

Charge 6: Other Priorities

Study of Housing Benefits at
Comparable Institutes of Higher
Education

Motivation and Approach

- The high cost of living, and particularly of housing, in Boston is a **major impediment** to both **recruitment** and **retention** of high quality both tenure and non-tenure track faculty candidates
- A comparative study was undertaken to understand policies of “matchmate” universities on this issue
- “Matchmate” was defined by: cost of living, university rank, and faculty size
- Data collected: eligibility (who/how long), value to recipient, financial burden to university (qualitative), etc.

University	Rank (2019)	Est. # Faculty	City	Cost-of-Living Index	Median Home Cost (\$)
Stanford U.	7	1766	Palo Alto, CA	613.5	3,284,200
Boston College	38	780	Newton, MA	244.9	1,036,500
U.C. Irvine	33	1628	Irvine, CA	211.5	853,200
Columbia U.	3	1027	NY, NY	209.3	662,100
NYU	30	2935	NY, NY	209.3	662,100
U. of Washington	59	1649	Seattle, WA	204	761,800
Harvard U.	2	1128	Cambridge, MA	202.7	780,200
MIT	3	1516	Cambridge, MA	202.7	780,200
Boston U.	42	1808	Boston, MA	181.6	587,000
Georgetown U.	22	678	Washington, DC	173.9	566,800
Tufts U.	27	616	Medford, MA	172.5	575,600
Northwestern U.	10	1380	Evanston, IL	134.8	341,700
Brown U.	14	998	Providence, RI	112.8	197,900
U. of Pennsylvania	8	1672	Philadelphia, PN	110.8	147,000
			Lexington, MA	234.8	970,300
Boston-area Communities			Needham, MA	230.7	917,500
			Malden, MA	153	446,100



Northeastern	44	988
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Faculty Benefits Categories Identified at Comparator Institutions

- **University owned properties for rental or for purchase**

Columbia University Faculty Housing Policy (2013):

"The top priority for the use of the University's apartment housing is the recruitment and retention of tenured faculty. "

- **Mortgage assistance (categorized as *minor* or *major*)**

MIT Ad Hoc Committee on the Design of the Faculty Housing Program (2005):

"The recent steep increase in the already high cost of housing in the greater Boston area is a major factor in the recruitment and retention of both senior and junior faculty at MIT."

- *Availability of short-term / sabbatical housing*

Results (Comparative Study w/ 14 institutions)

- 11 of 14 offer **temporary or long-term housing** to faculty through University-owned properties. Some properties are prioritized to new faculty hires while some housing markets are partially subsidized.
- 12 of 14 offer **some form of mortgage assistance**:
 - MINOR (12/14)**: covering closing costs, preferred vendors, etc.
 - MAJOR (5/14)**: access to lower-interest loan programs outside the university, providing low-interest loans (help with down-payment), directly originating the mortgage loan, or paying annual housing stipends (beyond base salary)

12 of 14 : provide temporary/long-term university-owned housing **and/or major** mortgage assistance

Northeastern in Context

- University owned housing: None
- Mortgage assistance: Minor

Northeastern currently provides slightly better benefits than the two outlying institutions (Boston College, Georgetown University)

However, **Northeastern policies provide less support to faculty to overcome the issue of rising housing costs than all other institutions surveyed, including nearby Boston University and Tufts.**

Feedback from Faculty

- There is a consensus that **housing is a priority concern for faculty candidates at all ranks**
- There is a sense among tenure track faculty that **home ownership is only possible with assistance from family or a financial windfall**, i.e., down-payment costs are the primary hurdle to home ownership
- The lack of stability for those who rent may make successful tenure track faculty **easier to be recruited by other universities in locations with lower cost of living or comparatively better housing benefits**
- **Long commutes** decrease productivity and reduce on-campus participation outside of the classroom

Recommendations

- **Housing development partnerships**, e.g., in partnership with the city of Malden (locations with easy T accessibility to campus)
- Creation of a **NU-owned housing portfolio** near campus.
 - Consider a "Faculty Transitional Housing Program" for up to 3 years
 - Priority for junior/incoming faculty and postdocs
- Provision of **Mortgage Assistance Loans** (e.g., \$50-100k) to junior faculty as part of recruitment packages

Resolution

BE IT RESOLVED THAT a Housing Task Force be created to (1) understand housing assistance benefits provided by peer institutions in high cost-of-living areas, (2) assess approaches for maintaining strategic competitiveness with respect to peer institution, and (3) develop a plan for improving housing benefits that can be rolled out in the very near term (1-3 year horizon).