



To all members of the Northeastern Community,

On June 15th, I announced a call to action for our university to address the scourge of systemic racism—especially anti-Black discrimination—and advance our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Since then, you have shared further ideas and insights through discussions, gatherings, and other forms of feedback. At the same time, a multi-faceted team of university leaders has been meeting regularly and developing concrete plans to turn aspirations into reality.

I am pleased to provide you with updates in the areas we identified in June. The initiatives listed below are the result of many people’s work, including the university’s six senior vice presidents, Dean for Cultural and Spiritual Life Robert José, and the co-chairs of the President’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion, Deans James Hackney and Uta Poiger. The Dean of the Library, Dan Cohen, also played an instrumental role.

Representation: It is vital for every member of our global community to find in Northeastern a welcoming home. Achieving this goal will demand a collective effort to meet our objectives for increasing student, faculty, and staff diversity across all our campuses. As a general principle, we seek to reflect the diversity of the societies in which Northeastern maintains its campuses—the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

With respect to our student body, we will increase the diversity of our entering classes at both our domestic and global campuses. We commit that across our campuses, incoming undergraduate students, master’s students, and doctoral students will fully reflect the relevant national racial diversity within five years. For example, the percentage of Black students in the United States will more than double at the undergraduate level over this time period. To achieve these goals, we will establish new financial aid streams and devote significant resources to targeted recruiting and retention efforts.

With respect to faculty, our long-term goal is that the faculty should reflect the diversity of the societies we serve. Our specific intermediate goal is to double the percentage of new faculty hires from underrepresented groups across all our campuses within five years. A specific focus will be to double the percentage of Black

faculty hires in the United States over this period. We will initiate targeted efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming environment that attracts and retains a diverse faculty.

Our community has a long tradition of research, scholarship, and high-impact academic programming that advance the cause of racial justice, such as our extraordinary Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project led by University Distinguished Professor Margaret Burnham and her colleagues. Now, we will create a new institute that will serve as the focal point for a larger university initiative related to racial justice and inequality. We will create at least 10 new faculty positions to support this effort, and propel Northeastern to a leadership position in high-impact, globally-networked learning and discovery on topics related to race, social justice, and related issues such as technology, health, and the environment.

In addition, we will reform hiring, retention, and HR protocols so that, within five years, our newly hired staff cohorts will reflect the societies in which we do our work. This will include the creation of new workforce development programs that ensure robust career pathways for people of all backgrounds within our community.

Student Support: We will strengthen and further invest in the links between the colleges and our cultural centers, drawing on their great potential to create integrated curricula on racism and anti-discrimination. In that same vein, we will expand successful models, such as the College of Engineering's Summer Bridge Program, to help students from underrepresented backgrounds across the university more quickly feel at home in our community. We will substantially increase funding for grants to students who develop educational programming related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will also invest in programs, activities, and initiatives that specifically address the needs of our first-generation students. And we will ask all academic departments to show how racism and anti-discrimination are specifically being addressed in their courses of study, in field specific as well as interdisciplinary ways.

NUPD Community Advisory Board: This new organization, which I announced in June, has had many meetings, town halls, and pop-up sessions that examine policing on and around our Boston campus. Its chair, Professor Jack McDevitt, recently announced the first in a series of reforms that the board has developed, including expanded feedback mechanisms for NUPD. This new approach will allow any member of the Northeastern community, including residents of our surrounding neighborhoods, to file a complaint, offer a commendation, or request information about NUPD policies and practices. This is just the beginning of the advisory board's ongoing work.

Cultural Competency and Anti-Racism Training: We will implement mandatory, university-wide cultural competency and anti-racism training programs for all faculty and staff on a regular basis. This will include embedding cultural competency and anti-racism modules throughout the curriculum.

University-wide Accountability: Starting immediately, administrative and academic leaders and managers at all levels will have meaningful diversity and inclusion goals for their departments and direct reports, as part of their annual goal setting and review. Beginning this academic year, we will launch an annual climate survey on diversity and inclusion; we will provide regular updates to share and assess our progress.

Community Engagement: We will deepen community service and expand service learning in the neighborhoods surrounding all of our campuses. In doing so, we will strengthen the ties between our community engagement programs and our academic programs. We will also increase procurement from businesses that are designated as women- and minority-owned, with a special emphasis on Black-owned

businesses at our U.S. campuses. Our goal over the next five years will be to double the total value of those contracts from the last five years.

Amplifying our Impact through our Employer Partners: We will launch a new initiative called NU PLACE, the Northeastern University Professional Leadership and Career Engagement Program. Beginning with a dozen employer partners who are recognized for their success in recruiting and developing underrepresented minorities, Northeastern will partner with them to learn and create new best practices, and create hiring pipelines for them to recruit and retain diverse talent from Northeastern.

We are navigating challenging times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic uncertainty. But complacency is not an option. I believe that these actions will lead to a more inclusive and dynamic university community—one that makes Northeastern a model for what we want our society to be.

It is important to acknowledge that meaningful change is a journey, not a moment in time. As we work together in the coming months to imagine a new academic plan, the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion will be infused throughout every dimension. As we continue to pursue this work together—and in so doing, achieve higher levels of mutual respect and understanding—I will continue to provide our community with regular updates on our progress.

I thank you for all you have done—and all that you continue to do—to make our collective efforts successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Aoun", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joseph E. Aoun
President