

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
FEBRUARY 7, 2008**

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**I. ACTION ITEMS**

**A. FISCAL YEAR 2009 TUITION AND FEE RATES**

The Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University is required by its enabling Act to adopt tuition and fee rates for students attending the University. Each year, the Board reviews and adjusts those rates to recognize the budgetary needs of the University and the appropriate contributions students should make to meet those needs. Historically, given the University's ongoing commitments to access and to providing a high quality affordable education, the Board has adopted tuition and fee rates that are among the most affordable of the Illinois public universities. Equally important, the Board adopts tuition rates that reflect a fair and appropriate contribution from students to the costs of their education. It is with those continuing commitments and parameters that this report presents fiscal year 2009 tuition and fee recommendations to the Board for approval.

In the November 2007 Board meeting agenda materials, the proposed fiscal year 2009 tuition and fee rates (beginning fall 2008) were presented to the Board and to the University community for discussion. At the February 2008 meeting, the fiscal year 2009 tuition and fee rates will be presented to the Board for action.

Clearly, students are the campus constituents most affected by changes in student tuition and fees. On October 26<sup>th</sup>, the three University Vice Presidents met with the president and finance committee chair of the Student Government Association and the student trustee to discuss tuition and fees. Discussed at that meeting were tuition and fee rates and recent increases and the availability of high demand course sections. Also discussed was the importance of the U-Pass for Northeastern students. All present agreed on the importance of the U-Pass and the lack of support to the University from the CTA, and all agreed to focus efforts on this issue and work towards a solution.

In addition, and as in previous years, the Provost and the Vice Presidents for Student Affairs and Finance and Administration met with the Student Government Association (SGA) in a forum open to all students on November 20 to present the proposed tuition and fee rates and to discuss student concerns. This meeting was open to all students and the SGA heavily advertised this forum to the student body. A summary of the meeting was included in the December 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Independent*.

In general, the students attending the forum understood the relationship between the decreasing state funding commitment and student tuition increases. Specifically, the lack of significant new state resources is resulting in greater reliance on tuition at Northeastern, a trend taking place at all Illinois public universities and most public universities across the nation. Even with these proposed tuition increases, tuition at Northeastern will be among the lowest of the Illinois public universities. Students attending the forum also asked about the availability of adequate course sections and the

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availability of the CTA U-Pass. The vice presidents agreed that these are University priorities and assured the students that efforts are being made to address these issues.

**Overview of Current Tuition and Fee Rates**

In fall 2004, a state law took effect requiring all Illinois public universities to guarantee new undergraduate students level tuition for four consecutive academic years. This past fall, the fourth cohort of undergraduate students attending Northeastern entered the University under the tuition guarantee.

One result of the tuition guarantee is the effect on tuition comparisons among institutions. Prior to fall 2004, most universities had one basic tuition rate for undergraduate in-state, resident students and it was much easier to compare and assess tuition rates among public universities. Now, because of this legislation, all Illinois public universities have at least five different tuition rates for in-state undergraduate students. This complicates tuition comparisons. Further, there has been no standard statewide methodology to facilitate tuition rate comparisons.

Tuition comparisons are important because they provide a means to assess affordability among somewhat similarly financed institutions. For discussion purposes, Table 1 presents tuition rates at Illinois public universities for the four general classes of undergraduate students: freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors—and uses what would be the typical tuition cost for full-time enrollment for each of those classes. An average is then computed to determine a common measure for all Illinois public universities. Based on this analysis, the average tuition cost for students attending Northeastern in the current fiscal year is among the lowest rates for in-state undergraduate students attending Illinois public universities; only Governors State University and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville have lower average rates. The average full-time undergraduate tuition at Northeastern is \$4,905, or 89 percent of the statewide average of \$5,489.

Another assessment of affordability is the rate of undergraduate tuition increases. Table 2 provides a comparison of the current year undergraduate tuition increases adopted by the NEIU Board of Trustees with the tuition rate increases adopted by the other Illinois public universities. The tuition rate for undergraduates new to Northeastern starting in fall 2007 was 11.4 percent higher than the fall 2006 cohort. This compared to a state average of 10.6 percent. For continuing undergraduates, the tuition rate increase at Northeastern was 14.7 percent compared to a state average increase of 12.0 percent. The tuition increases at Northeastern were slightly more than the state average for both cohorts of undergraduate students.

Table 3 summarizes graduate tuition rates at Illinois public universities and the most recent rate increases. This table shows that, in fiscal year 2007, graduate tuition at Northeastern was \$3,840 for a full-time graduate student, 75 percent of the state average,

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and the lowest among the Illinois public universities. In addition, graduate students at Northeastern were paying less for their education than most undergraduate students. As a result, the Board approved an adjustment in graduate tuition of 25 percent, which is reflected in this table. Even with this increase, graduate tuition at Northeastern is 86 percent of the statewide average.

Table 4 provides a comparison of the tuition costs for undergraduate and graduate students at Illinois public universities. Because graduate education is more costly than undergraduate education, it follows that graduate students should pay more for their education than undergraduates. Last year's report showed that graduate students at Northeastern paid 8.6 percent less for their education than new undergraduates. This year's data indicate that the adjustment made last year to graduate tuition at Northeastern had the desired effect of bringing graduate tuition in line with undergraduate tuition rates.

Based on IBHE data and using IBHE's fee classifications, Table 5 provides a summary of fiscal year 2008 mandatory fees at Illinois public universities. The annual mandatory fees at Northeastern total \$2,149 compared to a state average of \$2,250. It should be noted that the parking fee at Northeastern is mandatory (although waivable) while parking at some universities is optional and not included in the reported fees. It also should be noted that Governors State University and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville do not provide mandatory student health insurance. Therefore, the state average excludes those two institutions. Based on this data, fees at Northeastern rank in the lower half of the 10 remaining Illinois public universities and total 4 percent, or \$101, below the state average.

The table shows that student activities fees at Northeastern (student activity and campus recreation fees) are about at the statewide average. Northeastern has no fee for intercollegiate athletics, a fee that averages \$272 for those universities with that fee. Our student services fee (technology and parking) is nearly 90 percent higher than the state average for student services. Again, our parking fee is a mandatory fee at Northeastern, which is one of the major factors in this comparison, and the University has made a significant investment in our computer labs and the NEIUworks student services modules, both paid from the technology fee. Our combined health services and health insurance are similar to the two other Chicago universities – Chicago State and the University of Illinois at Chicago, reflecting the local health care market and the level of services offered through our health insurance. And finally, the statewide data show that students at Northeastern are contributing to the University's facility needs at less than half the rate of students at other Illinois public universities. In fact, six public universities have implemented new fees for facilities maintenance and/or improvement in the past three years.

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**Setting Tuition and Fees in a Challenging State Fiscal Climate**

The fiscal climate in the state of Illinois has had a direct impact on tuition and fee rates at Northeastern and all other Illinois public universities. The following chart summarizes changes in state appropriations and undergraduate tuition rates over the past 10 years. Between fiscal year 1998 and 2003, state funding increased 18.2 percent while tuition increased 22.2 percent. Other than the 6.4 percent increase in fiscal year 2003, tuition increases at Northeastern during this period did not exceed 3.6 percent.

However, in the second five-year period, when state funding decreased 4.3 percent, tuition increased 45.1 percent. The University maintained modest tuition increases until fiscal year 2006, and then increased tuition at a higher rate only in response to several years of state funding shortfalls. State funding levels will continue to challenge the ability of public universities to hold down tuition costs.

Not reflected in these state appropriations are additional funding requirements that the University is required by the state to make that must be funded with available resources. In fiscal year 2002, the University incurred a new requirement to contribute \$1.1 million annually to the Illinois state group health insurance plan. This was a new requirement for all public universities, in addition to the employee and employer contributions already required.

Public Act 94-4 requires Northeastern and all other public universities, for the first time, to make a contribution to the State Universities Retirement System for increases in employees' salaries above 6 percent in any of the four years used to determine average earnings for retirement purposes.

**Figure 1**

Fiscal Year	State Funding (in thousands)	% Change	Undergrad Tuition per Credit Hour	% Change
1998	36,024.1	----	88.00	----
1999	38,189.0	6.0%	91.00	3.4%
2000	40,330.4	5.6	94.25	3.6
2001	42,610.1	5.7	97.50	3.4
2002	45,396.8	6.5	101.00	3.6
<u>2003</u>	<u>42,585.4</u>	<u>(6.2)</u>	<u>107.50</u>	<u>6.4</u>
1998-2003	6,561.3	18.2	19.50	22.2
2003	42,585.4	----	107.50	----
2004	39,077.7	(8.2)%	110.00	2.3%
2005	39,227.7	0.4	115.00	4.5
2006	39,247.7	0.1	126.00	9.6
2007	40,026.3	2.0	136.00	7.9
<u>2008</u>	<u>40,770.7</u>	<u>1.9</u>	<u>156.00</u>	<u>14.7</u>
2003-2008	(5,370.5)	(4.3)	48.50	45.1

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What this means for tuition in the State of Illinois is that not only are public universities impaired by decreasing state appropriations, they also are experiencing a pattern of being required to pay additional state expenses out of these decreasing state resources. Because the University operating budget has two primary funding sources – state appropriations and student tuition revenue – any reduction in available state funding results in either greater reliance on student tuition revenue to fund University operating expenses or to greater pressure to reduce University services and programs.

**Addressing University Priorities**

Northeastern has a long history of reallocation and will continue to support priorities through internal reallocation. However, as mentioned above, we continue to be challenged in supporting these priorities because of decreases in state funding. In the current fiscal year 2008, the University implemented a two percent across-the-board reduction to keep budgeted expenditures within projected revenues. Even with this climate of state funding shortfalls, we continue to negotiate multi-year contracts with the five campus unions and implement modest salary increases for our non-negotiated employees.

Operating Budget Priorities. For fiscal year 2009, the University identified our highest priorities and we will continue to invest available resources in these areas. These priorities are providing fair and competitive salaries to our faculty and staff, meeting student instructional demands by increasing course sections and developing and implementing new academic programs, increasing our complement of tenure-track faculty, improving and expanding student advising, and being good stewards of our campuses by maintaining and improving our physical plant. These are the priorities approved by the Board in September 2007 and included in the University's 2009 operating and capital requests also approved by the Board in September.

As the University community discusses and considers fiscal year 2009 tuition rates, the appropriate balance between affordability, access and educational quality improvements must be found, all within the state funding climate outlined above.

In addition to operating budget issues affected by state funding, the University also must consider the operations and quality improvements that are supported by student fees. Student fees support such areas as technology, student activities, the Student Union, campus recreation, and student health services. The student demand for services in these areas continues to increase. For example, requests continue to grow for new fee-supported student clubs, expansion of health services, additional computer labs and faster and more robust internet connections.

A major new initiative is underway that is supported by student fees, the new University integrated information system – NEIU*works*, and the new University portal - NEIU*port*. A major component of this system is the expansion and improvement of student services,

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including a significant expansion of web-based student services (e.g., on-line registration, bill payment, degree audit that provides specific information on course/major requirements on a case-by-case basis, financial aid services).

In addition to the program requirements, student fees also support the various offices that administer the specific fee programs, such as the offices of student activities, health services and campus recreation. A portion of the increase in student fees for those three areas is the result of increases in health and retirement benefits for employees within those offices.

Capital Priorities. Similar concerns are also evident with facility needs. There have been no new capital appropriations from the state of Illinois since fiscal year 2004. Northeastern received no state capital funding for the renovation of our aging facilities, and several of our major campus buildings were built in the early 1970's. Two significant buildings on campus, the Science Building and the Classroom Building, have had no significant remodeling since construction. These capital needs were discussed with the Board in September and included in our fiscal year 2009 capital request.

With this lack of state support for renovation, it falls on the University to make difficult choices - either maintain education programs in facilities that minimally meet educational needs, continue to seek external funding through grants or gifts, or fund renovation projects internally. While we continue to try to secure external funding from state, federal and private sources, we are in the same position as most other colleges, universities, and non-profit entities in trying to secure external funding. And since state funding has not been available for facility needs, student fees are the only likely source of funding for facilities maintenance and renovation.

**Tuition and Fee Proposal**

Table 6 provides proposed tuition and fee rates for fiscal year 2009. The proposed tuition rates attempt to balance the needs of the University, the continuing commitment to keep the costs of attending the University affordable, and the ongoing fiscal challenges resulting from the lack of new state funding.

In fiscal year 2009, there will be six different tuition rates for in-state undergraduate students, depending on the date of first enrollment at Northeastern. For three of these rates there will be no increase; that is for those students entering in fall 2005, fall 2006 or fall 2007 cohorts. This level tuition will be in place for approximately one-half of our undergraduate students. For students entering prior to fall 2004, referred to in Table 6 as continuing students, the tuition rate will be \$170 per credit hour, an increase of 9.0 percent. The in-state, undergraduate tuition rate for new students would be \$220 per credit hour. For in-state graduate students, the proposed tuition rate is \$220 per credit hour, an increase of \$20 per credit hour, or 10.0 percent. For each in-state tuition rate, there is a corresponding non-Illinois resident tuition rate that is twice the in-state rate.

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An additional challenge for this year that is addressed in these recommendations is student tuition charges for students who first enrolled at Northeastern in fall 2004 and, by state law, have had their tuition held constant for four consecutive academic years. At the end of summer 2008, the tuition guarantee will expire for this first cohort of students, those that enrolled at Northeastern under this program in fall 2004. Several pricing options for these students were examined and modeled, including extending the tuition lock, adding this cohort to another cohort (e.g., fall 2005 or fall 2006), or moving these students into the continuing undergraduate tuition rate category. Each of these options was examined to determine whether the students would be making an appropriate contribution to their education relative to other undergraduate students and whether their tuition increase would result in an unrealistic burden for those students. Another complication is the tuition rate for this first cohort was established at a very low rate. These students have been paying \$124 per credit hour for four years, compared to the current rate of \$156 per credit hour for continuing students and \$195 per credit hour for new students.

These recommendations propose that this first cohort, those first enrolled between fall 2004 and summer 2005, will move to the continuing rate over the next two years. In fiscal year 2009, it is recommended that the rate for these students be \$155 per credit hour. While this represents a 25.0 percent increase, this rate is still \$5 per credit hour below the next lowest rate (fall 2005 cohort) and \$65 per credit hour below the rate for new students. If this plan is approved, it is anticipated that in fiscal year 2010, both the fall 2004 and fall 2005 cohorts will move to the continuing student rate.

The recommended fee rates will support student-requested program expansion in student activities, funding for student computer labs and costs for the new information system (technology fee), facility maintenance and renovation (academic enhancement/facilities fee), and fringe benefit increases for employee health insurance and retirement in other student support services.

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**B. APPROVAL OF LEASE OF UNIVERSITY PROPERTY**

Regulations adopted by the Northeastern Illinois University Board of Trustees require that all contracts for the lease of real property require approval by the Board. The University requests approval to enter into a contract with Chicago SMSA Limited Partnership, doing business as Verizon Wireless, for the lease of an area on the Library roof for the installation of a cellular switch site and antennae that will support the entire main campus and immediate neighborhood with improved cellular service from Verizon.

Currently, cellular service on campus and in the surrounding neighborhoods is sporadic. Over the past several months, University Computing Services has been in discussions with Verizon Wireless to install additional cellular service capacity on campus to improve cellular service to our faculty and staff and the neighborhoods surrounding the campus. As part of this discussion, the University obtained comparable contract terms for similar agreements with other Illinois public universities. University Facilities Management and Public Safety staffs also were involved in these discussions to assure that our facilities and campus safety would not be adversely affected by this contract.

The University seeks approval of this proposed contract with Verizon Wireless. The contract would be for an initial term of five years with the option for four additional five-year terms. Verizon would agree to pay the University \$21,600 annually (in monthly amounts of \$1,800) for the first five-year period. This amount would increase by three percent each year of the contract. These funds would be used to support general University operations. If the extensions are exercised, the amounts also would increase three percent per year. In exchange, the University would provide approximately 600 square feet of the main Library roof and approximately 500 square feet of the penthouse roof of the Library for the installation of the Verizon antenna and supporting cellular equipment. In addition, with proper notification, the Facilities Management and Public Safety departments will provide Verizon access to the roof site to service and maintain its equipment by.

This contract would not preclude the University from contracting with other cellular companies for similar services.

**RECOMMENDED LESSEE:**

Chicago SMSA Limited Partnership  
d/b/a Verizon Wireless  
One Verizon Way  
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

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**I. ACTION ITEMS (cont'd)**

**C. TENTATIVE: APPROVAL OF EXPENDITURE FOR STRATEGIC  
PLANNING**

It is anticipated that a recommendation for expenditure of funds for a strategic planning consultant will be brought to the February 7, 2008 board meeting pending negotiations as discussed in Information Item A. (see below)

**II. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**A. PLANNING**

1. Strategic Planning Process. During the past several months, the University community has been actively engaged in preparing for the development of our Strategic Plan. We began in the spring with the entire community establishing our new University Values Statement. Each of these Values is built on the Mission Statement adopted by the Board of Trustees and further defines who we aspire to be as an institution, what we value and how we go about interacting with each other, those inside and those outside the University community.

We also have been exploring our relationship with and role within the higher education community, the region, the state of Illinois, and the nation. What are our internal strengths and weaknesses and what are our external threats and opportunities?

To date, these exercises to better prepare us for strategic planning have been internal. It is now time to move the planning process to its next phase – the self-assessment of the University and the development of answers to the strategic questions of who we are, who we aspire to be and how will we get there.

To provide independent facilitation, the University developed and advertised a Request for Proposal (RFP) for external consultants to assist in our strategic planning process. We received five proposals that were reviewed by a committee to determine adherence to the RFP requirements, qualifications and experiences working with comprehensive public universities, and comparable strategic planning projects. As a result of the committee evaluations, two consulting firms were invited to campus with presentations scheduled for January 25, 2008 and February 1, 2008. It is anticipated that, as a result of these presentations and negotiations with the preferred consultant, the Board of Trustees at the February 7, 2008 meeting will be asked to approve the expenditure of funds for the strategic planning consultant.

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2. Elements of Student Success. Trustees recently received notebooks containing data and information regarding student success at NEIU. The most recent information is found just inside Sections 3 (Graduation Trends), 5 (Illinois Baccalaureate Survey), and 6 (NSSE data).
  
3. Development Council. To help coordinate the development efforts at the University, we have established a Development Council. Membership includes the president (as chair), the vice presidents, the deans, the director of development, and the director of public relations. Our new Vice President for Advancement, Dr. Carla Knorowski, will be a key member of this Council. The primary goals of the Development Council are communication, coordination, and sharing of ideas. We have created our initial plan for fund-raising initiatives and ideas.

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**B. REPORT OF ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING (ERP)/BANNER  
RELATED CONTRACT**

At its April 6, 2006 meeting, the Board of Trustees resolved that “in order to facilitate the timely implementation of the ERP project, (the Board) delegates to the University President the authority to approve such expenditures and contracts directly related to the ERP project without prior Board approval and that the President will report to the Board on all such approved expenditures and contracts normally requiring prior Board approval at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees.”

Contract for the Purchase of Storage Area Network

The University continues to make significant progress with the implementation of our new integrated information system, referred to as *NEIUworks*. In July 2007, the University went live with Banner Finance and, in January 2008, we went live with Banner HR/Payroll and issued our first paychecks using the new HR/Payroll system. In March, the University will go live with the Banner Student module and, for the first time, will allow students to register for classes using on-line registration.

One of the steps in implementing the new Banner/*NEIUworks* modules – Finance, HR/Payroll and Student – is the need to increase the University's system and data storage capabilities. The storage requirements of the new information system greatly exceed the needs of the predecessor systems. In addition, we are now processing and storing financial and payroll information in-house when previously this was outsourced. Also, the amount of new storage required over the next several months as we implement the Banner Student module greatly exceeds our current requirements. As a result, to facilitate the continuing implementation of Banner/*NEIUworks* and to provide for the system storage requirements, the University contracted for the purchase of a Storage Area Network (SAN).

This contract provides for the purchase of the SAN that will provide high speed access to approximately 18 terabytes of data storage. This device is designed to provide high availability and will be the primary storage for all ERP Banner/*NEIUworks* related systems. In addition to the hardware product, the agreement includes installation services and five years of support, effective December 7, 2007.

This contract was the result of a competitive Request for Proposal which had nine responses. Five of the original responders were eliminated, most often due to failure to fulfill the requirements of the RFP, which left four viable bids. Based on the ranking criteria included in the RFP (system requirements, options and pricing), the University selected two vendors – Fujitsu and Agilysys – for Best and Final presentations. At that point, the final pricing results were:

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Fujitsu: \$265,092  
Agilysys: \$285,717

As a result of its superior product and lower price, the University selected Fujitsu as the successful provider for the Storage Area Network.

**PROJECT COST:**

Computer Services \$265,092

**SOURCE OF FUNDS:**

ERP Project Fund and University Computing Operating Funds

**SELECTED VENDOR:**

Fujitsu Computer Systems Corporation  
1250 E. Arques Avenue  
MS125  
Sunnyvale, CA 94088-3470

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**C. REPORT OF APPROVED CHANGE ORDERS FOR ERP RELATED  
CONTRACT**

At its April 6, 2006 meeting, the Board of Trustees resolved that “in order to facilitate the timely implementation of the ERP project, (the Board) delegates to the University President the authority to approve such expenditures and contracts directly related to the ERP project without prior Board approval and that the President will report to the Board on all such approved expenditures and contracts normally requiring prior Board approval at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees.”

Modifications to Classroom Building 3054 Computer Center

At the February 15, 2007 meeting, the University President reported to the Board of Trustees on contracts awarded for improvements to the University's computer network center, which has been located in room 3054 of the Classroom Building for more than 25 years. Given the load demands of ERP project equipment, the electrical and cooling capabilities of the room were not adequate to support the ERP project and remodeling was necessary to bring greater capacity to that room to fully support the ERP project. All services were formally advertised and competitively bid. The bids were opened and contracts awarded in early December 2006. At the February 15, 2007 meeting, the Board was informed of the following contracts awarded to the low bidders:

General construction	Pelar Construction	\$82,477
Mechanical*	Anchor Mechanical	\$144,675
Electrical**	Broadway Electric	\$469,800

After these contracts were reported to the Board in February, additional work and change orders were required to complete the project. This work included patching and sealing openings in the computer room walls and ceilings, replacing floor tiles, adding duct dampers with electric actuators, expanding tests of the automatic emergency power transfer switch, and adding electrical capacity for additional equipment.

While these change orders were fairly minor in relation to the total project, this information is provided to the Board to fully disclose the final project costs for each contractor. The following change orders were processed to complete the project.

Pelar Construction	Three (3) Change Orders	\$10,035
Anchor Mechanical	One (1) Change Order	\$4,850
Broadway Electric	Four (4) Change Orders	\$14,972

\* Mechanical Work includes all HVAC and Plumbing

\*\* Electrical Work includes Inert Gas Fire Protection and Coordination/Scheduling of all trades.

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**D. NEWS AND EVENTS**

**1. International Day - November 15**

NEIU celebrated its fifth annual International Day, sponsored by the Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures. The purpose of the Festival is to celebrate the culture of the different ethnic clubs of the students at NEIU. Both the faculty of FLL and clubs participate in the festival that includes different types of traditional entertainment such as dance, music, fashion show, and different ethnic foods. Approximately 300 visitors and guest artists participated.

**2. IBHE – December 3-4**

Northeastern Illinois University hosted on December 3 and 4, 2007 the Illinois Board of Higher Education. President Hahs and the Board of Trustees of NEIU hosted an open reception on Monday, December 3, 2007 in the Golden Eagle Room, as well as a tour of the University. The IBHE staff and attendees enjoyed the visit to our campus. Thanks were expressed by IBHE Chair Carrie Hightman and Executive Director Judy Irwin.

**3. Academic Honors Reception – December 6**

On Thursday, December 6, President Hahs hosted the December 2007 Academic Honors Reception for students who are graduates of August and December 2007 and earned a cumulative Grade Point Average of 3.5 to 4.0, or have met the criteria of the Honors Program. Dr. Grace Dawson gave greetings from the Board of Trustees. There were 83 students, 290 guests and 30 faculty, staff and administration in attendance.

**4. Mostly Music- December 10**

Mostly Music at NEIU partnered with the Music Department on December 10 to produce the debut concert of the Chicago Clarinet Ensemble under the direction NEIU's clarinet professor Rose Sperrazza. The concert featured over 15 professional clarinetists, NEIU students and several community members. They were joined by soloists from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Chicago Clarinet Ensemble before a standing room only crowd in the NEIU Recital Hall. A reception, sponsored by Vandoren was held immediately following the concert.

**5. Student Stress - Free Zone – December 10-14**

Student Health Service sponsored the Student Stress-Free Zone during the week of December 10-14. This event is held during fall and spring semesters during finals week as a place for the students to go and relax between final exams and reduce stress and its negative impact on students' health. Activities include coloring, crafts, cards, and checkers. Pizza is served and chair massages are available. Between 150 and 200

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students a day took advantage of the relaxed atmosphere. An exit survey was conducted and those results should be available in about a month.

**6. 2007 Holiday Reception – December 13**

The NEIU Holiday Reception, held in the lower level of the Student Union was attended by approximately 650 people including NEIU Board of Trustees and NEIU Foundation members. Guests were greeted by President Hahs, Vice Presidents Lawrence Frank, Melvin Terrell and Mark Wilcockson. Music was provided by the NEIU Jazz Band under the direction of Mayo Tiano and the meal was provided by Sodexo.

**7. Commencement – December 15**

On Saturday, December 15, the University held the December 2007 Commencement Convocation for students graduating in August and December. Two ceremonies were held in the Physical Education Complex. The morning ceremony was for students graduating from the Graduate College with concentrations in the Arts and Sciences, and Bachelor degrees from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Non-traditional Degree Program. The afternoon ceremony was for students graduating from the Graduate College with concentrations in the Business, Accounting and Education, and Bachelor degrees from the College of Business and Management and the College of Education. Dr Grace Dawson gave greetings from the Board of Trustees for the morning ceremony and Omar Duque gave the greetings from the Board of Trustees for the afternoon ceremony. The Honorable Luis V Gutierrez was recognized with the Distinguished Alumnus Award. President Hahs gave the main address. Over 800 graduates, 4000 guests, 60 faculty and administrators and over 60 staff participated in the day's ceremonies.

**8. Adult Learner and Transfer Student Orientation Program – January 3**

Nearly 50 incoming transfer students and adult learners attended a Transitions Orientation sponsored by the Adult and Women's Student Program (AWSP) on January 3, 2008. Students heard presentations from the Office of Student Affairs, Academic Advisement, Financial Aid, Enrollment Services, Student Activities, and AWSP. Representatives from the College of Business and Management, College of Arts and Sciences, and College of Education answered questions, and Student Computing Services and the Parking Office assisted students with their services as well.

**9. Town Hall Meeting - January 11**

On Friday, January 11, President Hahs hosted her first town hall meeting in Alumni Hall on the main campus. This idea was developed in conjunction with the Faculty Senate and provided an opportunity for dialogue within the University community. The event was attended by approximately 225 people. There are plans to hold another town hall meeting later in the spring.

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**10. A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – January 17**

Northeastern Illinois University's Annual Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was held in NEIU's Auditorium on Thursday, January 17, 2008. The keynote speaker was Hermene Hartman, owner and publisher of N'DIGO Magapaper, Hartman Publishing Group, (N'Digo and Savoy magazines). Ms. Hartman moderated a Round Table Dialog with Lewis Myers, partner and attorney, Myers and Grant, Attorneys at Law; the Reverend Dr. Al Sampson, pastor, Fernwood United Methodist Church, host, WJYFTV program and Total Living Network Television Show, ordained by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and president of the Metropolitan Council of Black Churches in Chicago; and the Reverend Gregory Seal Livingston, national field secretary, Rainbow PUSH Coalition. The program concluded with choral selections by NEIU's Black Heritage Gospel Choir.

**11. Twelfth Annual African, African American, Native American, Caribbean and the Americas Heritage Program: "Globalization and Identity: Preserving Our Heritage and Destiny" – January and February**

During January and February 2008, NEIU is hosting its twelfth Annual African, African-American, Native American, Caribbean and the Americas Heritage Conference with the theme, "Globalization and Identity: Preserving our Heritage and Destiny". On January 30, the keynote presentation "Positive on Purpose – The Bright Truth of a Dark Past" was presented by ABC-7s Bill Campbell, executive producer and host of the ABC-7 Television Chicago show "*Chicagoing*", and president of CampbellQuest, Ltd., an executive and professional coaching practice. It was followed by a Round Table Dialog with students, faculty, and staff. Additional guest speakers and presenters will continue through February.

**12. Jewel Box Series – January and February**

The Jewel Box Series concert on Friday, January 18 featured The Avalon String Quartet. Over 90 students from North Side College Preparatory High School attended the master class that preceded the concert. The Avalon Quartet worked with about 30 high school string students who played for them in the master class.

On February 15, The Jewel Box Series will feature the guitar duo of Eliot Fisk and Angel Romero. NEIU faculty artist Brian Torosian will join them on stage for one work for three guitars. The February concert is completely sold out and both the January and February concerts will be broadcast live on WFMT radio 98.7 FM.

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**13. NEIU Lobby Day April 9, 2008**

For the second consecutive year, NEIU will participate at the Higher Education Legislative Coalition Lobby Day scheduled for Wednesday, April 9, 2008 in Springfield, Illinois. The Office of Government Relations will coordinate this event and will make certain that NEIU is well represented. The event will be sponsored by the University Foundation.