



Assessing Community Sentiment on Campus Climate, Student Rights, and University Governance at Northeastern University

By The Educational Freedom Project
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About the Educational Freedom Project

The Educational Freedom Project (EFP) is a student association seeking to fulfill and defend the promise of higher education — a promise rooted in learning, teaching, expression, and opportunity.

The Educational Freedom Project at Northeastern

EFP was founded at Northeastern in June 2025 in response to a series of institutional changes affecting student life — including alterations to freedom of expression policies, changes to institutional DEI organization, research funding adjustments, and immigration policy concerns. We observed these shifts but had lacked systematic data on how the broader community was experiencing them, creating the need for comprehensive community sentiment research.

Why This Report

Northeastern University's mission is to “create a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive, succeed, and feel a strong sense of belonging.”¹ This report assesses how the Northeastern community experiences that mission in practice. Northeastern EFP will share this report with the Northeastern community and administration and will work with the Student Government Association to advocate for policy reforms based on our findings.

¹“About Northeastern.” *Northeastern University*, 10 Feb. 2025, www.northeastern.edu/about/about-northeastern/.



Over the course of the Fall 2025 semester, Northeastern EFP conducted a comprehensive study of community sentiment. Our research included three surveys polling 1,077 students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni. Additionally, we organized a town hall and a policy solution workshop, which brought together 36 and 13 student organization leaders, respectively.

Key Findings

Fulfilling Northeastern's Mission

64.1% of those surveyed are not confident the policies, announcements, and actions of Northeastern adhere to its mission.

A majority of the Northeastern community does not feel confident that the university's actions fulfill its mission.

Research Opportunities

92.5% of impacted respondents said their research and career opportunities were negatively impacted by the federal administration.

Students find opportunities for experiential learning increasingly less accessible.

Transparency on ICE Engagement

69.5% of those surveyed said the university administration is not transparent about ICE-related issues.

Northeastern's lack of transparency regarding its protocol if ICE enters campus has left students fearful.

Administrative Transparency, Student Representation

95.8% of those surveyed said students should be involved in decision-making about the university's mission, student code of conduct, and policies.

Students are not satisfied with the level of transparency from the Northeastern administration, nor with their level of representation within university governance.

Free Expression

55.8% of those surveyed and 100.0% of student organization leaders surveyed are not confident Northeastern promotes and protects free expression.

Students and professors alike feel increasingly scared to fully express themselves in open discussion.

Protection of Civil Rights

96.6% of the those surveyed said the university should legally protect students & faculty if their civil rights are challenged.

Northeastern affiliates desire legal support for all students and faculty if their civil rights are threatened.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

78.8% of surveyed student leaders feel the creation of an Office of Belonging does not represent the university's mission.

Students report feeling that changes to the DEI structure & leadership were negatively impactful and not representative of the university's mission.

Table of Contents

- 5** Executive Summary
- 7** Methodology and Results
- 14** Fulfillment of Northeastern's Mission
- 15** Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression
- 17** Research and Career Opportunities
- 21** Belonging at Northeastern
- 23** Resources for International Students
- 25** Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- 26** Student Representation and Administrative Transparency
- 30** Conclusion
- 31** Works Cited

Executive Summary

The Educational Freedom Project (EFP) is an association of students seeking to fulfill and defend the promise of higher education — a promise rooted in learning, teaching, expression, and opportunity. Over the course of the Fall 2025 semester, Northeastern's EFP branch conducted a comprehensive study of Northeastern student sentiment on a range of issues, spanning free expression to student representation. Data was gathered through three different methods:

1. **Community Survey**²: Conducted over the span of 20 days, we surveyed 1,032 Northeastern University community members, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents.
2. **Town Hall**: We hosted an hour-long town hall attended by 36 Northeastern student organization leaders — referred to in this report as “student leaders” — where we noted their views on a range of issues pertaining to Northeastern policy.
3. **Policy Solution Workshop**: We hosted an hour-long policy solution workshop attended by 13 Northeastern student leaders, where we presented our potential policy solutions and gathered their input.

The following report compiles findings from all our research.

Our findings demonstrate a strong dissatisfaction with the free speech environment on the university's Boston campus. Of those surveyed, 55.8% of students and 100.0% of student leaders did not feel confident in Northeastern's ability to promote free expression. During the policy solution workshop, 90.9% of student leaders surveyed said they were dissatisfied with Northeastern's lack of transparency around its requirement to approve demonstration requests.

We also found that the university's renaming of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the Office of Belonging³ is both confusing and disheartening for many students. 78.8% of surveyed student leaders felt that the creation of an Office of Belonging does not fulfill the university's mission. Together, these results exemplify the perception of Northeastern's changes to the Office of DEI as a retreat from, rather than a reframing of, the university's mission.

Analysis of the data also shows that the federal administration has negatively impacted research and career opportunities for Northeastern students. 92.5% of 53 affected respondents say the federal administration has negatively impacted their research and career opportunities. And 63.7% of student leaders expressed low confidence in the university's ability to properly manage their research funding, sharing, for example, significant dissatisfaction with the \$100 Lab and Studio Fee⁴ imposed on students for access to research facilities.

²Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Community Survey, 9 Sept. 2025 to 10 Oct. 2025, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iMIVEZveRMi_txOWouYIOF6U5YfPI-9o/view?usp=drive_link

³MacDiarmid, Zoe. “Multiple Employees Leave Northeastern after Dei Rebrand.” *The Huntington News*, 9 Aug. 2025, [huntnewsnu.com/87627/campus/several-employees-in-the-office-of-belonging-leave-the-university-months-after-dei-rebrand/](https://www.huntnewsnu.com/87627/campus/several-employees-in-the-office-of-belonging-leave-the-university-months-after-dei-rebrand/).

⁴ Northeastern University. “Tuition and Fees.” Student Financial Services, studentfinance.northeastern.edu/billing-payments/tuition-and-fees/.

Executive Summary Continued

Our findings also reveal overwhelming support for stronger legal protections for international students, with over 96.6% of community survey respondents calling for university-provided legal resources. But, 88.6% of the student leaders surveyed expressed little or no confidence that Northeastern would defend their legal rights. During the town hall and policy solution workshop, student leaders shared feelings of fear and uncertainty, citing inadequate support and communication from the Office of Global Services.

When it comes to the university's policy pertaining to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), students indicate Northeastern is not being sufficiently transparent in clarifying what steps it will take if ICE is present on campus property. When asked whether they felt Northeastern was transparent about ICE policies, 69.5% of community survey respondents said no. Separately, 85.3% of student leaders surveyed at the Northeastern EFP town hall responded that it is "very important" the Northeastern community be made aware of what steps the university will take if ICE comes to campus.

In addition, the data from the Northeastern EFP university community survey, town hall, and policy solution workshop show that administrative transparency and student representation are issues of high importance. 82.4% of student leaders surveyed at the town hall said it is "important" or "very important" that senior leaders in Northeastern's administration and Board of Trustees are transparent about the decisions they make impacting student life. When asked whether the university administration should involve students in decision-making concerning the student code of conduct, academic freedom, or other university policies, 95.8% of students, staff, faculty, and alumni said "Yes." Despite this, 85.3% of student leaders at the town hall answered that they are "unsure" or do "not believe" that Northeastern's Student Government Association, the representative body of undergraduate students, advocates for their core concerns on campus, adding that SGA initiatives feel like suggestions rather than tangible actions.

In summary, Northeastern EFP gathered data from a total of 1,077 members of the university community through surveys, a town hall with student leaders, and a workshop with student leaders. Findings reveal that 55.8% of students, staff, faculty, and alumni, and 100.0% of student leaders were not confident that the university promotes free expression. 78.8% of student leaders did not feel the university's actions fulfill its mission of belonging. 88.6% of student leaders were not confident that the university would protect their rights. 69.5% of students, staff, faculty, and alumni did not think Northeastern is transparent about what the university's policy is if ICE comes to campus. 95.8% of students, staff, faculty, and alumni responded that students should be involved in decisions concerning the student code of conduct, academic freedom, and university policies.

Northeastern EFP will share these findings with Northeastern University's administration and propose legislation to the Student Government Association Senate aimed at addressing the issues identified in our research.

Methodology and Results

Northeastern EFP's Topic Choice and Research Process

The overarching questions we sought to answer were whether students at Northeastern:

1. Feel they are adequately represented in the university's decision-making process
2. Feel the university is transparent in its decision making
3. Feel their rights, security, and wellbeing are adequately supported by the university

To answer these questions our research focused on the following issue areas:

1. Academic Freedom and Free Expression
2. Research and Career Opportunities
3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
4. Resources for International Students
5. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
6. Student Representation and Administrative Transparency

Our research focused on these six key areas because they directly relate to Northeastern's mission of creating a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive, succeed, and feel a strong sense of belonging. Additionally, recent institutional changes regarding these areas have raised questions about how the university is fulfilling this mission in practice.

Through quantitative and qualitative methods, our researchers conducted three surveys, a town hall with student leaders, and a policy solution workshop with student leaders.

Methodology and Results

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression: Recent changes⁵ to Northeastern's policies on these issues have prompted concerns about whether students can freely engage in the marketplace of ideas. As demonstrated by the Chicago Principles⁶, this ability is a cornerstone of higher education and democracy.

Research and Career Opportunities: The federal government's cutting of over 40 Northeastern research grants⁷ and the university's adoption⁸ of various cost containment measures^{9,10} has significantly impacted students' ability to access experiential learning opportunities, central to the Northeastern learning model.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): The rebranding of the Office of DEI to the Office of Belonging¹¹, combined with leadership changes¹², has raised questions about the university's commitment to creating an inclusive environment where all students feel they belong.

Resources for International Students: With over 40 Northeastern affiliates¹³ having visas revoked and increased immigration enforcement activity around Boston¹⁴, international students, a core group of the university community, face unique challenges that impact their sense of security and belonging.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement: Escalating immigration operations in Boston¹⁵ creates uncertainty about campus safety and the university's role in protecting community members.

Student Representation and Administrative Transparency: How decisions are made regarding the university's governance and strategic direction are largely unknown¹⁶ to students. Nonetheless, the degree to which students can participate in decisions that affect their educational experience directly relates to whether they can meaningfully "thrive and succeed" as promised in the university's mission.

⁵Curwin, Eli. "Faculty Express Concern, Frustration with Northeastern Freedom of Expression, Academic Freedom Policies." *The Huntington News*, 30 Oct. 2024, huntnewsnu.com/80958/campus/faculty-express-concern-frustration-with-northeastern-freedom-of-expression-academic-freedom-policies/.

⁶Zimmer, Robert, and Isaacs, Eric. Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression. 2014. <https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>.

⁷"Federal Landscape: Frequently Asked Questions." *Northeastern Global News*, 30 Jan. 2025, news.northeastern.edu/federal-landscape-faq/#research-and-teaching.

⁸Jagannath, Nikhil. "Northeastern Ends Student Support Initiative." *The Huntington News*, 18 Apr. 2024, huntnewsnu.com/77361/campus/northeastern-ends-student-support-initiative-lays-off-more-than-120-employees/.

⁹MacDiarmid, Zoe. "Provost Reports Hiring Slowdown at Northeastern, Denies Hiring Freeze." *The Huntington News*, 25 Mar. 2025, huntnewsnu.com/85251/campus/provost-reports-hiring-slow-down-at-northeastern-denies-hiring-freeze/.

¹⁰Baker Dimock, Caroline. "Northeastern Adds \$100 Fee for All Lab, Studio Courses." *The Huntington News*, 24 Aug. 2025, huntnewsnu.com/87700/primary-homepage/northeastern-adds-100-fee-for-all-lab-studio-courses/.

¹¹Curwin, Eli. "Northeastern Purges DEI Websites and Messaging amid Trump Executive Order." *The Huntington News*, 29 Jan. 2025, huntnewsnu.com/83151/campus/northeastern-purges-dei-websites-and-messaging-amid-trump-executive-order/.

¹²MacDiarmid, Zoe. "Multiple Employees Leave Northeastern after DEI Rebrand." *The Huntington News*, 9 Aug. 2025, huntnewsnu.com/87627/campus/several-employees-in-the-office-of-belonging-leave-the-university-months-after-dei-rebrand/.

¹³"Federal Landscape: Frequently Asked Questions." *Northeastern Global News*, 30 Jan. 2025, news.northeastern.edu/federal-landscape-faq/#research-and-teaching.

¹⁴Willingham, Leah. "ICE Crackdowns Intensify across Boston as Sanctuary Cities Face Trump's Latest Operation."

¹⁵*NBC Boston, NBC10 Boston*, 16 Sept. 2025, www.nbcboston.com/news/local/ice-in-boston-massachusetts-as-sanctuary-cities-face-trumps-latest-operation/3809609/.

¹⁶Gainor, Danya. "Federal Immigration Raids Planned for Chicago and Other Sanctuary Cities in Coming Days after a Weekend of Warnings." *CNN*, 8 Sept. 2025, www.cnn.com/2025/09/08/us/chicago-sanctuary-cities-ice-raids-planned/.

¹⁷Cutler, Sonel and Armanini, Kate. "Inside Northeastern's Powerful 32-Person Governing Board." *The Huntington News*, 20 Feb. 2025, huntnewsnu.com/81984/campus/inside-northeasterns-powerful-32-person-governing-board/.

Methodology and Results

Community Survey

The first survey, titled “The Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Community Survey,” could be filled out by any member of the Northeastern University community. We define “Northeastern University community” as any of the following:

- Undergraduate students
- Graduate students
- Faculty
- Staff
- Alumni
- Parents of an undergraduate or graduate student

This survey was conducted over the span of 20 days with one to five members of Northeastern EFP, each day, approaching Northeastern University community members on campus or engaging with them through social media, email, or text. Apart from questions on the topics of interest for this research report, they were also asked demographic and employment questions.

Parents were asked three unique questions:

1. Has your child's ability to attend university, conduct research at a university, or gain employment post-graduation been affected by the new federal administration?
2. If your child's ability to attend university, conduct research at a university, or gain employment post-graduation has been affected, has it been positive or negative? (Optional)
3. Please select any relevant ways the federal administration has been impactful. (Optional)

Alumni were asked five unique questions:

1. What college did you belong to/best associate under (if you pursued a degree under multiple colleges)?
2. Please select the sector of employment that you have most recently been employed by.
3. Are you currently employed?
4. Has your employment status been affected by the new federal administration?
5. If your employment status has been affected by the new federal administration, has the effect been positive or negative?

Methodology and Results

Community Survey

Faculty were asked three unique questions:

1. What college are you affiliated with? (Optional)
2. What subject do you teach? (Optional)
3. Are you a part of a research project/research spinoff company? If so, has your research or research spinoff company been affected by the new federal administration? (Optional)

Current students were asked five unique questions:

1. What college do you belong to or best associate with?
2. Which of the following options best describes what year of college you are in?
3. Have your research opportunities or co-op funding been affected by the new federal administration? (Optional)
4. If your research opportunities or co-op funding have been affected, has it been a positive or negative effect? (Optional)
5. Feel free to explain your response to the prior questions regarding co-op funding.

All survey respondents, after answering the unique questions specific to their group, were asked the same 10 questions, eight of which concerned the research topics of the report. Two questions asked how Northeastern EFP could stay in touch with respondents and whether they could assist in the planning of the Northeastern EFP Town Hall. The community survey received a total of 1,032 responses, with a breakdown of 14 parents, 10 faculty, 54 Alumni, four staff, and 950 current students — specifically, 220 Graduate Students and 730 Undergraduate Students.¹⁷

¹⁷ The community survey received four additional responses after analysis of the data for the report was already underway, hence why those responses are not represented in our analysis.

Methodology and Results

Town Hall

The Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Town Hall Survey¹⁸ was conducted during the student organization leaders town hall, where we also gathered qualitative data. The town hall, publicized as “The Educational Freedom Project Town Hall,” hosted Northeastern student organization leaders — referred to in this report as “student leaders” — at the Fenway Community Center on September 30, 2025. The town hall was approximately one hour long and attended by 36 student leaders. The first fifteen minutes of the town hall were devoted to presenting Northeastern EFP’s mission statement, having student leaders complete a baseline survey on some of the topics included in this research report, and sharing the purpose, topics, and conversation guidelines¹⁹ of the gathering. The following 45 minutes of the town hall were spent in discussion groups. Student leaders were seated at seven different tables, three of which were tables where videos, pictures, and recordings were not permitted and where statements were given anonymously. Each table had one Northeastern EFP conversation facilitator and one Northeastern EFP notetaker who did not participate in the conversation. While two tables had six student leaders and another had four student leaders, all other tables each had five student leaders. The topics of the town hall were the same as the topics of this report with the exclusion of “Research and Career Opportunities.” The survey asked eight questions on topics related to this report. Five questions on the survey were about respondents’ backgrounds: what college they are in, what is their major, what year they are in university, what student organization they are affiliated with, and are they on the executive board of their student organization.

¹⁸ Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Town Hall Survey, 30 Sept. 2025, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fcxPyp_iB1rY8z1RSTveJts8Zs2XpsPs/view?usp=drive_link

¹⁹ Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Town Hall Presentation, 30 Sept 2025, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xceUObMUd9gkz3x39nLf3NiKxAx-M7sP/view?usp=drive_link

Methodology and Results

Town Hall

During the town hall, the provided survey asked the following:

- One question on academic freedom and free expression
- One question on the university's mission
- One question on DEI and its relation to the University's mission
- Two questions on students' legal rights
- One question on international students
- One question about transparency regarding ICE
- Two questions on student representation

During the town hall, facilitators asked the following:

- Two questions on academic freedom and freedom of expression
- One question on changes to DEI
- Two questions on resources for international students
- Two questions on student representation and administrative transparency

Not all 36 student leaders completed the town hall survey. There was variance in respondents for four questions: one on international students, one on ICE, and two on student representation.

All 36 student leaders at the town hall also answered discussion questions. The facilitators wrote summaries of their group's discussion based on typed notes from the notetaker. During the summarizing process, facilitators created a glossary²⁰ by coding their discussions: they noted recurring topics, the sentiment in which they were discussed, and the amount of student leaders that brought up the topic in that same sentiment.

²⁰ Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Town Hall Glossary, 30 Sept 2025, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q2VPR1xcxZF3vxBT01IBx1w16Ww_QUhN/view?usp=drive_link

Methodology and Results

Policy Solution Workshop

Northeastern EFP conducted the policy solution workshop over Microsoft Teams on October 7, 2025. It was approximately one hour long and attended by 13 student leaders. Five student leaders who attended the workshop also attended the town hall. 11 of the student leaders who attended the workshop filled out our third survey²¹. All 13 student leaders who attended the workshop participated in discussion where qualitative data was gathered.

The workshop's survey and discussion were on the same topics as the town hall and community survey, but questions during both sections were primarily focused on student leaders' perspectives concerning potential policy solutions at the university. The workshop's survey and discussion each asked nine questions regarding the topics of this report. Attendees spent approximately seven minutes filling out the survey following a brief explanation of Northeastern EFP's mission statement. Then, a Northeastern EFP member presented the workshop's purpose, topics, and conversation guidelines²². Then, discussion breakout groups were formed consisting of three to four student leaders, one Northeastern EFP notetaker, and one Northeastern EFP discussion facilitator. Discussions lasted approximately 45 minutes. To compile qualitative data from the workshop's discussions, conversation facilitators summarized the notetaker's typed notes of their discussion and in this process created a glossary²³ by coding their discussions: they similarly noted recurring topics, the sentiment in which they were discussed, and the amount of student leaders that brought up the topic in that same sentiment.

The results and conclusions from the quantitative and qualitative data gathered through the university community survey, town hall and policy solution workshop are presented in the following sections.

²¹Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Policy Workshop Survey, 7 Oct. 2025, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jdrDubl1irgo9crGcROvXSdO_4Lc2dAH/view?usp=drive_link

²²Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Policy Workshop Presentation, 7 Oct. 2025, https://drive.google.com/file/d/16-gMWDjTHth-1SJuxNH6_UYJcp8eQjkF/view?usp=drive_link

²³Educational Freedom Project's Northeastern University Policy Workshop Glossary, 7 Oct. 2025, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sN0dRY7P4d1o7uzp58aTtmxio5kpwnZq/view?usp=drive_link

Results

Fulfilling Northeastern's Mission

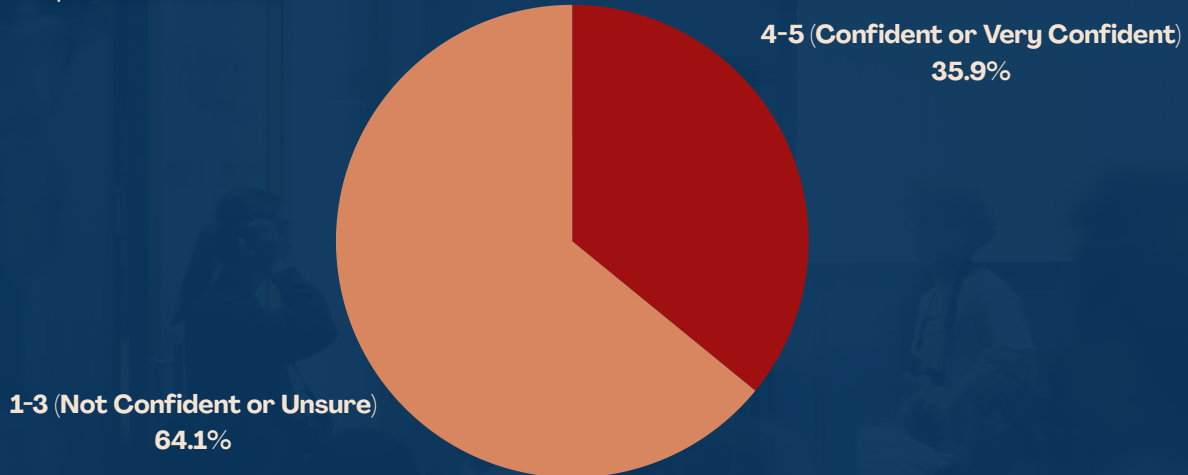
Community Sentiment on Northeastern Alignment with their Mission

Results of Northeastern EFP's research show the university community, along with student leaders, agree that it is vitally important for Northeastern to stand up for its mission of "creating a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive, succeed, and feel a strong sense of belonging."

When asked "How confident are you that Northeastern University's policy, announcements, and actions align with the University's mission statements," 389 of 1,031 respondents, a plurality of 37.8%, indicated they are uncertain whether the university's policies, announcements, and actions align with its mission (Figure 1.1). 35.9% of respondents, or 369, were either "somewhat" or "very confident." 26.3%, 271, said they have low confidence or are not confident at all.

Figure 1.1: How confident are you that Northeastern University's policy announcements and actions align with the University's mission statement, e.g. "Creating a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive, succeed, and feel a strong sense of belonging"?

Total Respondents: 1031



In the town hall survey, when asked about the importance of Northeastern adhering to its mission statement, 27 out of the 33 student leaders, or 81.8%, rated it as "important" or "very important," demonstrating the consensus amongst student leaders that Northeastern aligning its policies with their mission statement is viewed as crucial.

Results

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

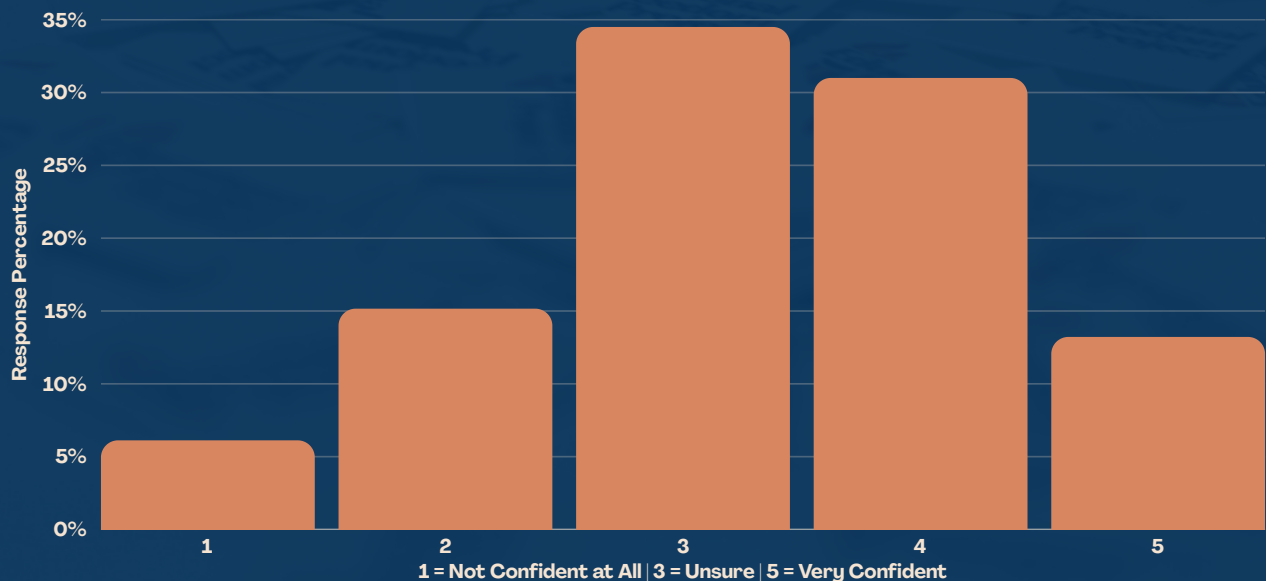
Assessing Freedom of Expression on Campus

Our findings show that the majority of students, alumni, parents, staff, and faculty are concerned about Northeastern’s policies on free expression.

Northeastern EFP’s Community Survey asked respondents: “How confident do you feel that Northeastern promotes free expression on campus?” The question listed examples of what constitutes freedom of expression, such as “the ability to demonstrate freely on campus” and “a sense of openness in the classroom.” 55.8% of those polled felt “not confident” or “unsure” about Northeastern’s current ability to promote free expression on campus. Proportionally, those most concerned about Northeastern’s free speech policies were alumni and staff, with over 70.0% of total respondents for both groups expressing feeling “not confident” or “unsure” about Northeastern’s current ability to promote free expression on campus. Of the 727 undergraduate students surveyed, 57.2% selected “not confident” or “unsure”.

Figure 2.1: How confident do you feel that Northeastern promotes free expression on campus?

Total Respondents: 1032



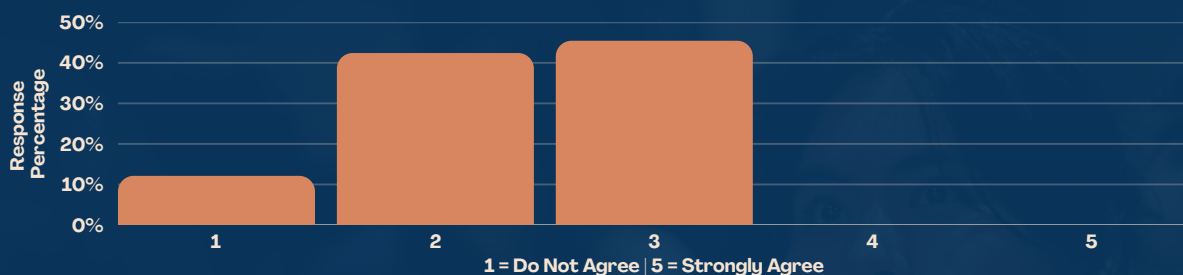
Results

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Continued

In the town hall survey, we asked a similar question: “Based on your current understanding of Northeastern administration’s policies and actions regarding free expression, how well do you feel (1-5) they protect free speech on campus?” 100.0% of respondents gave a ranking from 1-3, saying they “do not agree” or feel “unsure” about the school’s ability to protect free speech. Of this group, 20 out of 33 leaders (60.6%) said they “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Not one respondent expressed confidence in Northeastern’s ability to protect free speech on campus.

Figure 2.2: Based on your current understanding of Northeastern administration’s policies and actions regarding free expression, how well do you feel (1-5) they protect free expression on campus?

Total Respondents: 33 Student Leaders



Many of the student leaders who attended the town hall expressed their concerns about freedom of expression at Northeastern during the discussion. Students cited the university’s reaction to the April 2024 pro-Palestine encampment and protests on campus²⁴, saying Northeastern administration was actively suppressing the students’ free speech. During the conversations, students agreed that Northeastern’s confusing demonstration policies make it difficult to protest properly, and the long and arduous process leaves students feeling like the school is trying to push their voices aside. As for student organizations’ activities and intentions, those too have been impacted by the administration. One student leader expressed that they feel the need to censor what their organization posts on social media so they don’t lose essential grants. In other cases, student leaders said they have had to rename and repurpose events they wanted to hold because Northeastern was not satisfied with them, threatening to deny the organization the ability to book space on campus.

In a follow-up survey where a subset of the same student leaders were polled as part of our policy solution workshop, many continued to express the same disappointment in Northeastern’s policies. When asked if they felt “satisfied by the current level of transparency concerning the university’s criteria and process for deciding whether student organizations’ requests to demonstrate are approved,” 90.9% responded “no.” Only one respondent selected “yes”. The students were then asked the same question about the university’s criteria and process for deciding whether their organizations’ requests to book a space are approved. 54.5% of the students responded “No,” indicating that they feel that the current level of transparency is not enough.

²⁴Sunkara, Annika. “Campus Turned Processing Area.” *The Huntington News*, 12 June 2024, huntnewsnu.com/78499/encampment/campus-turned-processing-area/.

Results

Research and Career Opportunities for Students

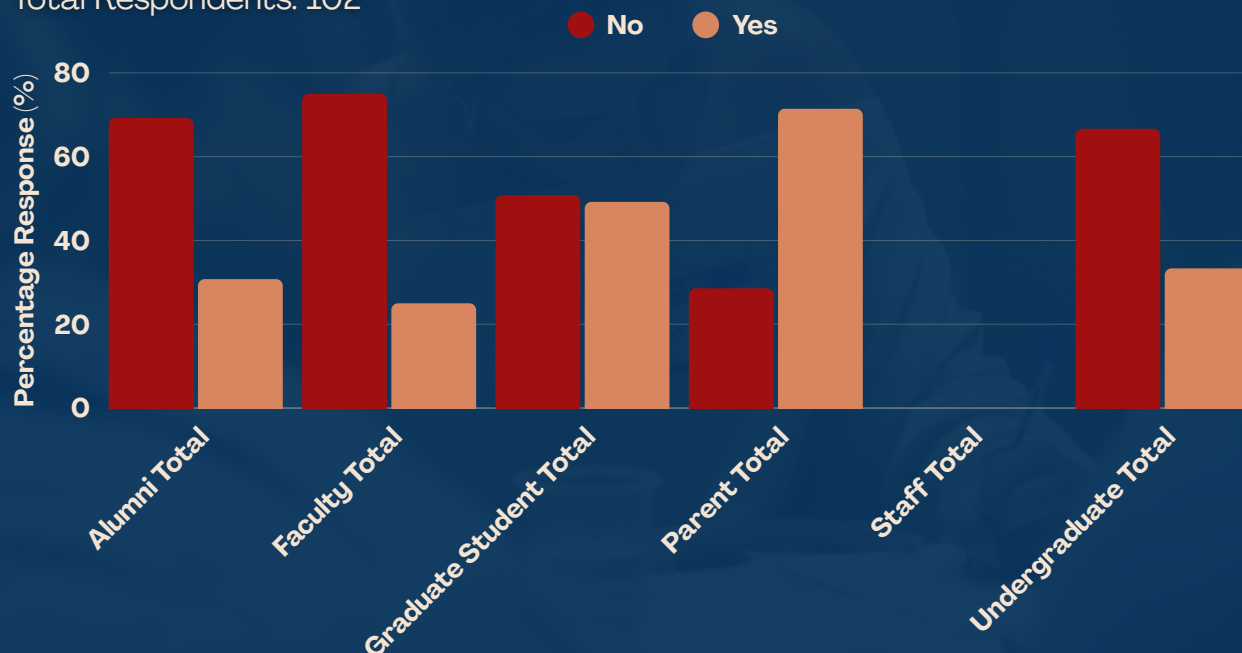
Assessing the Access and Barriers to Student Opportunity

The community survey, town hall, and policy solution workshop results show that students' research and career opportunities have been negatively impacted both by the federal administration and the actions of Northeastern's administration. Respondents also indicated that they feel opportunities to participate in university research lack accessibility.

The community survey asked the optional question "Have your research opportunities or co-op funding been affected by the new federal administration?" Here, 102 university community members responded. Of the respondents, 45.1% said their research opportunities or co-op funding had been affected. Notably, out of the 102 impacted respondents, 15, or 14.7%, were undergraduate students and 63, or 61.7%, were graduate students (Figure 3.1). The stronger impact on graduate students is particularly noteworthy, as they not only represent the largest share of respondents but also the group most engaged in conducting in-depth²⁵, specialized research at the university.

Figure 3.1: Have your research opportunities or co-op funding been affected by the new federal administration?

Total Respondents: 102



²⁵ Gocke, Meghan. "What Is a Graduate Degree?" *Northeastern University Graduate Programs*, 28 Feb. 2025, graduate.northeastern.edu/knowledge-hub/what-is-a-graduate-degree/#:~:text=By%20the%20time%20a%20student,best%20fit%20their%20needs%2C%20however.

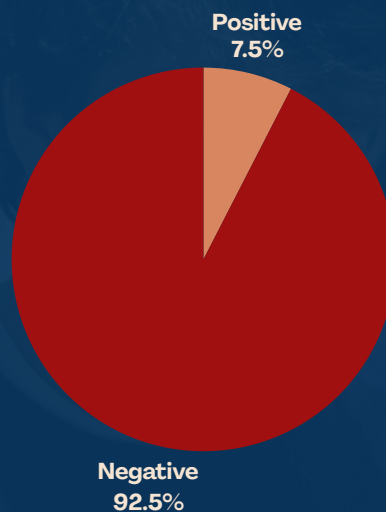
Results

Research and Career Opportunities for Students

Assessing the Access and Barriers to Student Opportunity

The following question on the community survey asked “If your research opportunities or co-op funding has been affected, has it been a positive or negative effect?” Because this question was optional, only 53 of the 102 impacted respondents answered. Of the 53 responses, only four said that the effect had been positive. Forty-nine respondents, or 92.5%, reported that the federal administration has negatively impacted their research opportunities or co-op funding (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: If your research opportunities or co-op funding have been affected, has it been a positive or negative effect?
Total Respondents: 53



Results

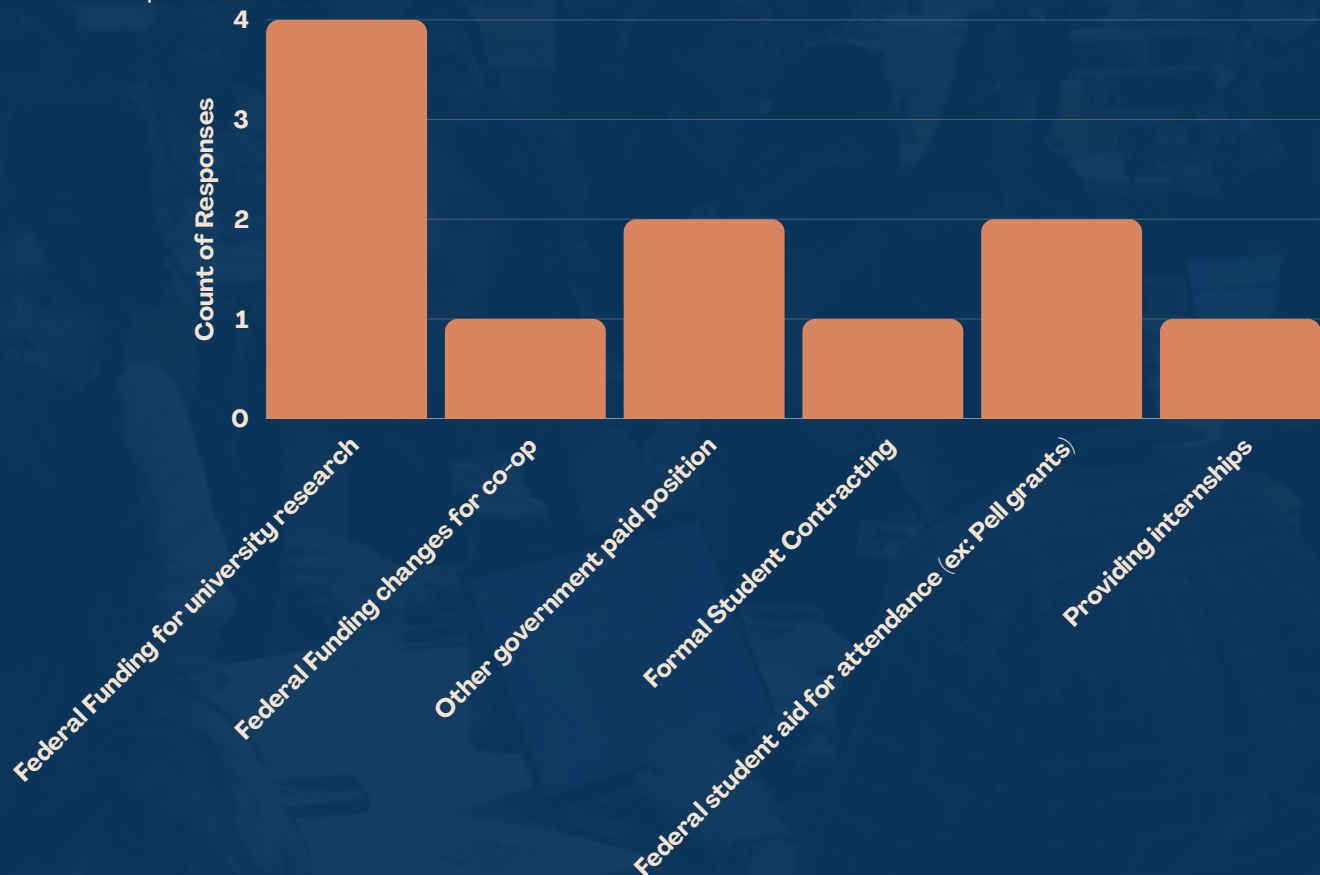
Research and Career Opportunities for Students

Assessing the Access and Barriers to Student Opportunity

Of the eight parents whose children were impacted by the actions of the federal government, six answered that their child had been negatively affected. The disaggregate responses show that four parents listed “federal funding for university research,” two listed “other government paid positions,” two listed “federal student aid for attendance (ex: Pell Grants),” one listed “formal student contracting,” one listed “providing co-ops,” and one listed “federal funding changes for co-op.” In sum, of the impacted community members surveyed, nearly half said the impact has been negative.

Figure 3.3: Please select any relevant ways the federal administration has been impactful.

Total Respondents: 8



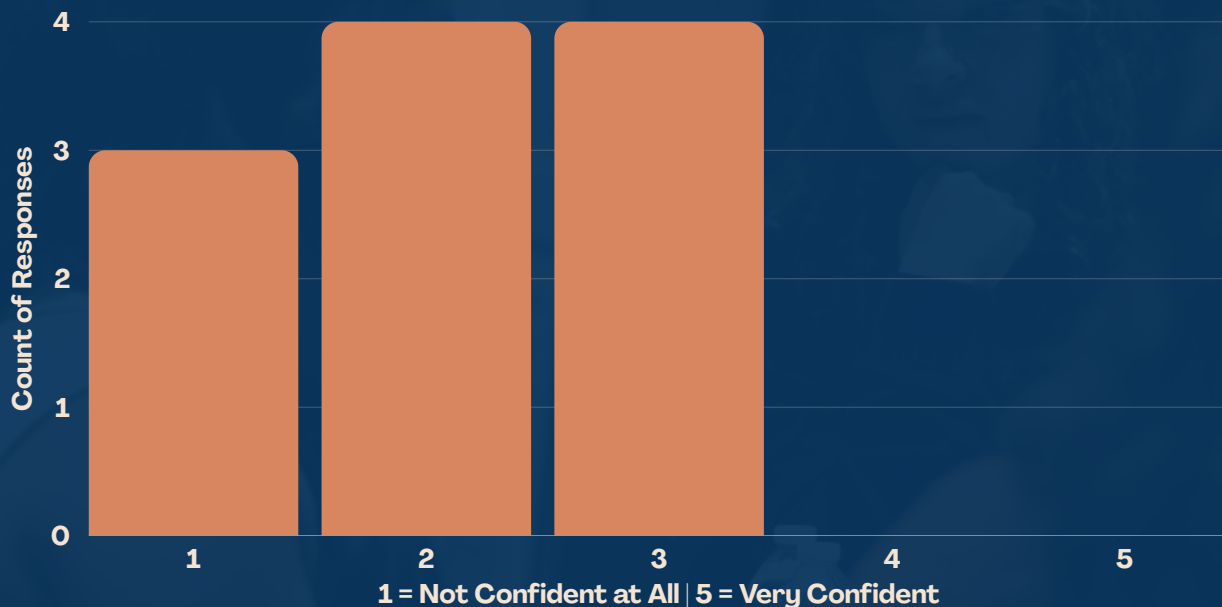
Results

Research and Career Opportunities for Students

Assessing the Access and Barriers to Student Opportunity

The community survey responses are supported by both the quantitative and qualitative information collected during the town hall. At the town hall, eight undergraduate student leaders discussed their worries concerning research cuts. The president of an engineering organization said they are currently involved in research but “cuts to biomedical research” worry him. In addition, student leaders expressed deep frustration for the new \$100 Lab and Studio Fee⁸ imposed on students for each lab or studio class they take, and on music ensembles for studio use.

Figure 3.4: How would you rate your confidence (1-5) in Northeastern's ability to properly manage and protect federal research funding?
Total Respondents: 11



Results

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community

Response to DEI Restructuring and Student Support Gaps

The results from the community survey indicate a reduced sense of belonging due to Northeastern's decision to restructure the Office of DEI as the Office of Belonging. When asked, "To what degree have you felt positively or negatively impacted by the changes to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Northeastern," 469 out of the 1,032 respondents, or 45.4% (Figure 4.1), had some or severe negative impact. 482 respondents, or 46.7%, had no impact, and 81 respondents, or 7.8%, had some level of positive impact. The results demonstrate that a significant portion of the Northeastern community has experienced negative effects, which suggest that these changes have damaged the very thing they have sought to uphold: belonging.

Figure 4.1: To what degree have you felt positively or negatively impacted by the changes to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Northeastern?

Total Respondents: 1032

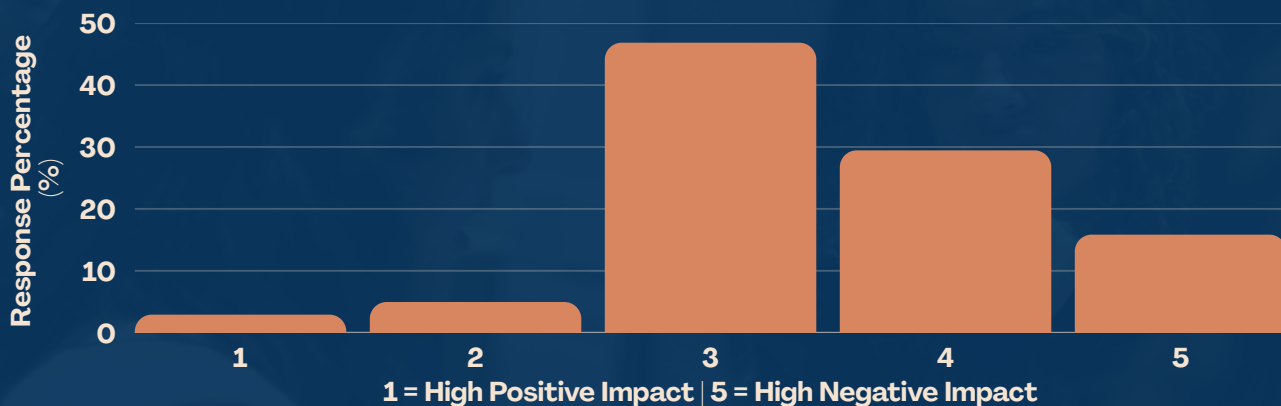
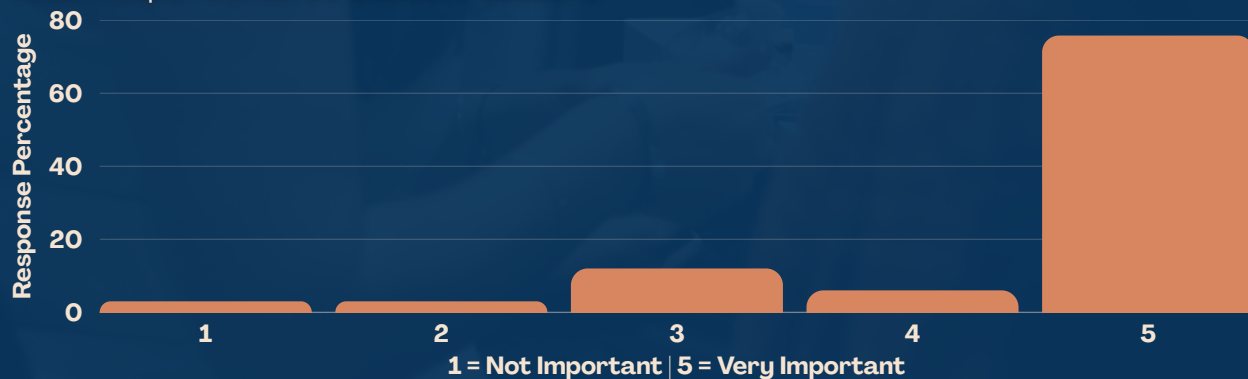


Figure 4.2: How important do you feel it is (1-5) for Northeastern University's policy and actions to represent their mission statements e.g. "Creating a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive, succeed, and feel a strong sense of belonging"?

Total Respondents: 33 Student Leaders



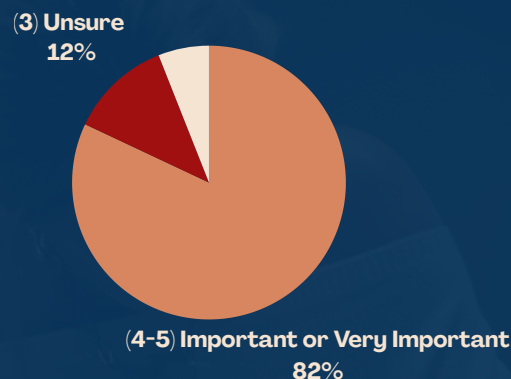
Results

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community Continued

The town hall survey shows that Northeastern's response to federal attacks on DEI policies has had a noticeable impact. At the town hall, when asked "To what degree (1-5) do you feel the changes to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion at Northeastern fulfill their mission statements," 26 out of 33 student leaders, or 78.8%, answered saying they "disagree" with the changes made to DEI fulfilling their mission statements, with two saying they were "uncertain" (Figure 4.3). Student leaders expressed deep concern and disappointment over the rebranding of the DEI Office to "The Office of Belonging," along with the loss of key staff members, including the executive director. Many viewed this as a "performative" move, rather than a genuine commitment to diversity, with one student giving a personal account of how they were emailed to be photographed for the Northeastern website because they are a wheelchair user. Students cited a lack of transparency, fear of retaliation, and a reduction in diversity on campus along with institutional support for marginalized students.

Figure 4.3: To what degree (1-5) do you feel the changes to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion at Northeastern fulfill their mission statements e.g. "Creating a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive, succeed, and feel a strong sense of belonging"?

Total Respondents: 33 Student Leaders



In addition to DEI changes, many survey respondents and student leaders largely agreed that Northeastern's mental health and disability resources are inadequate. In the town hall, 47.2% of student leaders, 17, discussed feeling a general lack of student support from administration. Student leaders described their interactions with University Health and Counseling Services: incredibly long response times — sometimes complete unresponsiveness — being forced into medical leave when the university deemed their health to be a "liability," and the denial of essential disability accommodations. Student leaders also expressed concern over the actions of NUPD when it comes to mental health resources, describing inadequate wellness checks and "hostile" behavior towards those in crisis. While Northeastern EFP cannot confirm all these claims, they demonstrate a widely held understanding among student leaders that student-facing resources can be unwelcoming and unsupportive.

At the policy solution workshop, 100.0% of student leaders, all 11, indicated support for "the Office of Student Life conducting an annual university-wide survey of students' basic needs." Students widely agreed that there are not enough resources to support student basic needs and agreed on the need to develop initiatives that require Northeastern to address, provide, and promote resources that address students' basic needs.

Results

International Students and Legal Resources

Student Sentiment Concerning Civil Rights and Legal Protection for International Students

Results from the community survey indicate an overwhelming desire for legal support on Northeastern's campus for at-risk populations. We posed the question: "Would you like the university to provide legal resources to students and faculty if their immigration status were to be threatened? Examples of legal resources include: connecting students with an immigration attorney and/or writing a declaration of support for a university community member." A total of 997 respondents, or 96.6%, stated that they would want Northeastern to provide legal resources to international students if their legal status were threatened (Figure 5.1).

Additionally, at the town hall, 36 student leaders were asked the same question. Similarly, 96.7% of attendees answered almost unanimously in the affirmative (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.1: Would you like the University to provide legal resources to students and faculty if their immigration status were to be threatened?

Total Respondents: 1032

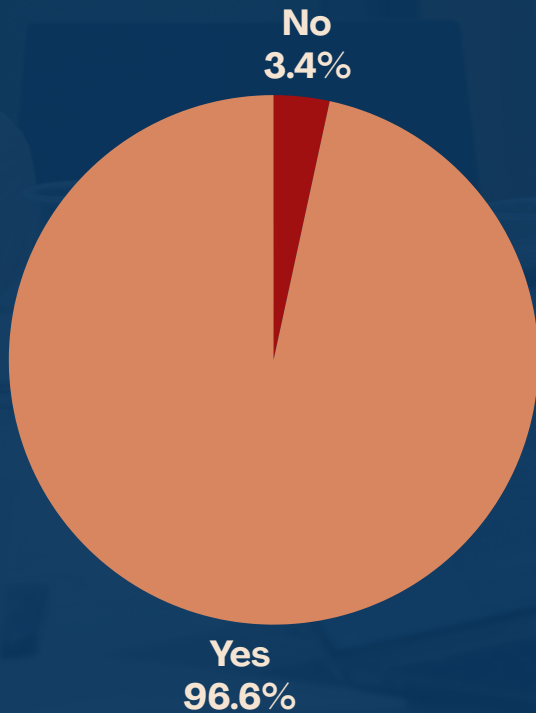
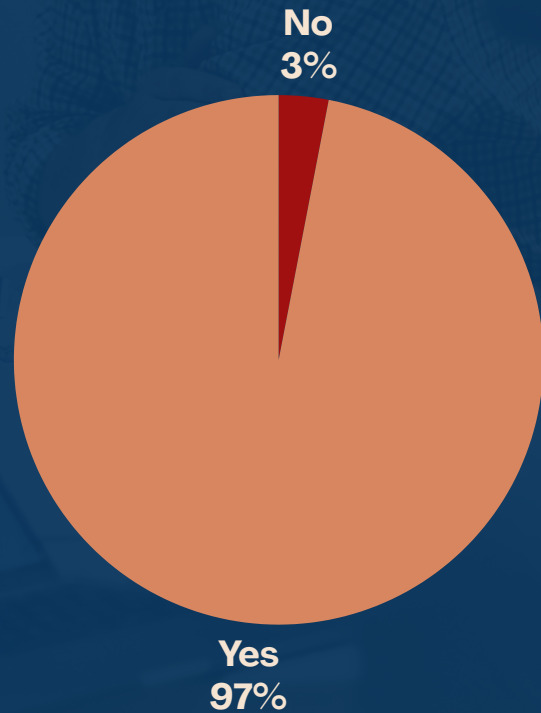


Figure 5.2: Do you think Northeastern should provide legal resources to defend your civil rights as a student?

Total Respondents: 33 Student Leaders



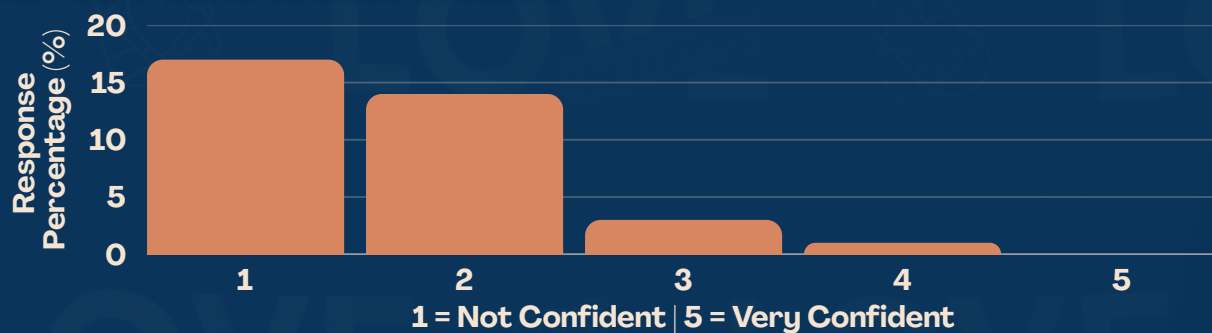
Results

International Students and Legal Resources Continued

Student leaders were also asked, “How confident (1-5) are you that Northeastern would sufficiently provide legal resources to defend your rights as a student?” Here, 88.6% responded with a “1” or “2,” stating they have “no confidence at all” or “little confidence” that Northeastern’s administration would provide the resources (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: How confident (1-5) are you that Northeastern would sufficiently provide legal resources to defend your rights as a student?

Total Respondents: 35 Student Leaders



Paired with students’ anecdotes, also expressed at the town hall, these responses reveal a significant gap between students’ desire for the university to provide resources to international students and the expectation that it will. One student said that “every international student [they know] has said [they’re] terrified.” Another student who spearheads a radio show that discusses related issues said “We decided no one who was a host would be an international student. That’s not a risk we’ll take.” International student sentiment could be described as “waiting for the other shoe to drop,” as expressed by this student, who also said that “being on a student visa is fine for now, but who knows what’s going to happen.” At the town hall, students overwhelmingly admitted that, for a school that “lives and dies by its international students,” it is odd that there has been little additional support for them.

It is also worth noting that throughout all conversations, 72.2%, or 26 leaders, independently discussed the lack of support for international students. This topic was the third-most discussed, just behind a lack of student representation (80.6%, 29 leaders) and concerns about freedom of expression (77.8%, 28 leaders).

At the policy workshop, 11 student leaders were asked, “Do you think the university should set up an immigrants’ rights clinic in the School of Law where law students led by faculty represent non-citizens such as Northeastern international students?” 90.9% of leaders, or 10, said they would support this. These sentiments underscore a broader criticism of Northeastern’s Office of Global Services (OGS). One student asserted that “OGS [has] no programs that [work] or [intend] to protect international students.” Another expressed their frustration with the lack of guidance given to international students by OGS, saying, “they aren’t even able to provide basic support, let alone related to current attacks on international students. All they said is [to keep] your social media [private].” While students may not be aware of the full set of resources OGS has to offer — an issue in itself — at a time when many students feel it is imperative that this office speak up, they see it worryingly silent.

Results

Immigrations and Customs Enforcement

Community Concerns Over University ICE Policy

In addition to a lack of support from Northeastern administration, international students feel that the Northeastern administration has not been transparent regarding the university's plans if ICE comes to campus.

In the community survey, respondents were asked the question: "Would you consider Northeastern transparent about their policy if federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) comes to campus?" Out of 1,032 respondents, 717 or 69.5% responded no (Figure 6.1). Many responses indicated confusion and concern — students don't know what Northeastern's policy really is, nor what actions the administration plans to take if ICE enters campus. One respondent wrote: "In the absence of transparency, students are left to assume they are unprotected." Another: "I would wager the University could benefit from being clearer and more direct with its language and policy."

In the town hall survey, 85.3% or 29 of the 34 responding student leaders felt that it is important that the Northeastern community is informed about what the Northeastern administration will do if ICE comes to campus (Figure 6.2). During the town hall, student leaders discussed being "left in the dark" and feeling unprotected: "I'm afraid to do social and political expression, I might be punished, if ICE shows up," one student commented.

Figure 6.1: Would you consider Northeastern transparent about their policy if federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) comes to campus?

Total Respondents: 1032

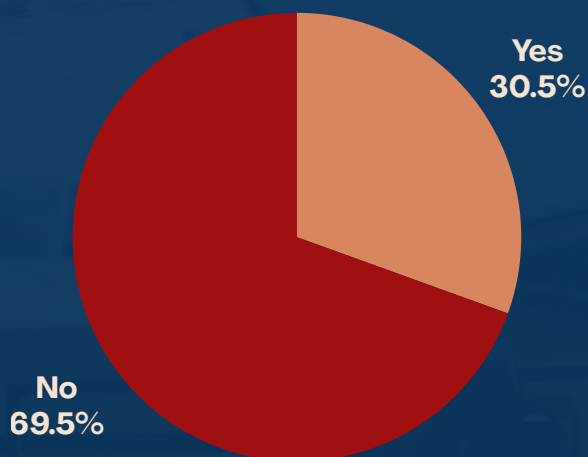
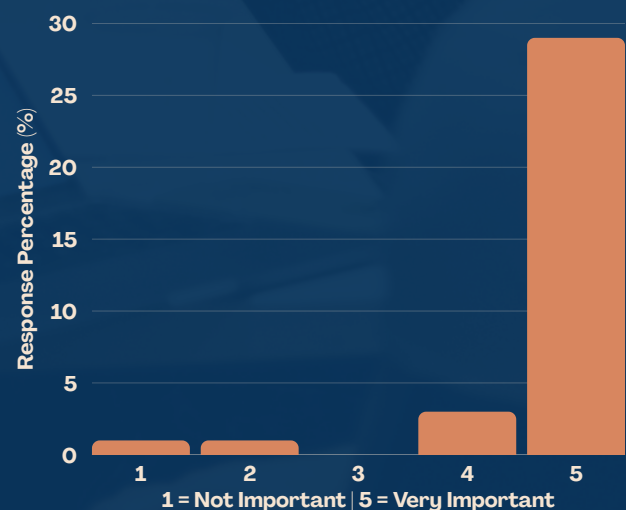


Figure 6.2: How important do you feel it is (1-5) that the Northeastern University community is informed about what Northeastern administration will do if Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) comes to campus?

Total Respondents: 33 Student Leaders



Results

Student Representation and Administrative Transparency

Findings on University Transparency and Student Representation in Shared Governance

Survey data from the community survey, town hall, and policy solution workshop show that representation and transparency within the Northeastern administration and Board of Trustees are issues of high concern at Northeastern.

In the community survey, when asked whether “Northeastern should involve students in decision-making concerning the student code of conduct, academic freedom, or other university policies,” 989 respondents, or 95.8%, answered “Yes” (Figure 7.1). Furthermore, in the town hall survey, 28 of 32 student leaders, or 87.5%, answered that it is either “important” or “very important” that senior leaders in Northeastern’s administration and Board of Trustees are transparent about decisions that impact student life (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.1: Do you think Northeastern should involve students in decision making concerning the student code of conduct, academic freedom, or other university policies?

Total Respondents: 1032

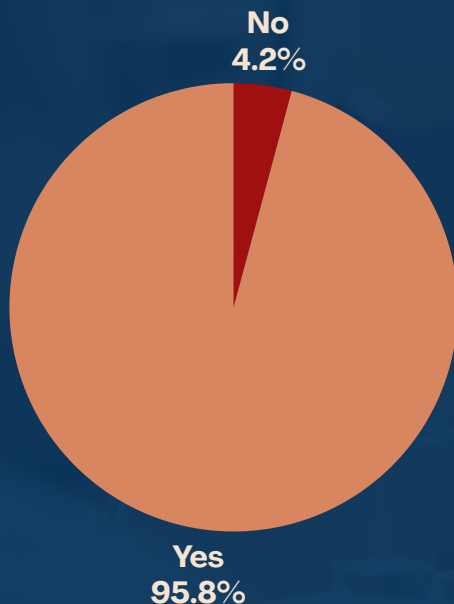
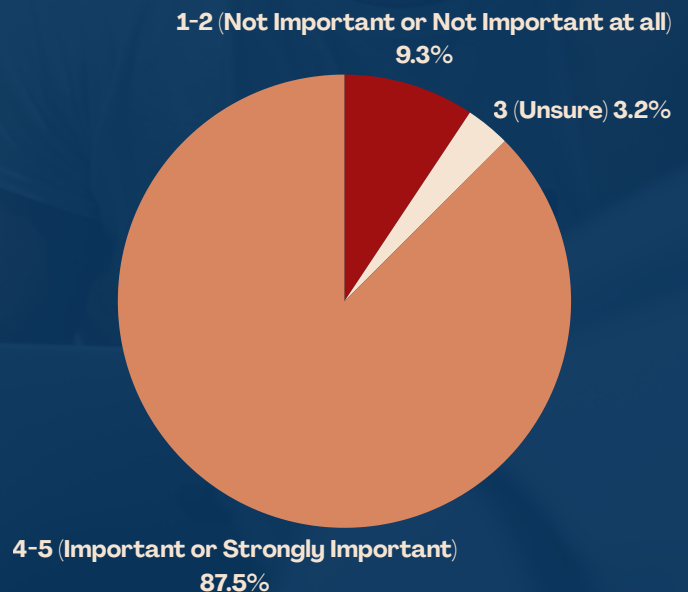


Figure 7.2 How important do you feel it is (1-5) that senior leaders in Northeastern’s administration and Northeastern’s Board of Trustees are transparent about the decisions they make that impact student life?

Total Respondents: 32 Student Leaders



Results

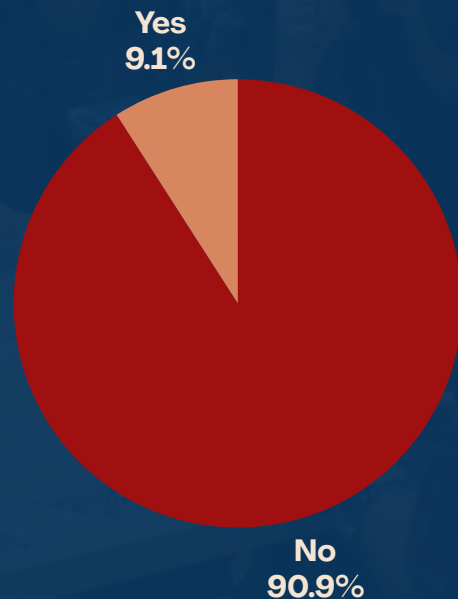
Student Representation and Administrative Transparency Continued

Findings on University Transparency and Student Representation in Shared Governance

Nonetheless, polling data from the community survey, the town hall, and the policy solution workshop suggests that Northeastern students are dissatisfied with current levels of transparency from the administration and Board of Trustees. Twenty student leaders at the town hall, or 55.5%, brought up a lack of administrative transparency in their discussions. Additionally, during town hall discussions, 16 out of 36 of student leaders, or 44.4%, brought up a lack of administrative communication, while 11 brought up inaccessibility to the administration. And when asked in the policy solution workshop survey, “Do you think that senior members of Northeastern’s administration and the Board of Trustees are adequately transparent about decisions they make that impact student life,” 10 out of 11 student leaders answered “they are not adequately transparent” (Figure 7.3). As one community survey respondent wrote, “[Northeastern] consistently lacks communication with students,” and as a student leader said at the town hall, “the Board of Trustees is ‘an opaque organization’ that does not make representative decisions.”

Figure 7.3: Do you think that senior members of Northeastern’s administration and the board of trustees are adequately transparent about decisions they make that impact student life?

Total Respondents: 11



Results

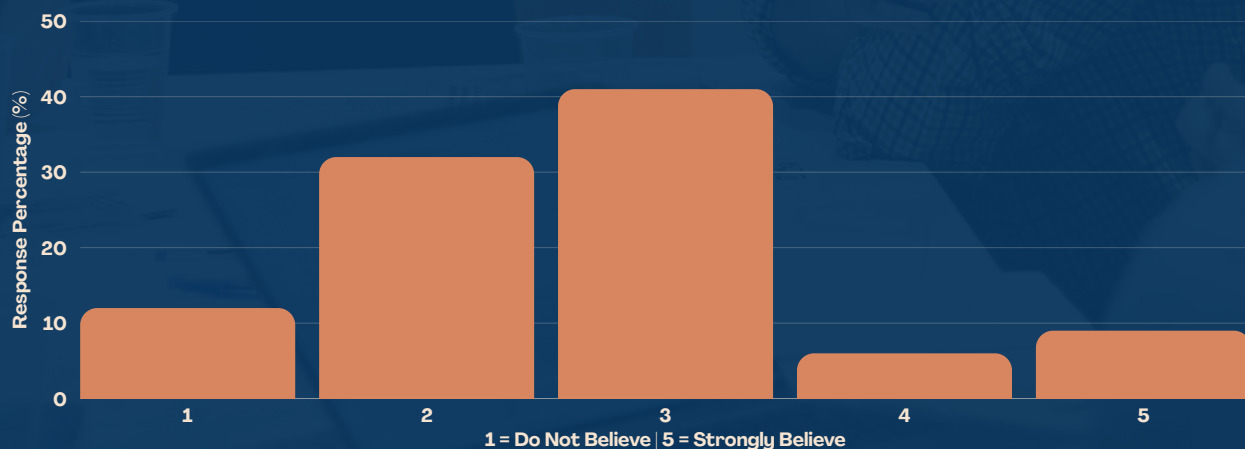
Student Representation and Administrative Transparency Continued

Findings on University Transparency and Student Representation in Shared Governance

Polling data also suggests that Northeastern students are dissatisfied with the level of representation they have in the university. At the town hall, 29 out of 36 student leaders, or 80.5%, brought up the lack of student representation at Northeastern and their desire for more — whether that be on the Board of Trustees, in the administration, or at a campus-life level. When it came to Northeastern’s Student Government Association (SGA), the representative body for undergraduate students, students again expressed concern: In the town hall survey, 85.3% of student responding leaders, or 29 of 34, answered that they are either “unsure” or “do not believe” that Northeastern student government representatives advocate for their core concerns on campus (Figure 7.4). As many pointed out, they believe this is in part because SGA is not given enough power to influence real change on campus. At the town hall, one student leader commented that initiatives taken in SGA “feel like just suggestions and not tangible actions,” and as another said, passing legislation in SGA is “very draining and isolating” because administrators are “inaccessible” and do not respond to legislation.

Figure 7.4: To what degree (1-5), do you believe Northeastern student government representatives advocate for your core concerns on campus?

Total Respondents: 34 Student Leaders



Overall, our research shows students are not satisfied with the level of transparency from the Northeastern administration and their level of representation within university governance.

Limitations

A reflection on the study's methodology: sampling, design, qualitative analysis, and scope constraints

While the study provides valuable insights into community sentiment at Northeastern, there are several methodological limitations that should be considered.

Sampling and Representation

While 1,077 respondents is substantial, it is only 2.2% of the university's population, and 77.2% of those respondents are undergraduate students, meaning our sample is weighted heavily towards those students. To add, all respondents in the study participated voluntarily, which may have attracted respondents with stronger viewpoints than the broader Northeastern community, creating a degree of bias in our research. In addition, our study did not collect comprehensive demographic data, limiting our ability to understand how different subgroups are impacted by specific issues. Furthermore, the small sample size of faculty and staff may also be too small to draw broader conclusions. Lastly, our town hall and policy solution workshop exclusively included student leaders, who may be more politically engaged and have different perspectives than the general student body.

Survey Design

Some questions in our surveys may have contained implicit framing that influenced responses. For instance, providing examples of how Northeastern changed its DEI programs may have primed respondents to think about how they feel about these changes rather than how their lives have changed day-to-day. In addition, the responses in this study may have been influenced by respondents' feelings about daily political developments, potentially limiting their applicability to Northeastern's policies.

Qualitative Analysis

Town hall and policy solution workshop discussions were facilitated and summarized by Northeastern EFP members, who may have unconsciously emphasized themes aligned with the association's perspectives. Also, during the summary process, the researchers did not conduct inter-rater reliability testing to ensure consistency across different notetakers and facilitators.

Scope Constraints

Because our research covers seven topics, the breadth and depth of each topic is limited, and deserve even more in-depth analysis. In addition, because the community survey, town hall, and policy solution workshop were all conducted during one semester, the research cannot establish trends or changes in sentiment over time.

Interpretation

Limitations suggest our findings rely heavily on engaged community members such as student leaders, meaning readers should be hesitant to take our findings as definitive measures of universal opinion. However, the consistency of themes across multiple data collection methods strengthens confidence in our core findings, particularly where large majorities expressed similar views.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Northeastern Educational Freedom Project collected and analyzed data on Northeastern community sentiment, reaching 1,077 individuals through three surveys, a town hall with student organization leaders, and a workshop with student leaders. Results show that 55.8% of students, staff, faculty, and alumni, and 100.0% of student leaders surveyed are not confident that the university promotes free expression. 75.8% of student leaders surveyed do not feel the university's actions fulfill its mission of belonging. 88.6% of student leaders are not confident that the university would protect their rights. 69.5% of students, staff, faculty, and alumni surveyed do not think Northeastern is transparent about what the university's policy is if ICE comes to campus. 95.8% of students, staff, faculty, and alumni surveyed believe students should be involved in decisions concerning the student code of conduct, academic freedom, and university policies. Northeastern EFP will share this information with the Northeastern University student body and administration, petition for policy proposals, and propose legislation to the Student Government Association Senate to push for policy reforms.



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