STEM-DRIVEN PREPARING FOR CAREERS

THE LURE OF THE LAB: Larry Andrade leads research and development
“Catch the opportunity.” That’s one translation of the motto, *Occasionem Cognosce*, on the family crest of the Lowell family, benefactors of education in Boston since the early 19th century.

This motto could not be more fitting for our entire student body—and for the Lowell Institute School at Northeastern University. The first school of its kind in the nation to focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the Lowell Institute School offers students the opportunity to complete a Bachelor’s degree and advance in STEM-driven careers.

At a time when the opportunity for higher education was narrow and confined to the educated elite, the Lowell Institute School, founded in 1905, encouraged working people to “catch the opportunity” made newly available to them, to study and learn while they continued to work, to move up in their professions, and—with newly acquired knowledge and skills—to lead.

And that’s the spirit and vision of the Lowell Institute School today, as it has been re-imagined for a new and demanding economy. It is a school that provides a unique combination of curricula specifically structured for the last two years of Bachelor’s degree study, Northeastern’s signature experiential learning, and the opportunity to participate in co-op.

In these pages, you’ll meet alumni and students drawn to STEM careers, which make up more than 10 percent of the U.S. economy, are predicted to grow the fastest, and represent some of the best-paying fields in the country.

Their stories provide a glimpse into this sector of the economy and a perspective on how the College of Professional Studies is responding to a changing world with its enduring commitment to learning for a lifetime.

Sincerely,

John G. LaBrie
Dean
In 1836, John Lowell, Jr., established a family foundation known as the Lowell Institute, chartered in Boston, for the purpose of providing "public lectures, to be delivered in the said city of Boston upon Philosophy, natural history, and the arts and sciences...for the public good."

From this grand, altruistic purpose grew the vision that would become the Lowell Institute School:

"The bequest of John Lowell, Jr., which ultimately led to the establishment of the Lowell Institute, was at the time the largest gift that had ever been appropriated in this country, by a private individual, for the endowment of any literary institution. The institution he founded was unique. Oliver Wendell Holmes said: 'No nobler or more helpful institution exists in America than Boston’s Lowell Institute.' Lowell envisioned an educational institution dedicated to providing lectures to the people of Boston regardless of their gender, race, or economic status. For that reason the lectures were to be free of cost and open to everyone….Funds from the trust were to be used for instruction only, not infrastructure, and the cost of courses should not exceed the cost of two bushels of wheat."  

In 1900, A. Lawrence Lowell, a member of the Corporation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), became trustee of the Lowell Institute, and replaced a Lowell Institute program known as the Series of Advanced Lecture Courses taught by MIT faculty with the School for Industrial Foremen.

"A. Lawrence Lowell concluded that the popular lectures sponsored by the Lowell Institute, although very well done, were not reaching the kind of student who would benefit most. 'There was ample opportunity for people with money to go to college. For the tradesmen there were trade schools, but there was no opportunity for the foremen, to improve themselves in their daily work. Dr. Lowell felt it would be better to replace these supplementary lectures, on more or less unrelated topics, with lectures organized into a well-planned curriculum.' He felt that a better curriculum would help to encourage those men who worked as foremen to return to school."

Today, generations of ambitious students who have studied at the Lowell Institute School have taken their places in the foremost fields of their day, and the leaders of the School have adopted a new strategic vision based on the needs of students and the demands of the economy.

"This new strategic vision [for the Lowell Institute School] recognized that the market was shifting away from the relatively narrow bachelor of science in engineering technology degrees to broader STEM degrees and that the Lowell Institute School was in a unique position to offer these degrees….

"[It] acknowledged that the Lowell Institute School should not duplicate what other colleges do. In the area of STEM education, community colleges in the Boston area were already training numerous working adults in the basics of STEM. It was duplicative for the Lowell Institute School to offer associate degrees when community colleges provided the same service at a very low cost to students. Instead, the Lowell Institute School’s mission of educating working people in industry was thought to be best served by focusing on providing bachelor’s degree completion programs that support students’ efforts to obtain the credentials and training that employers require in high-growth STEM fields where there is strong workforce demand."
Larry Andrade’s unconventional route to R&D leadership

The rise in opiate abuse and the emergence of synthetic drugs with street names like “n-bomb,” “bath salts,” and “spice” have increased the demand for accurate drug testing and monitoring services. Whether working to make drug compliance tests more reliable or developing methods to detect the presence of new illegal drugs in blood or urine, scientists must possess both a deep understanding of biochemistry and demonstrated expertise in the use of sophisticated analytical technologies, such as liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry.

At Dominion Diagnostics of North Kingstown, Rhode Island, one of the nation’s top providers of clinical drug monitoring solutions, that responsibility is entrusted to the company’s Director of Research and Development—and University College 1994 graduate—Lawrence J. Andrade.

A blue-collar boyhood

Lawrence Andrade’s career journey was not a typical one. He grew up in a working-class family in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, without college-educated role models.

“My father was in the U.S. Navy when we were younger, then he was a machinist, a foundry worker, and a meat cutter, and my mom worked as a housekeeper,” Andrade remembered. “Neither one finished high school, but they both worked hard and did whatever they could.”

While Andrade enjoyed science classes and excelled in school, college remained a vague and remote aspiration. However, while attending high school, he began volunteering at nearby Memorial Hospital. >>>

“I had to continue to work full-time, and there really weren’t any schools that had part-time programs, especially in the life sciences. Then I discovered Northeastern University’s University College.

“I made an appointment with Katherine Ziegler, a counselor at the school. Together, we went over my goals and needs, she reviewed my transcripts, and we tried to figure out which programs would be a good fit.

“After we laid everything out, she extrapolated a possible graduation date: the summer of 1994. I said to her, ‘But Mrs. Ziegler, I’m going to be 30 years old when I finish my Bachelor’s degree’—to which she replied, ‘Well then, Lawrence, you can be a 30-year-old with a degree or a 30-year-old without a Bachelor’s degree. Your choice is clear.’

“That crisp and concise logic hit a nerve. It made sense. It made me think. And, it proved to have a lasting impact. I carry that lesson with me to this day, and it colors how I approach everything I do.”

Andrade leads new product research and development at Dominion Diagnostics, North Kingstown, RI.
The R&D team develops more accurate means of confirming the presence of drugs and reducing the number of false positives. Dominion Diagnostics was named one of Rhode Island’s 2015 Best Places To Work by Providence Business News.

“Going it alone

By age 18, he had moved out of his parents’ house and enrolled in Community College of Rhode Island while working a succession of full-time jobs in the evening. Without scholarships or family support, Lawrence Andrade spent five years earning an Associate in Applied Science degree in Chemical Technology. The effort paid off when DuPont offered Andrade an entry-level position as a chemist in the Boston area. Andrade enjoyed the work, but soon discovered that his career would be limited without a Bachelor’s degree. DuPont provided a generous educational reimbursement program, but that also meant that Andrade would have to continue working full-time while earning his degree. When he researched programs, he discovered that only one university in the Boston area offered part-time programs in life sciences: Northeastern. He applied and was accepted.

Facility and students: something in common

“My instrumental analysis instructor and genetics professor were very helpful and inspiring,” recalled Andrade. “Most of the teaching staff worked full-time in the field, so we had that in common, which I don’t think I would have had in day school.”

Five years later, at age 30, Lawrence Andrade graduated with honors with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical and Biological Technology. Before long, his Northeastern biology education landed him a research position at ARIAD Pharmaceuticals, purifying and characterizing recombinant target proteins to develop anti-cancer drugs. His name began appearing on articles in scholarly journals, including the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science and the Journal of Medicinal Chemistry.

“Northeastern enabled me to become a biologist,” said Andrade. “The education in biology and biochemistry was current, and I found that I was able to compete with seasoned people who went to Ivy League schools.”

Working at the forefront of science

At Dominion Diagnostics, Andrade supervises a staff of four working to develop more accurate means of confirming the presence of drugs, both therapeutic and illicit, and reducing the number of false positives.

“We develop and validate the methods in the research lab, then transfer them to the instruments in the production laboratory. The assays are then run by our Medical Technologists,” noted Andrade. “It’s hard to stay ahead of the street drugs, but as soon as they’re scheduled by the Drug Enforcement Agency, we pursue them to add to our menu.”

It is important and rewarding work. “Our patients depend on our results, which can directly affect people’s lives,” said Andrade. “It’s not something we take lightly.”

THE GIFT OF EDUCATION

Ken Solano, Associate Dean Emeritus, with student, Alexis Polack, 2015 Scholarship recipient.

My father-in-law said if I was ever going to marry his daughter, I’d better go to college. Things worked out! Because of the people I met at Northeastern, I had a great career, and my late wife, Nancy—also an alum—and I were married for 37 years.

I studied English and Journalism and got my degree from the College of Liberal Arts, now the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, in 1968. Nancy got her Master’s in Education from the Graduate School of Education in 1977.

After getting my Master’s in Higher Education Administration at the Graduate School of Education in 1975, I worked with two of the former deans of Northeastern’s University College, John Jordan and the late Kenneth Ballou.

Today, I teach Organizational Behavior, Leadership, and Human Relations courses at the College of Professional Studies. There have been lots of changes, but it’s great. About 50 percent of our courses are now online. It’s the way of the future.

I support scholarships at the College of Professional Studies because I want to see our students succeed. You can give working students the gift of education by supporting the Spirit Scholarship Fund at the College of Professional Studies. Gifts to this fund provide grants to students facing severe financial hardship.

– Ken Solano

To make a donation or for more information:
Please contact Carla Kindt, Director of Development and Special Projects at Northeastern University, at 617.373.2724 or c.kindt@neu.edu.
Or visit northeastern.edu/cps to make a gift on our secure website.
Strictly speaking, Carla Porter doesn’t really need to complete her Bachelor of Science degree in Information Technology. After all, she has succeeded for decades in the competitive and dynamic world of Information Technology with—out a degree, most recently as Business Systems Analyst Manager at athenahealth, a fast-growing leader in the field of electronic health records.

But Porter is determined to fulfill a promise she made to her grandmother, Elizabeth Sheppard, to complete the degree she began at Northeastern in 1982 but quickly abandoned.

“I was one of those kids that wasn’t built for college,” Porter recalled. “The only reason I went was because my grandmother was in my ear. There aren’t many college graduates in my family, my grandmother was very high on continuing education, and I felt pressured. I didn’t last a year.”

With the help of a scholarship from the Boston Housing Authority, Porter returned to Northeastern part-time in pursuit of a Finance degree while working full-time as an administrative assistant at Cabot, Cabot & Forbes. She stayed at Northeastern long enough to earn a certificate in Finance before relocating to Baltimore to “get my life together.”

“I had put school out of my mind,” she said. “I was progressing in my career without a degree in a way that I was financially stable and professionally satisfied.” She was also fully occupied being a mother to Christine and a second child, Anthony.

As her children approached adulthood, Porter began contemplating a move back to Boston to be closer to her family. She had transitioned into application development in 2001 (“I love it”), but when she began applying for jobs, she found that the lack of a degree was eliminating her from consideration in many cases.

Returning to Boston in 2013, Porter freelanced as a SharePoint developer before a former colleague recruited her to athenahealth in 2015. As she watched her own children’s college experiences, she couldn’t forget her late grandmother’s words.

“My grandmother was proud of my accomplishments, but she never stopped urging me to finish my degree,” said Porter. Elizabeth Sheppard put additional pressure on Porter by setting her own example.

“My grandmother was in her 50s when she went back to school, and not only got her Associate’s and Bachelor’s, but her Master’s degree,” Porter noted. And so, 33 years after she first became a Northeastern student, Carla Porter is back on campus working to complete her Bachelor’s degree, with some extra support from the College of Professional Studies.

“Last year, I applied for and received the Northeastern College of Professional Studies Working Professionals Education Advancement Scholarship,” said Porter. “I was awarded $5,000, which helped me out so much, as you can imagine.”

Now it’s her turn to set an example for her children, both of whom attended college but have since put their education on hold.

“It’s a personal accomplishment that I want to complete for myself, and for my children to see and then maybe they will continue their education,” said Porter. “We’re all competitive by nature—and if my going to school makes them think, ‘Mom ain’t gonna get the degree before I do,’ so be it.”

Carla Porter is finishing the degree she started in 1982.
How non-science major Sarah Trifiletti got into veterinary school in record time via Northeastern

There are only 28 veterinary medical colleges in the United States, and just one in New England. The Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University in Massachusetts is consistently ranked among the nation’s top 10, and competition for admission is tough, with fewer than 100 applicants accepted most years. Considering that, you might think a person with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and little other science education would have a slim chance of getting into Tufts. But Sarah Trifiletti did just that—with a big assist from Northeastern’s Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical program in the College of Professional Studies.

“I was a Psychology major at Boston College,” noted Trifiletti, who completed her undergraduate degree in 2012. “I was leaning toward doing a counseling psychology master’s or PhD program, or getting into psychology research.”

Shifting gears after graduation Working on a suicide hotline during college convinced the Huntington, New York, native that a future in counseling was not a good fit for her, so she took a research position upon graduation. Part of the research involved a medical study, and Trifiletti soon found herself gravitating toward a career in medicine. The specific specialty soon became clear. “One of my friends’ parents is a veterinarian, and she suggested that I come in and spend some time shadowing her,” she recalled. “A few hours a week became a regular thing; it was really interesting and intriguing, and I loved it.” Her career path clear, Trifiletti now had to address a major hurdle. “I’d only taken Calculus and one semester of Biology as an undergrad,” she explained. That was a problem, because the Tufts Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program requires applicants to have two semesters of General Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Physics, and single semesters of Genetics and Biochemistry.

The answer: Northeastern’s Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical Program While working as a veterinary technician at South Coastal Animal Health in Weymouth, Massachusetts, Sarah Trifiletti began exploring her options for getting the additional coursework and laboratories she needed. “I looked at Northeastern, Harvard Extension, Boston University, and UMass,” she said. “I liked Northeastern because of all the accelerated courses they offered, and the fact that it was the only school that offered a program at night, which was important because I was working days at the veterinary clinic.”

Once she enrolled, she found more to like. “What I especially liked about the program is the small lecture class and laboratory class sizes of about 25 students each,” said Trifiletti. “This allowed students to ask questions and really get to know professors. In the College of Professional Studies, students really matter—they aren’t just another number, and professors are more than willing to help students after class.”

Trifiletti singled out two professors in particular. “Dr. Kugabalasooriar and Dr. Sowalsky stood out to me for their hard work, dedication, and exceptional way of teaching the material,” she said. “They were both excellent professors who had comprehensive and clear lecture styles, and were always dedicated to teaching students. And, they truly helped me to understand very difficult material.”

Fully vetted for veterinary school In just a year and a half, Trifiletti successfully completed 11 courses and was accepted for admission to Tufts last February. She started her first semester this fall.

Adjusting to the rigor of the program has been the biggest challenge so far, but Sarah Trifiletti is relishing the opportunity. She is looking forward to working in a small animal practice after graduation. “In terms of the material I learned and its applicability to my coursework at Tufts, the Northeastern courses definitely helped me a lot.”
Why do so few Boston high school students go on to complete a university degree? This is the answer that Foundation Year was created to address—and to rectify. The program began accepting students into its one-year intensive program in 2009.

Foundation Year students follow a rigorous curriculum, including math, English, psychology, history, and sociology, with electives in business, STEM, or the liberal arts track. Students are offered considerable support as they enter the world of academia, attend workshops on college preparedness, and are given email and phone access to faculty, tutors, and counselors, whom they can contact at any time. It’s a program designed to make the academic world relevant and accessible to traditionally underserved students, regardless of their ability to pay—and it is working.

While college persistence among Boston public high school graduates is low, students who completed Foundation Year are persisting at rates almost triple that of their peers. It is a program of which Northeastern is particularly proud, with program leaders and faculty sharing results, methodologies, and resources in the national conversation on how best to give students the chance to succeed academically.

The path to an Engineering degree and career is not the same for every student: Nelzir Louiseize’s path led him through the intensive first-year college program at Northeastern, Foundation Year, to build his academic strength for the rigors ahead.

Northeastern University College of Professional Studies created Foundation Year in 2009 for students like Louiseize, to improve college persistence among City of Boston high school graduates. In a city renowned for higher education, data show that the four-year persistence rate for high school graduates in 2007 who were enrolled in a two-year college was only 22 percent.

Northeastern University designed Foundation Year to address three key barriers to students’ success: a lack of academic preparedness, a limited understanding of the college system, and financial constraints.

A promising student focused on athletics

As Nelzir Louiseize prepared to graduate from Boston’s John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science, the faculty and counselors at the school recommended that he apply for the program. “Both of my parents were born and raised in Haiti and came to the United States around 1990,” said Louiseize, who grew up in Dorchester. “In high school, I was more focused on playing football and doing track and field. I was one of those kids cruising by, not really thinking too much about what I was going to do after high school.”

A bridge to college

Foundation Year accepted Louiseize and gave him a second chance to improve his academic preparation, while earning college credits and getting acclimated to the demands and environment of campus life. With a low student-to-faculty ratio of 8:1 and rigorous support, including writing and math tutors, Foundation Year provides a vital bridge to students who might otherwise have difficulty making the transition to college.

“I didn’t really have a backup plan if I didn’t get in,” said Louiseize. “I probably would have gone to Bunker Hill or another community college and then possibly transferred to one of the state schools.”
Foundation Year showed me that if I concentrated on academics and applied myself, I could achieve something.

“The co-ops helped me discover what I want to do in my career,” said Louiseize. “I really like working with people, and I don’t want to be stuck in a lab. I’m thinking of becoming a sales engineer, which will enable me to meet people and travel while also doing engineering.”

In the meantime, Nelzir Louiseize is adding to Foundation Year’s impressive record of success. To date, 61 percent of the first group of Foundation Year students have persisted in pursuing their degrees—more than triple the rate of the Boston public high school graduates from the same year.

“My main advisor, Oyenike Balogun-Mwangi, kept telling me that she saw the potential I had and kept me motivated to apply myself,” said Louiseize. “Foundation Year showed me that if I concentrated on academics and applied myself, I could achieve something.”

With the calendar about to turn to 2016, Northeastern’s May commencement is now in sight for an aspiring electrical engineer.

Instead, Nelzir Louiseize is attending Northeastern University and working toward completion of his Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering next May. A key to Foundation Year’s success is the extra attention each student receives. In addition to completing the Foundation Year program, Louiseize was advised to strengthen his Physics background with another course and attend the College of Engineering Summer Bridge program before starting his Engineering studies, which he did.

Co-ops provide real-world experience

Nelzir Louiseize has also benefited from Northeastern’s co-op program. At architectural engineering firm KlingStubbins in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he assisted the firm’s electrical engineers in designing and specifying electrical systems for building designs.

“We created the electrical blueprints for the building,” he explained. “The electrical engineers would mark up the plans by hand, and I would make the changes in the AutoCAD software.”

His second co-op was at LTX-Credence in Norwood, Massachusetts, a leading provider of semiconductor test systems. Tasked with modifying testing solutions to fulfill customer needs, Louiseize worked closely with engineers in a collegial atmosphere to fine-tune and test systems to ensure they met customers’ requirements. Again, it was valuable experience.

Alexander Bove Is Still Learning—and Teaching

Lifelong learning is not an abstraction to Alexander A. Bove, Jr., who earned his first degree (an Associate’s) from Northeastern in 1961 and his most recent one, a PhD in Law, from the University of Zurich just last year. The half-century or so between those two diplomas has been filled with a succession of accomplishments, including graduate degrees from Suffolk University and Boston University School of Law, a stint as an estate planning columnist for the Boston Globe, and six books.

Bove’s most recent book, Trust Protectors: A Practice Manual with Forms (left), explores a relatively recent development in trust law, the increasing use of the “trust protector”—a person granted powers over the trust to make adjustments in the best interests of the trust and its beneficiaries.

“The book examines the role of the protector and the practical considerations in using one,” said Bove. Reviewing the book, Suffolk University Law School professor Charles E. Rounds, Jr., wrote, “The content is immediately useful, the scholarship rock-solid, and the coverage encyclopedic.”

His current status as an internationally respected expert on estate and trust law would have come as a surprise to the Alexander Bove of 1961. He was on an engineering and business track at Northeastern when his career took a dramatic turn.

“I was very heavily influenced by one of my business professors at Northeastern, Stephen Burke,” said Bove, whose second Northeastern degree was a Bachelor’s in Business Administration in 1963. “He was so impressive in class, and then we met several times to talk about issues and my plans for my future, and he would mentor me. I don’t know that I would ever have gone to law school if it wasn’t for Professor Burke.”

Dani Rylan: Founder of the Nation’s First Professional Hockey League for Women

As a child, Dani Rylan dreamed of becoming a pro hockey player, but a professional career in her favorite sport was not open to women. Even so, she went on to enjoy a successful career in college hockey, playing for Northeastern’s Huskies from 2010 to 2012, while studying for a Master’s in Sports Leadership at the College of Professional Studies.

But Dani did not give up on her childhood dream. In 2015, with her new graduate degree in hand, she founded the National Women’s Hockey League and serves as the League’s first Commissioner. The League’s first game, on October 11, 2015, garnered significant national and local media coverage, with CBS Sports citing it as a date that will be remembered as one when “the game changed and history was made.”

At present, the league is made up of four teams from cities in the Northeast: Boston, Buffalo, New York, and Stamford. The League’s goal is to give successful college players the opportunity to continue playing after college.

“Too many women players end their careers at that point and never reach their athletic peak, which is often said to occur for women around the age of 27,” Dani recently told the Sports Business Journal. “My hope is that we can provide that opportunity to more players, and maybe find new national players that we haven’t heard of, allowing them to reach that goal.”
Planning for Resilience in One of the Country’s Oldest Cities

Dr. S. Atyia Martin, a 2014 graduate of the Doctor of Law and Policy program and part-time lecturer in the Master’s in Homeland Security program, is the City of Boston’s first Chief Resilience Officer.

The newly created position, which Dr. Martin stepped into in August 2015, was created to “…help Boston prepare for, withstand, and bounce back from the ‘shocks’—catastrophic events like floods, infrastructure failure, and acts of terrorism—and ‘stresses’—slow-moving disasters like persistent racial and economic inequality, lack of affordable housing, and unemployment,” according to a City of Boston announcement.

Dr. Martin is well positioned to lead the city’s efforts on these issues: She has been the Director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness at the Boston Health Commission since 2011, and was the Director of the DelValle Institute for Emergency Preparedness. In her new position, she’ll be applying the work of her dissertation, which focused on emergency management for socially vulnerable populations, entitled, “The Social Determinants of Vulnerability Framework: Incorporating the Needs of People into Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.”

From Study to Practice: Doctoral Thesis Comes to Life

When Randell Trammell, EdD’14, State Executive Director and CEO of the State YMCA of Georgia, started his Doctorate in Education, neither he nor others in the nearly 100-year-old organization knew how it would change him or the organization.

Fast-forward to 2015, and the Georgia Center for Civic Engagement, a program of the State YMCA of Georgia, is firmly established with the purpose of addressing “the decline in civic knowledge among students in Georgia,” and earning recognition from teachers, students, and public officials.

The Center is a direct outgrowth of Dr. Trammell’s research, which studied the power of experiential learning for high school civics students versus more traditional teaching methods. It brings students into the civic and legislative processes they are studying and provides resources to teachers and students statewide.

And, there’s another powerful link to Trammell’s studies in Education and Organizational Leadership. The YMCA has instituted a program evaluation in 27 states, based on his dissertation research.

What Should Northeastern Look Like in 2025? Tell Us!

The University is asking all stakeholders—students, alumni, parents, donors, and friends of the Northeastern community—to add their voices to the conversation about the future of the University’s Academic and Long Range Plans. This includes determining the essence of Northeastern, what the University should look like in 2025, and how its distinctive identity should evolve to meet the challenges facing higher education.

To learn more about the process, find up-to-date information, share ideas, and join the discussion, visit Northeastern.edu/academic-plan.

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