international prosperity that had lasted since the end of World War Two came to an end. Two major recessions in the 70's caused significant economic upheaval, and much like the 30's or today, political upheaval soon followed. But unlike the Depression, it was political right who benefited this time, as it was the liberal New Deal policies from before that seemed ineffective.

Reagan's conservative "revolution" almost immediately left its mark: Unions were attacked to keep wages low. Outsourcing was encouraged to keep profits up. Public services were privatized and taxes were cut sharply. And this was not simply an American phenomenon; "neoliberalism" (as this came to be known) happened across the developed world. It was a global economic restructuring, which responded to the economic crises of the 70's by attacking the gains workers had made since the Depression and offshoring on a mass scale (McNally 2009). And while none of this did much good for working people (unemployment rose and wages haven't gone up since 1973), profit rates doubled from

1983-1997. For those who in power, that was what mattered (McNally 2011:83-86).

The changing political climate soon affected higher-ed as well. In 1983, Reagan's Department of Education released its report, *A Nation at Risk*. The American education system (it declared) was drowning in a "rising tide of mediocrity." Whether this was true or not is a matter of debate, but the report's effects were not. As education researcher Alexandra Robbins described, "Within a year, 44 states had increased graduation requirements, and 27 lengthened the school day," and that was just for K-12. On the collegiate level, that report marked the rise of what was called "an Overachiever frenzy," where both students and universities began focusing more on a college's prestige far more than they ever had before (Robbins 2007:34-38). The result of this has been an intercollegiate arms race for prestige. And it's this arms race that has pushed up the price of college at over four times the rate of inflation.

To understand why, consider one effect of increasing demand for college. With so many people applying to college, and the "smartest," richest, "highest value" students being a smaller chunk of the total, university administrators had to figure out how to differentiate their college from the rest; how to make their college seem like "the best" for "the best" students (Perry 2009). But in education, this type of categorizing is remarkably hard to do. Unlike other pursuits (like research), it's much harder to measure in education what "the best" even means.

THE COLLEGE RANKINGS SCAM

Because of this difficulty, when *US News & World Report* published its first college rankings in 1983, this bid to sell magazines soon caught on. Within five years, what started as an informal survey of college presidents' opinions of other schools became a complex ranking algorithm, and soon became gospel for many parents and college administrators (Robbins 2007:185-194). This ranking system and the others it inspired seemed to provide that all-important "feedback," a way for colleges to know that they're doing

the right thing, and for students to select the "best" colleges. It was also a great way to sell magazines (Curtis 2007:64-66).

The only problem is that these rankings don't look at anything remotely meaningful to education quality. They don't focus on academic caliber or the rigor of the curriculum, and they most certainly don't look at how students feel about their campus. In fact, according to the magazine *Washington Monthly*, in 1988 when *US News & World Report's* first algorithm ranked a non-Ivy League school as the nation's best, the statistician who wrote the algorithm was fired. Mel Elfin, the editor responsible "seems to have known that the only believable [read marketable] methodology would be one that confirmed the prejudices of the meritocracy." From that point forward, the rankings have been rigged such that Harvard, Yale, and Princeton almost always come out on top.

While college rankings don't look at quality, they do measure non-educational factors

What If US News & World Report Ranked Spouses?

Let's say *US News* ranked potential spouses instead of schools. The equivalent ranking for a [spouse] would be based on what [her/his] friends thought of her looks on a scale of one to five, the length of previous relationships (but only over the last year, because this is an annual ranking), the average looks of previous girlfriends/boyfriends, the average salary of those girlfriends/boyfriends, the number of previous suitors who wanted [your spouse] back this year, the size of her/his salary, and the frequency with which her/his parents give her/him pocket change. A large chunk of the potential spouse's ranking would be based on his/her selectivity: The more likely he/she is to like you, the worse his/her rank. There would be no analysis of personality, intelligence, kindness, or humor, not to mention whether you might get along. Forget his/her interests, passions, and tastes. Will he/she love you, care for you, and make you happy? Unimportant."

—Alexandra Robbins, "The Overachievers"

deeply biased towards expensive, richer schools. Factors like a low acceptance rate, alumni donations, and the university's reputation — not reputation in the eyes of its students, but in the eyes of other college presidents. It would be like deciding which football teams made the playoffs by asking every other team's head coach.

What the rankings did do was systematically skew American higher education, biasing higher rankings towards wealthier schools, and biasing wealthier schools towards wealthier students. Schools would shell out massive sums for state-of-the-art dorms, expensive landscaping, and prestigious research institutions. All of this would boost the universities' image and reputation, and all of this would (it was hoped) convince a new generation of top high school seniors to choose one school over another.

But in the end, the only results were drastically increased costs. It also meant an explosion of university debt, so schools today spend less of their money on actual teaching (only 35-44% on average; Perry 2009). And the quest for a larger endowment to pay off all of this ends up favoring wealthier students. For students from upper class backgrounds are typically rich enough to afford tuition, wealthy enough to forgo financial aid, affluent enough to afford alumni donations, and well-adjusted enough to not need expensive remediation. For the rest of us on the other hand, the result is simply exploding student debt. And unfortunately, *US News & World Report* rewards this behavior. Because higher college rankings are positively correlated with college wealth (Rojstaczer 2001).

Over the last two decades, the result of this pro-wealthy bias has been catastrophic. The average cost of a four-year private university is now over \$33,000. Had college costs risen simply at the rate of inflation, tuition costs would be less than a third of that! (College Board 2010). And this is on top of widespread cuts to public universities and community colleges. If things continue at this rate, if the 4% annual increase costs over the last year continues unabated, one year at Northeastern

will cost over \$165,000, by the time our children reach college age 30 years from now. That simply won't be affordable.

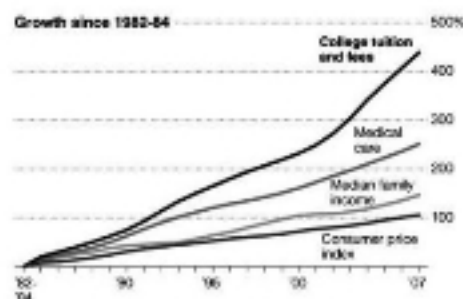
THE TUITION IS TOO DAMN HIGH

Since NU decided to transform itself in the early 1990's, it has fully and openly engaged in the arms race for prestige (Bombardieri and Sacchetti 2006). It has prioritized college rankings above all else, and in the process has made this school alienating, unequal, and far too expensive. And it is this fundamental dynamic that has created the many undesirable features that currently mark NU, as we submit the facts to a candid world:

Northeastern University has spent inordinate sums on advertising, landscaping, and expensive new dorms, all increasing the price of college. Most of these dorms are still too expensive for most students to live in. Large portions of students are thus forced to migrate off campus, making community harder to find, and straining relationships with surrounding neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, the ones who do stay on campus soon discover that the dorms (after freshman year) are often isolating and atomizing. Neighbors rarely know each other, and almost never talk. And rather than run the dorms in a way that boosts community (perhaps with a Harvard-style house system), they're run with the express goal of preserving the school's image. Hence, the harshness of the OSSCR "justice system," where students are punished for minor infractions in an atmosphere of "guilty until proven innocent." Creativity and dorm life, even painting a wall something other than white, gets deliberately stifled.

Because Northeastern has focused on image over substance, it hasn't increased its offices' capabilities as necessary with the shift to being a residential school. Hence the registrar, housing, the health center, and advisors remain vastly overworked. Because they cannot adequately deal with the student body's needs, the entire university has become stiflingly bureaucratic. And since the focus



on improving rankings requires more money than can be raised through tuition hikes, Joseph Aoun was made university president, mainly based on his supposed fundraising abilities at USC (Bombardieri and Sacchetti 2006). He now gets paid over \$900,000 per year, and lives in an \$8.9 million mansion. Meanwhile, tuition keeps going up, while the university debt has climbed to \$800 million on Aoun's watch, increasing pressure further for more tuition hikes.

All of this alienates a large portion of students, who see administration hypocrisy for what it is (Falik 2010). And even more students (two-thirds in the What Sucks poll) get angry because these major decisions about our school are made without student control. Our opinions are either never sought or completely ignored. The lack of student voice further decreases community, further decreases donations from alienated alumni, and further increases the pressure to drive tuition higher (The Huntington News 2011). And thus the downward spiral continues...

Consider the fact that Northeastern University topped the nation in applicants last year. The much-vaunted administration wisdom says this "proves" Northeastern is a quality school. But does it? What if the increases in applications had less to do with quality, and more to do with a drastic increase in advertising? What if the administration boosted its recruitment efforts, in order to get more applicants, so that it could intentionally reject these applicants, so that the school would appear more selective, and thus boost its prestige, given that college rankings judge lower acceptance rates as good? Given the nature of this school, not only

is this alternative possible - it's likely! After all, this is the school that ignored the SAT results of its international and remedial students (15-20% of its students), all in order to boost its test score average (Robbins 2007:191).

To top this it all off, college rankings don't even matter. In 1999, economists Alan Krueger and Stacy Dale concluded after a 20-year study that rankings really don't make a difference in post-graduation success. What matters is the aptitude of the students, not the renown of their alma mater (Robbins 2007:187; Dale and Krueger 2002). But because we've been told otherwise for so long, many don't realize that rankings are a lie.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY...FOR WHAT?

Capitalism has always had an issue with universal education. Hannah More, the philanthropist who opened schools for the poor in the 1800's, put it succinctly: She would teach her students how to read, but not how to write. The poor would learn "piety" and "deference," but not learn enough to question the wider system.

Unfortunately, More's philosophy prevails, as there are still those who would fear a well-educated population. We've thus ended up with a tiered education system: A relatively small number get taught creativity and a wider love for learning; a somewhat larger group get taught technical skills to fill certain specialties; and the overwhelming majority gets taught barely anything at all, enough to work a dead-end job obediently, and not much else. The first group gets taught how to think critically; the latter group ends up associating school with boredom, alienation, and rote memorizing. They end up with a hatred of learning, at least the way schools define it (Derber et al. 1990:85-88).

Sooner or later, this becomes a problem. Critical thinking and intelligence are inseparable, and preventing one usually ends up hurting the other. A fifth of America is now functionally illiterate, and a tenth can't find America on a map (WV Department of Education 1998; Trivedi 2002). And unfortunately, the education reforms following Reagan's report have only

made this worse. For instead of focusing on student needs and the love of learning, the recent changes to US education have catered to the needs of employers, focusing on "economic competitiveness" instead. On a broad scale, a profit making system sees education as a means to an end, not something innately useful. Hence the rush for schools to prove their "value-added," and the focus on college rankings which supposedly measure that. But the only "value" that's been measured is how much colleges have driven up costs to vainly imitate Ivy League gloss. This, not affordability, is what the previous generation of (mostly) upper-class administrators considered "valuable" in education. And since the 80's didn't see any student movement on the scale of the 1960's, the arms race of extravagance continues unabated...

Until now, that is. Push young people into debt and a 25% unemployment rate, and they'll wake up! In the last decade, several groups nationwide have formed or reformed to fight for affordable education. With college debt as much an issue for us as the draft was for our parents, more and more students are asking fundamental questions about our education system, like what do we want out of it? And how should we go about getting it?

THE CALL FOR A STUDENT UNION

What do we want out of an education system? Given the state of America's schools, that's not the hardest thing to figure out: we want an education system that teaches critical thinking and the love of learning to all its students, not simply to some. And by critical thinking, we mean a willingness to question all assumptions, regardless of the elites that hold them dear. On top of this, the system we envision would help all students discover and choose their passion, without the self-fulfilling prophecies that one group is pre-destined for mental labor, and another group granted creativity and empowerment. And regardless of whether students chose a liberal arts education or some other vocational training, education must be affordable for all.

As for NU, if the What Sucks survey is any indication, students want above all an

affordable and democratic education. We want a voice and meaningful student power. We're tired of our president living in a mansion while the rest of us face tuition hikes. We're tired of college rankings trumping student needs, and tired of the alienation and lack of community. We shouldn't have to go bankrupt to go here. Now the question is how to make that happen?

The short answer is that we have to ORGANIZE! Join groups fighting for a tuition freeze! Join groups fighting for a student voice on campus! In most industrialized countries, including Canada, France, and the UK, they have student unions, which are organized like labor unions. The unions there have won collective bargaining rights over tuition, room and board, and major university decisions. Over there, these student unions are a huge reason why tuition has stayed so ridiculously low — because governments know that if they try to make education unaffordable, millions will hit the streets and stop them. Only if we get that type of organization, only if we force our voices to be heard, can we change our university's direction.

Remember: had it not been for the student organizing of the 60's, we'd still be getting drafted, the voting age would be 21, and we very likely wouldn't even have a student government (such as it is). We've done it before, and we can do it again.

SHORT TERM & LONG TERM ALTERNATIVES

Once students form a student union, the questions will rise as to what the new Northeastern would look like. How would it function economically, and how would it be governed politically? From a governance standpoint, the students have demanded a greater voice on campus, and we could implement participatory democracy in several ways. For starters, we could expand, strengthen, and simplify the university referendum process, and increase the policies subject to them. We could demand, via student referendum, that bloated executive pay gets cut, and tuition gets frozen. We could institute participatory budgeting of university finances, allowing students to collectively determine how much of our collective tuition to spend on landscaping,

how much for teaching, and so forth. We could require student approval (via referendum) before the school builds any more expensive, tuition-increasing dorms. And we could even resolve the NU Shuffle perhaps with what Ancient Athens did: selecting students by lot to various juries or committees who would govern the administration of our school. Other colleges have successfully done this.

Given multiple ways a student voice could be implemented, we can at least begin with a movement asking how students want to see democracy on campus. NUSDS is hoping to spearhead this within the upcoming semester, but it will take the participation of thousands of students to be successful.

But even then, a tuition freeze is a short-term fix. And if we want a long-term cure rather than a band-aid for college costs, we may want to consider alternative economic models for running a school. Models that aren't based on unsustainable student debt.

One possibility is that NU becomes a public university, something that was considered in the early 1990's. The costs of higher education become partially subsidized by tax dollars, and the school becomes cheaper. And if it wasn't for the state's current budget problems, Northeastern could easily become a crown jewel of Massachusetts' higher-ed.

One other possibility is the "work college" model, currently implemented at a small number of schools across the country. At Berea College for example, every student automatically gets a full tuition scholarship, in return for which every student is required to work somewhere on campus. Essentially, it's like every student doing work-study 10 hours a week, and of course students can choose whichever work suits their preference. The school benefits with lower labor costs, and the students benefit both with their scholarship, and from earning extra money on the side.

Additionally, the work college model has the added benefit that since students work in almost every office of the school, campus democracy becomes far easier to implement.

And since alumni are typically quite grateful for the affordability a work college offers, they tend to be very generous with donations. The endowment stays high, the scholarships continue, and affordable education becomes available for the next generation.

Northeastern might not be able to implement either model overnight. But they are viable long-term goals. And if the school commits itself to the long-term goal of affordability, cuts bloated executive pay and expensive expansion projects, they could at least start down the right path. If the students so desire, it could gradually introduce a work program in order to reduce costs, and/or begin the process to become a public institution. With its new mantra of affordable, accessible education, the school could engage in a multi-year funding appeal to build up the funding necessary for the full scholarships. This step would truly be a massive undertaking, and would probably take several years. But the new mission of affordable education would probably find more willing donors than the current narcissism over rankings.

None of this would be easy, and all of this would take planning and very competent execution. But it's by no means impossible, and if successful, the benefits would be massive: an affordable Northeastern for generations to come. No more \$150,000 tuition by the time our children are grown, no more (or at least less) student debt either. And given skyrocketing tuition, it's only a matter of time before people start demanding this of universities across the country.

A FINAL CALL TO ACTION

Sooner or later, the current unsustainable economic model for higher education will collapse. Tuition can't keep rising like this forever. And student debt, which will top a trillion dollars in less than a year, can't keep growing. Our generation simply doesn't have a trillion dollars to pay back, and a debt that can't be paid back won't be. The defaults have already started; sooner or later, the SLABS (Student-Loan Asset Backed Securities) will end up collapsing just like mortgage-backed securities and credit default swaps.

The result will likely be another stock market slump, another avalanche of layoffs, and the recession going from bad to worse. And if the unemployment rate for our age group is already 25% without those shocks, can you imagine what will happen if it gets worse (Norris 2011; Harris 2011)?

Given the sheer size of the problems, the impulse to do nothing is understandable; to retreat into the world of quick distraction, trying to convince ourselves that everything is alright when it isn't. But if we do nothing, higher education will simply become more expensive, to the point that it won't be affordable for our own children. Do nothing, and the jobs situation won't improve, wages won't go up, and college will return to what it was in the 1800's — a place solely for the elite.

But if we join together and fight, we'll be able to accomplish things we'd never have thought possible on our own. And the bright side is, we've done this before! In the 1960's, ending the draft and the Vietnam War seemed impossible, but the student movement did it! Lowering the voting age seemed impossible, but the student movement did it! And today, students across the country have won tuition freezes and kicked out corrupt university presidents. If they can do it, so can we!

We have the power to fight for the direction of American higher education. If we do nothing, the bubbles will eventually burst. The political right will blame it (as they typically do) on the poor and working class. They'll cut funding for college even further, and the situation will be made even worse. But if we fight, we can show the world an alternative and prove that it is possible — Empowering and accessible education for all!

Challenge the status quo. Organize. Become a leader. Demand a Student Debt Jubilee. Fight for a Student Union. Affordable education is our right — let's make it a reality!

BECAUSE WHEN WE FIGHT, WE WIN. STUDENT UNION POWER!

For footnotes: nudisorientation.blogspot.com

CONCLUSION

"Absolutely Boston, Totally Northeastern" —NU promotional YouTube video

Northeastern University and Boston. The school loves to play up the fact that it lies in the heart of this bustling city. And why shouldn't it? The city oozes with history and continues to show a revolutionary spirit. Its appeal is global, and students from all around the world come to learn, play, and live in this city. And while I'm a transplant from Los Angeles (cue the "BEAT LA! BEAT LA!" chant), I will always consider Boston as one of my homes.

So I think it's important that we make ourselves aware of what's going on in our home. No matter how long we spend here, be it two, four, or five years, we cannot deny the fact that, at least for now, we are residents of Boston. Boston, much like any other city, is not perfect.

The Charles River, the Prudential Center, Faneuil Hall, Cambridge...these are the places we are told make up Boston. We are told that we can shop along the sidewalks of Newbury Street. We are told that we can take in the culture at the Museum of Fine Arts. And we are told we can feel safe in the confines of our bubble bordered by Huntington and Columbus Ave.

But Boston is not just characterized by the pretty landmarks a marketing team decided to emphasize. Boston is not just the small chunk of land that has been deemed safe to venture just because of NUPD's presence. And Boston is not just a college town built to fulfill the needs of its students.

Boston is something far bigger than the confines of Northeastern University. Boston is a city, and this campus but one part.

There is another Boston, a Boston that exists past the Davenport and International Village. There's a Boston that exists past where the rail lines of the MBTA stop, and there's a Boston that is not advertised as a selling point of going to Northeastern University.

It's a Boston that we are told are unsafe to venture into. It's a Boston where the underprivileged live not far from the elites who inhabit on Beacon Hill. It's a Boston where racial tensions are present, and a Boston facing the effects of urban decay and an ongoing economic crisis. These are the broken parts of Boston, not unlike the broken parts of any other large city.

It's a Boston that we are not told about. And this Boston is very real.

As residents of this city, is it not our business to be aware of these issues?

This Dis-Orientation Guide serves as a reminder of the issues that we are not made aware of. Issues that we, even as temporary Bostonians, should care about. This guide is your opportunity to see a Boston very different from the ones that we have been sold on. It is your opportunity to see this Boston and act to make a difference.

Because Boston's issues are Northeastern's too. If we truly are a campus that is "Absolutely Boston, Totally Northeastern", we must act like it. Our very presence in Boston has an impact on this city, and it is up to us to make that impact a positive one.

We need to live up to the resident status that we all enjoy here. After all, the citizens of Boston let us learn, play, and live here. Being here thus means being a part of the greater Boston community.

Living here means acting like this is your home.

When I think of going back home, I think of how I'm going to improve it when I get back. But until then, Boston is my home. And I'm not just going to sit here, get my degree, and act like I don't live in this city.

Check out these Social Justice Groups!

Boston Scholar Research Collaborate

Boston Students for a Democratic Society (Boston SDS)

Engineers Without Borders (EWB)

Feminist Student Organization (FSO)

Generation Citizen

GlobeMed

Health Disparities Student Collaborative (HDSC)

Husky Energy Action Team (HEAT)

InterVarsity

Invisible Children

Latin American Student Organization (LASO)

Net Impact

Northeastern University Students for a Democratic Society (NU SDS)

Northeastern University Teaching English Language and Literacy Skills (NUTELLS)

Northeastern University Vegetarians United (NUVU)

NU Pride (Formerly NUBiLaGA)

NUSTAND (Anti-Genocide Group)

Peace Through Play

Progressive Student Alliance (PSA)

Slow Food Northeastern

Students for Choice

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

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Disclaimer

This unofficial guide was created by a diverse group of students with a wide range of experiences and opinions. This guide was not sanctioned by any member of the Northeastern University administration or faculty, and is not the product of any official student group. The views and opinions do not necessarily represent the opinions of the individuals involved but are meant to foster dialogue and encourage students to creatively address issues in their community.