



Dear Northeastern University community,

In the weeks since President Aoun led a community discussion on the rise in hostility and violence toward Asian Pacific Islander Desi American communities, we have engaged with Northeastern students, faculty, and staff from across the university to discuss these issues.

We are writing today to update you on our progress toward developing an action plan for Northeastern. We have grouped our work into two priority areas: enhancing our infrastructure for learning and creating a more inclusive student experience.

Enhancing our Infrastructure for Learning

Learning is foundational to inclusive communities and societies. Toward that end, we are expanding opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff to acquire a deeper understanding of our Asian and Asian American communities through cultural studies, staff training, and professional development.

To help facilitate these efforts, Associate Professor of History Philip Thai has been appointed as Northeastern's new director of Asian Studies. Professor Thai is a leading scholar of modern China's legal, economic, and diplomatic history.

We see an immediate opportunity to expand our academic offerings in Asian and Asian American studies, and to improve our existing programs and courses in regional, cultural, racial, and ethnic studies. As part of this effort, the university will relaunch the Asian Studies Speaker series, enabling Asian and Asian American scholars and leaders to share their knowledge and experiences with the Northeastern community. In addition, to kick off an innovative, cross-college approach to broadening learning opportunities, we will offer a badge in global and cultural literacy, with an expected launch this fall.

We will initiate university-wide mandatory training in cultural literacy and anti-racism in the fall 2021 term. Plans are also under way to embed cultural literacy training in student orientations and in new faculty and staff orientations. To ensure shared accountability, university leadership will require offices to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in faculty and staff searches, promotions, and annual assessments.

Creating an Inclusive Student Experience

Northeastern aspires to create a student experience that celebrates and supports identity, increases intercultural literacy and learning, promotes academic success, and equips students to forge a more just, equitable, and inclusive world.

The Center for Intercultural Engagement will extend its coordination of intercultural programming across Northeastern's global network, complementing the essential work of our existing cultural centers. Alongside this work, we will assist our cultural centers in developing and scaling new and existing programs, while facilitating collaboration with our schools and colleges to offer cultural center-based academic opportunities.

We will invest greater resources in our cultural centers, providing more professional development options for our cultural center staff and improving their spaces. As a first step, the university has authorized plans to renovate the Asian American Center and create new shared space in Ell Hall.

Finally, the university's newly appointed dean of students and vice chancellor, Chong Kim-Wong, will team up with Dean of Cultural and Spiritual Life Robert José to strengthen students' voices across all dimensions of university life.

In closing, we want to offer our acknowledgement and thanks to all of the students, faculty, and staff who worked with us to co-create these initiatives. Their role is, and will continue to be, vital to our shared success. Our new Senior Vice Provost and Chief Inclusion Officer Karl Reid led much of this work and will continue to play a leadership role in integrating, advancing, and monitoring this critical work.

As President Aoun charged our university community on May 25—at the event marking the one-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd—this is a time for learning and a time for action. Each of us has a role in this work, whether in expanding our cultural literacy, creating or attending programs that expand our intercultural awareness, or joining our academic work with the lived experiences of our community members.

We look forward to engaging with each of you in this mission to eradicate the scourge of systemic racism and build an inclusive community for all. We will continue to update you regularly on our progress: on these specific plans as well as on the other priorities identified in the [President's Action Plan](#).

Sincerely,

David Madigan
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Ken Henderson
Chancellor and Senior Vice President for Learning