

2019-2020 Enrollment and Admissions Policy Committee (EAPC)

Final Report

EAPC Members:

Robert Painter (Co-Chair, COS)

Elizabeth Zulick (Co-Chair, CPS)

Victoria Cain (CSSH)

Ozlem Ergun (COE)

Sundar Kumarasamy (VP, Enrollment Management)

Denise Spenser (DMSB)

2019-2020 Charges:

1. **NU-In.** In collaboration with the Offices of the Provost and the Chancellor, the EAPC shall monitor the experience of N.U.in students and other group transfer program students as they integrate into their cohorts on the Boston campus and, if warranted, make recommendations for improving policies and practices for the group transfer programs.
2. **PlusOne.** In collaboration with the Registrar's Office and other appropriate groups, the EAPC shall recommend best practices for defining and providing access to PlusOne program requirements.
3. **PhD Network.** In collaboration with the PhD Network and other appropriate groups, the EAPC shall review the infrastructure and support systems for admission and enrollment of international graduate students and recommend best practices. *Not examined in AY 2019-2020.*

1.1 Process on Charge 1 (NU-In)

EAPC Members worked closely with the Office of the Chancellor to determine what institutional oversight and data was available within the University on “experiences of NU-In students”. Meetings were held with Sundar Kamarasamy, Vice President of Enrollment Management (10/18/19); Shane Karcz, Assistant VP for Enrollment Research & Analytics (11/8/2019); and Chris Gallagher, Vice Chancellor for Global Learning Operations (10/24/19 and 11/26/2019), and further discussion and questions were addressed via email.

1.2 Findings on Charge 1 (NU-In)

The basis of the charge seemed to be anecdotal reports among the Northeastern community that NU-In students are viewed as underprepared to handle academics, at least in certain fields, in the Spring term vis-a-vis Fall Freshmen students. The Committee found that this viewpoint seems

largely outdated, based on empirical data. As of 2017, NU-In students are largely and increasingly indistinguishable in academic performance from Fall Freshmen across various metrics, including:

- [1] 1-year retention rates (FF: 97%, n=2,676 / NU-In: 97%, n=720);
- [2] First semester GPA (FF: 3.45 / NU-In: 3.31);
- [3] 6-year graduation rates (FF: 87%, n=3,082 / NU-In: 86%, n=435);
- [4] GPA at graduation (FF: 3.48, n=3,082) / NU-In: 3.40, n=435).

In 2007, the average GPA of an NU-In student was 3.47; in 2018, the average GPA was 3.94, which is very similar in quality to fall admit students and suggests an increasingly talented cohort of students taking part in these programs. That is, NU-In programs are not a "backdoor" means of acceptance to Northeastern and should not be viewed as such.

The Committee found that the NU-In programs are increasingly treated as a desirable and competitive option for accepted high school students, i.e. there is no stigma for entering students. Rather these programs are increasingly valued by students, faculty and administrators (and championed by the University) as typical of the international, experiential climate of Northeastern. Student satisfaction surveys collected by the Office of the Chancellor attest to the fact that students view NU-In programs as highly positive learning experiences.

In this context, this is a dynamic time for NU-In programs. According to data from the Office of the Chancellor, NU-In program enrollment has grown every year from just 23 students in 2007 to almost 1,100 students in 2019-2020. NU-In programming is now housed under the Office of the Chancellor in the Global Experience Office, and the institutional oversight is much clearer than beforehand. There have been more in-depth academic site reviews by Northeastern administrators; Northeastern faculty from the Boston campus are now being pilot-tested to rotate through NU-In sites to improve overall academic quality; and course offerings are being greatly expanded.

Lastly, while the stigma of underpreparedness of NU-In students might be residual to Boston campus instructors of "Level 2" courses (e.g. certain math and Khoury courses for majors), it is clear that several academic problems with particular NU-In sites and contracted-instructors at the host institution have largely been recognized and fixed. Four NU-In locations have changed partners or discontinued partnerships (e.g. Ireland, London) or been closed outright (China), and STEM offerings have occasionally been transferred to other sites. In certain cases, the rumor of ill-preparation could be traced to a particular course or instructor abroad, e.g. BIO119: Anatomy at the Greece site, or MAT101: Calculus for Business at the China site. Instructors and courses at Australia USYD and Ireland CIEE received particularly poor scores in a TRACE-like survey conducted by the Office of the Chancellor for the 2018 cohort. Yet there may still be a general problem of some NU-In students returning to the Boston campus without a firm grounding in the "Level 1" course they received abroad. The Office of the Chancellor reports for the Spring 2019 cohort that there was a strong pattern of fewer students earning A

grades and more earning B grades in a slate of specialized courses, including: BIOL 2299 (Inquiries in Biological Sciences); CHEM 1214 (General Chem 2); MATH 1342 (Calc 2 for Science and Engineering); PHYS 1155 (Phys for Engineering 2); ECON 2315 (Macro Theory), among others. The Office of the Chancellor is finessing this issue, in part, by instituting NU course and faculty at some sites to provide a higher level of academic rigor in pre-requisite courses.

The Committee recognized that much was in flux with the administration of NU-In programs in the transition of leadership to the Office of the Chancellor. According to Shane Karcz, new surveys and TRACE evaluations are being employed at all NU-In sites as of 2019, now administered three times to students enrolled in NU-In, including: [1] a first-month survey, [2] a “mid-term” survey, and [3] a fuller end of term evaluation that is structured similarly to Northeastern’s current TRACE evaluations. Due to the fact that little survey data currently exists in a form which would allow straightforward comparison between NU-In and Fall Freshmen students prior to 2016, the Committee suggests that the experience of NU-In students be revisited in approximately three years time.

1.3 EAPC Resolution on Charge 1 (NU-In)

Whereas NU-In programs represent a valuable, dynamic, global learning experience for freshmen students, and whereas NU-In programs are currently experiencing rapid revision, expansion, and oversight,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate Agenda Committee charge the 2022-2023 EAPC to monitor the experience of NU-In students, in collaboration with the Office of the Provost and the Chancellor, with a particular reference to NU-In student exit surveys and TRACE evaluations in comparison with similar metrics for Fall Freshmen.

2.1 Process on Charge 2 (PlusOne)

EAPC Members met with Tom Sheahan, Senior Vice Provost for Curriculum and Programs (10/17/19); Amber Watson, Director of Undergraduate Advising, College of Science (10/29/19); Adam Smith, Assistant Dean, Academic Programs, CAMD (10/22/19); Andrew Casasanto-Ferro, Associate Director of Academic Student Services, CSSH and Jason Riccio, Assistant Director of Advising, CSSH (10/29/19); Susan Freeman, Interim Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, COE (11/5/19); Alan Mislove Associate Dean & Director - Undergraduate Programs, and Jessica Biron Associate Director of Undergraduate Programs, Khoury (1/15/20); members of the Registrar’s Office, including Nina LeDoyt (Senior Associate Registrar), Charles Price (Senior Associate Registrar), Heather Daly (Catalog and Content Manager) (10/30/19); and further discussion and questions were addressed via email.

2.2 Findings on Charge 2 (PlusOne)

The University has taken meaningful steps to increase the number of PlusOne applicants and opportunities. These steps include gathering and consolidating information about masters programs and working towards a clear graphical interface for the catalog that incorporates unified information about accelerated masters programs into descriptions of various programs of study. Additionally, many colleges, notably CAMD and CSSH, have successfully increased the number of participants in PlusOne by increasing the number of combined majors and streamlining advising efforts.

Despite these institutional steps, the EAPC's conversations with PlusOne stakeholders indicate that systemic problems remain with the program's visibility and accessibility to students in various colleges. Some of these problems include:

[1] **Lack of Uniformity in Execution.** The University lacks uniformity in eligibility, standards, and application processes for PlusOnes. Requirements for internal and external candidates often differ. Institutional communication and marketing is poor: there is no single site for information about PlusOne due to the bespoke nature of these programs. This creates confusion and requires students and faculty to hunt down information from offices across the University.

[2] **Lack of Advising.** Cross-college exploration, registration and advising remains difficult. There is a lack of clarity on who advises the students and who is responsible for the student experience. Candidates' awareness of the program often depends solely upon advisors' communication.

[3] **Need for 5000-level courses.** There are too few 5000-level courses available to majors and dual-majors in each department. More 5000-level courses offer students greater flexibility to sample graduate courses, and departments gain the additional benefit of a wider pool of students for graduate classes.

2.3 EAPC Resolution on Charge 2 (PlusOne)

Whereas PlusOne programs represent a growing option for students to access intrinsically valuable and accelerated Master's degrees; and whereas PlusOne programs encourage Northeastern undergraduate students to stay at the University to complete their Master's degree,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate recommends that the Provost's Office establish a uniform, standardized process for PlusOne admissions, explore greater visibility of

marketing for PlusOne programs in the course catalog, employ a single user-friendly system for PlusOne applications (such as the Apply Yourself system that is currently widely used for Northeastern graduate applications), and retain the current policy of exempting applicants from submitting standardized testing scores, application fee, and transcripts.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate recommends that the Provost's Office work with the deans to standardize undergraduate academic advising for all PlusOne Programs and to provide ready access to graduate academic advising for undergraduates interested in the PlusOne Programs.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate Agenda Committee monitor the change in PlusOne management, marketing, and growth in partnership with the Office of the Provost in AY 2020-2021, with a particular reference to accessibility, flexibility and ease of application to PlusOne programs.