

A red banner with a large black 'N' and the text 'Northeastern University' is mounted on a black pole. The banner is split into two panels by the pole. The left panel shows the top and bottom parts of the 'N' and the university name. The right panel shows the middle part of the 'N'. The background is a blurred green tree.

Northeastern
University

Graduate Enrollment Management

The year was 2017...

The problem: “We need more traffic and leads”

The goal: 20% increase in 12 months

The Result

781%

Increase in blog traffic

80%

Increase in program page visits

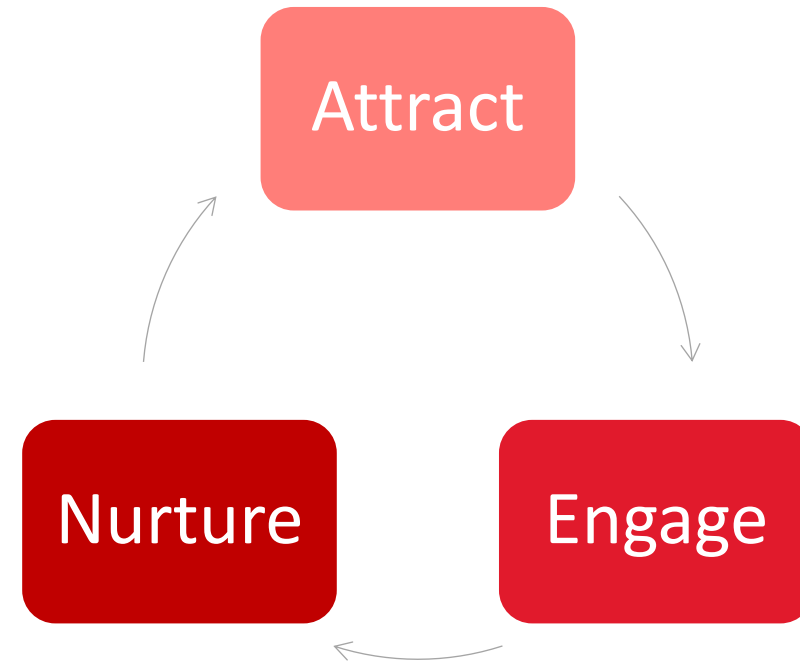
32%

Increase in captured leads



Applying Inbound Marketing Principles to Higher Ed

- > Attract customers by creating valuable, tailored content
- > Target prospects at the earliest stages of their decision-making journey
- > Leverage SEO tactics to increase content visibility



Elements of Northeastern's Graduate SEO Strategy



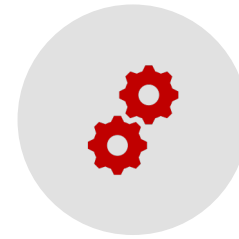
SEO-FOCUSED
BLOG



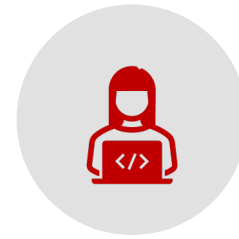
GATED CONTENT
ASSETS



MEASUREMENT
PLAN



OPTIMIZATION
FRAMEWORK



TECHNICAL
SUPPORT*



Element #1: SEO-Focused Blog

- Student Personas
- Keyword Research
- Editorial Calendar
- Content Creation

The screenshot displays the Northeastern University Graduate Programs website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the university name and a search bar. Below the navigation, a large hero section features a featured article titled "Career Resilience: What it Is and How to Build It" dated February 2, 2021. To the right of this article are three smaller article thumbnails: "6 Tips for Navigating Group Work in an Online Class", "Professional Development Opportunities in Education", and "What Does an Enrollment Counselor Do?".

Below the hero section is a filter bar with "Filter by:" and two dropdown menus for "Category" and "Area of Study". The main content area is a grid of article cards. The first card is "Entering into Community College Leadership" dated Wed Jun 16 2021. The second is "Product Approval in Biotech" dated Thu Jun 10 2021. The third is "Is a Master's in Health Informatics Worth It?" dated Thu Jun 10 2021. The fourth is "Top Higher Education Conferences to Attend in 2021 [Updated]" dated Mon Jun 07 2021. Each card includes a date, title, a short summary, and a "MORE" link with a right-pointing arrow.

On the right side of the page is a sidebar with several sections: "Most Popular:" with a list of popular articles; "The best of our graduate blog—right to your inbox" with a "Subscribe" button and a text input field; and "Keep Reading:" with a vertical list of category tags such as "ANALYTICS", "BUSINESS", "CAREER ADVICE & ADVANCEMENT", "COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL MEDIA", "COMPUTING AND IT", "EDUCATION", "ENGINEERING", "FACULTY INSIGHTS", "FEATURED", "FEATURED", and "GRAD SCHOOL TIPS & ADVICE".

At the bottom of the page, there is a pagination bar showing "1 2 3 4 150".

Blog Goals & Strategy

Deployed as a cost-effective way to support enrollment management's inbound marketing strategy, the blog aims to:

- > Increase organic website traffic
- > Address top- and mid-funnel questions from prospective students
- > Encourage site engagement and drive leads
- > Increase credibility as thought leaders



Develop Student Personas

- > Define target segments
- > Identify stakeholders
- > Conduct persona interviews
- > Uncover and document pain points
- > Supplement with keyword research



Perform Keyword Research

Persona
Project Manager Michael



"As a member of a medium-sized team, I am usually the one taking the lead on projects even though we don't have a defined project manager role set up. My company is really vamping up for some larger projects so I need to look into my options to become a better project manager and leader for my team and company."

Bio:
Michael is a 28 year old working at a large bio-tech company in the Boston area. He has been with the company for 4 years and has become the go-to guy when a project needs to get off the ground. His boss has given him leadership roles here and there and is now relying on him even more because the company is introducing a new type of medication. Michael has been in this position before but worries that these upcoming projects might be too large for him to handle. He starts to research his options for quick tips and tricks about Project Management only to be left hanging with useless blog posts and forums. He is overwhelmed and needs to figure out how he can best serve his team and company.

Pain Points:
-Unsure of the ability to lead a team
-Unsure of the skills needed for successful project management
-Portraying credibility to executives
-Has difficulty conveying the impact and value of a successful project and a role that project management played in the process.
-Not sure of the paths available moving forward to get important skills

Awareness Stage Content
At this stage, the prospective graduate student is trying to find tools, courses, and programs to help them build the skills they need. Once they move through blog posts, free online courses, and out of reach technologies, they realize they have two real options. They can either get their project management certificate or get their masters. Each being a good option, but offering two different things.
They understand that they feel a pain, but they're unaware of the solutions at this phase. Your content at this stage should be designed to help the reader get to the root of their pain. Educational offers that are brand-neutral are important at this stage. Your goal should be to help educate the reader on the elements that make up the solution to their problem and to build trust in their eyes. This is your opportunity to meet them where they are, and become their trusted advisor.
Un gated blog posts, in-depth pillar content, short videos, and downloadable eBooks perform best at this stage.

Top Questions at the Awareness Stage:
What are some key skills I need to effectively lead my team through future projects?
What are commonly used project management methodologies, techniques, and frameworks?
How can I effectively move through projects?
How can I improve the consistency and reliability of the completion of my projects?
What metrics should I be paying attention to?

Possible Pillar Topics	Topic Volume	Targeted Keyword	Exact-Match Volume	Difficulty
Project Management Strategies	10,000	project management strategies	1,900	31

Possible Cluster Topics	Sub-Topic Volume	Parent Topic	Targeted Keyword	Exact-Match Volume
Project Management Methodologies	9,900	Project Management Strategies	project management methodologies	2.9k-4.3k
Project Management Strategies	1,900	Project Management Strategies	developing project management plan	250
Project Goals	390	Project Management Strategies	project scope statement	851-1700
Project on time	49,500	Project Management Strategies	time management for project managers	590
Project Budget	6,600	Project Management Strategies	cost estimation in project management	750

Top 10 Headlines by Backlinks
Writes: Your online project management software
[Project management](#)
What is Project Management
Work breakdown structure
[Program management](#)
[Clarizen: Project Management Software](#)
[Strategic planning](#)
Certifications | Project Management Institute
[3. The Project Life Cycle \(Phases\) - Project Management](#)
[Best Project Management Software and Tools](#)

10 Interesting Questions
Which is the best project management software?
How does WBS help a project manager?
What are best project management tips and tricks?
What is the best project management methodology?
How are projects linked to the strategic plan?
What is the role and responsibilities of a Project Manager?
How is project management an integrated strategic management?
What is the best way to start a project?
What are some project management tools?
What are project management processes?

Consideration Stage Content
At this stage, the prospective graduate student has two main options for closing their skills gap. They already have defined the pain that they're experiencing and now know that a solution exists. One potential path forward involves pursuing additional education by getting their Project Management certificate. They also realize that they could take it one step further and get their masters degree. While both are good options, we should leverage the potential career outcomes that come with completing your master's degree. We want to put their focus on helping them make comparisons to narrow the field down to pursuing their masters.
Your content should help the reader create a list of options, shape their criteria, and overcome any hurdles that might be in the way of moving forward. Create offers that help them define what is important to them and narrow down their options. In-depth guides are important at this stage as the reader has already consumed a great deal of content and is well educated tactically.

Top Questions at the Consideration Stage:
How can I easily transition into a project management career?
Can I get by with just my project management certification?
What degree or certification is better in the long run?
How can I become a project manager?
What is a project managers career path?

> Leverage tools

» SEMrush

» Ahrefs

» Moz

> Consider keyword importance and ranking potential

> Map keywords to student journey



Establish an Editorial Calendar

- > An SEO-driven editorial calendar works as more than just a scheduling document
- > Designed for organization, structure, transparency, and planning
- > Consider your calendar a working file

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	Targeted Keyword	Blog Article Title Idea	Program/Audience/College	Journey Stage	Author	Editor	Stakeholder	Draft Deadline	Publish Date	Last Modified Date	Status	Published URL	Targeted Persona	Content Offer	Notes
2	DATE (Month-YEAR)														
3															
4															
5															
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Produce SEO-Friendly Content

Consistency is critical.

- > Establish a repeatable content creation process
- > Balance audience needs and SEO best practices
- > Develop a blog-specific “style guide” for content creators



SEO Optimization Checklist

Before publishing blog content, ask yourself:

- Does the content help the user complete their task?
- Thinking about your targeted search term, does the content align with the searcher's intent?
- Is the content clear and easy to understand? Does it follow a natural progression from start to finish?
- Does the content communicate your brand's voice effectively?
- Does the content guide your user to take a next step?
- Does the content link to related resources on your website?
- Is the content linked to from other pages on your website?

1. Meta Elements

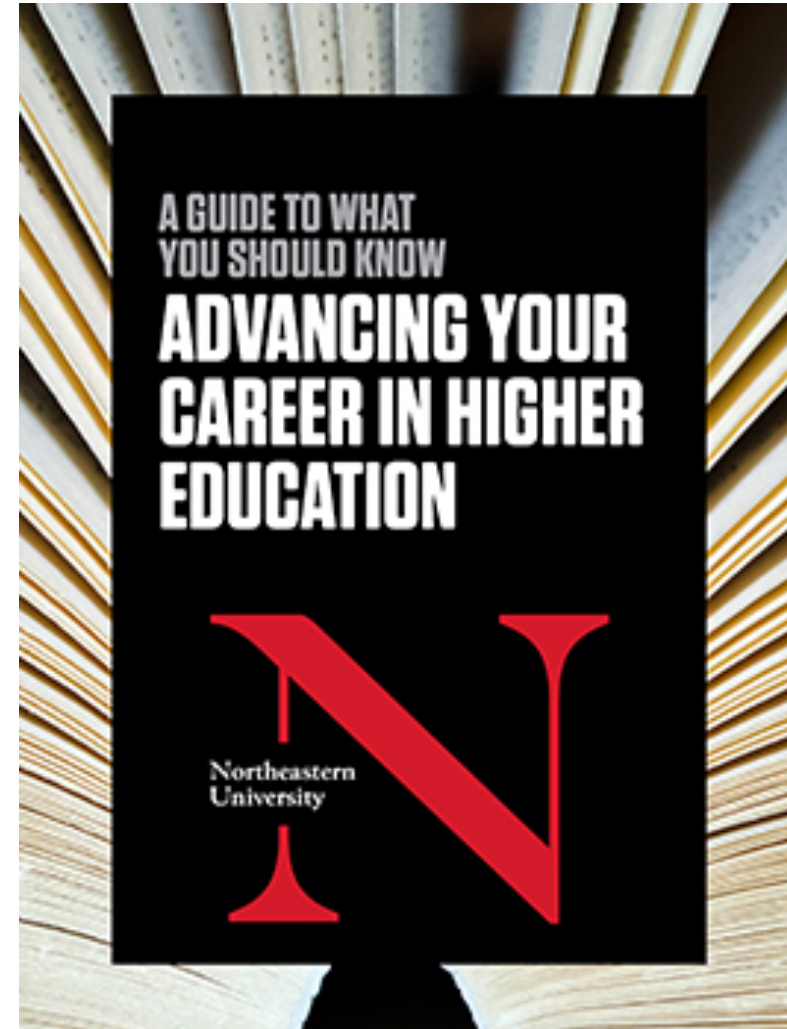
- Title Tag**
 - The page has a Title Tag
 - The Title Tag is between 50-60 characters in length
 - The Title Tag includes the targeted keyword
 - The Title Tag is interesting, but precise
- Meta Description**
 - The page has a Meta Description
 - The Meta Description is between 120-156 characters in length
 - The Meta Description inspires the reader to take an action
- URL**
 - The URL includes the targeted keyword
 - The URL is not cumbersome or overly long
 - The URL consists of lowercase letters
 - The URL includes dashes between words
 - The URL **does not** include underscores, spaces, or other characters

2. On-Page Content Elements

- Headline/H1**
 - The page includes an H1
 - The page contains only one H1
 - The H1 includes the targeted keyword
 - The H1 is engaging and conversational
 - The H1 communicates your value proposition
- Subheads (H2s, H3s, H4s, etc.)**
 - The content makes use of various subheads to organize information

Element #2: Lead Generating Assets

- Gated Content Offers
- Optimized CTA Placement
- Email Nurture Follow-up



Create Gated Content Offers



Used to convert top-of-funnel traffic



Informational & educational



Focus on searcher intent



Career guides, ROI calculators, webinars

The screenshot shows a landing page for Northeastern University. The header features the university's logo and name. The main content area has a blue and purple background with the text: "Advance Your Computer Science Career. Learn what you need to know, from fast-growing jobs to breaking into the industry without prior experience." Below this is a section titled "Be at the Forefront of Change in a Rapidly Evolving Industry" with a paragraph of text and a bulleted list of points. A prominent red "DOWNLOAD NOW" button is visible. To the right, a dark sidebar contains a form titled "Download Your Free Guide" with fields for First Name, Last Name, Email Address, Phone Number, and Country. A disclaimer at the bottom of the sidebar states: "By submitting the form, you agree to receive details from Northeastern University about our degree programs and certificates via phone, email and/or text message. You can unsubscribe at any time." The footer includes a list of city locations and social media icons.

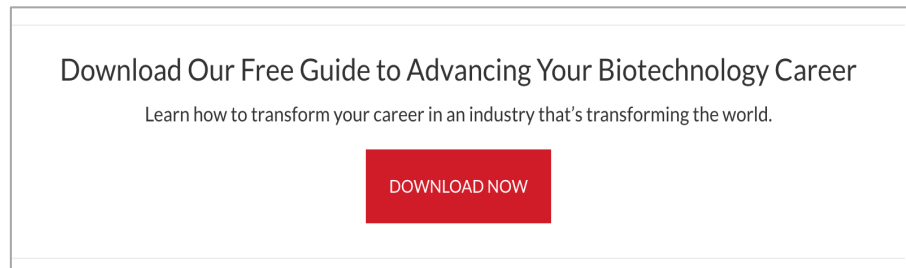
Optimize Your CTAs



Download Our Free Guide to Advancing Your Biotechnology Career

The world of regulatory affairs moves quickly. Here are the tools you need to keep up and get ahead in the industry.

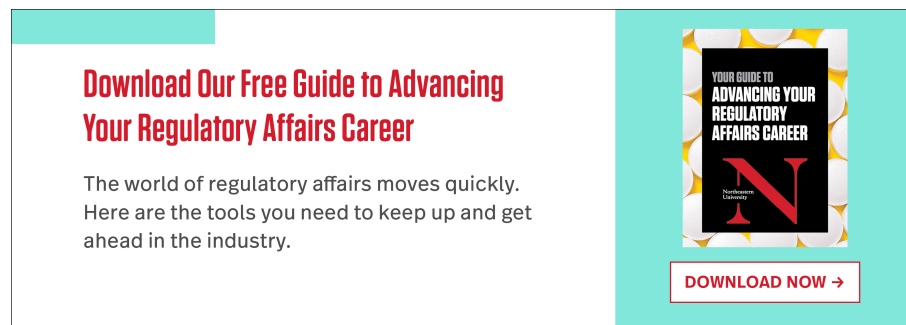
[DOWNLOAD NOW →](#)



Download Our Free Guide to Advancing Your Biotechnology Career

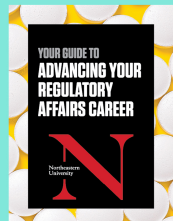
Learn how to transform your career in an industry that's transforming the world.

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)



Download Our Free Guide to Advancing Your Regulatory Affairs Career

The world of regulatory affairs moves quickly. Here are the tools you need to keep up and get ahead in the industry.



[DOWNLOAD NOW →](#)

- > Experiment with visual and text-based CTAs
- > Consider page placement
- > A/B test using Google Optimize & Hotjar



Nurture Your Leads

- > Direct them back to related content
- > Develop a dedicated nurture stream to continue engaging these prospects
- > Consider a newsletter to re-engage readers and increase return visits

The screenshot shows a nurture email from Northeastern University. At the top, there is a header with the university logo and the text "Discover how an EdD can advance your career." Below this is a section titled "Thank You for Downloading Our Free Guide" with a sub-heading "A GUIDE TO EARNING YOUR EdD". The text explains that the e-book helps prepare for the next step in a career and offers the opportunity to study on-ground in Seattle and Charlotte, or online. Below this is a "Related Reading" section with three articles: "6 Benefits of Online EdD Programs", "How an Online EdD in Organizational Leadership Can Advance Your Career", and "How Much Do EdD Graduates Make?". Each article has a "Read More >" link. At the bottom, there is a footer with city locations, contact information, and social media icons.



Northeastern
University

Real-World Results

7,800%

Increase in monthly
blog traffic since
2017

75,000+

blog-generated
leads

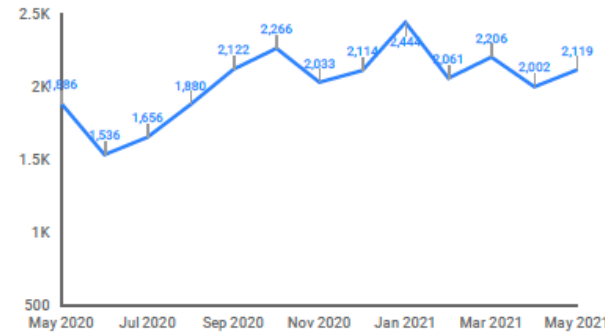


Element #3: Measuring Performance

- Critical KPIs
- Tools
- Dashboards

How many opportunities came from the grad site?

2119 Opportunities last month



Note: June & July Summer Scholarship Opportunities not included

What's the initial lead source of opportunities?

Lead Source	% of Total Leads
1. Organic	64%
2. Referral	11%
3. Direct	10%
4. Paid Search	9%
5. Other	7%
6. Email	1%
7. Paid Social	+0%

How many visitors did we get?

Visits

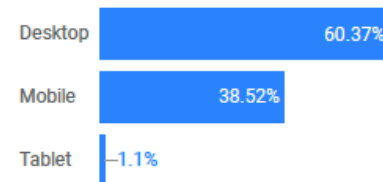
2,514,699

↑ 19.9% from previous 90 days

[View detailed report](#)



What's the traffic breakout by device?



[View detailed report](#)

What channel did visitors come from?

Compared to previous period

Channel	Visits	% Δ
1. Organic Search	2,076,646	21.2% ↑
2. Direct	297,227	16.5% ↑
3. Referral	46,373	44.2% ↑
4. Paid Search	41,767	-20.2% ↓
5. Paid Search (Brand...)	18,066	-
6. Email	10,534	-50.8% ↓
7. Social	9,731	4.2% ↑
8. Display	8,912	17.8% ↑
9. (Other)	2,530	-45.8% ↓
Affiliates	1,213	-37.7% ↓
Grand total	2,514,699	19.9% ↑

[View detailed report](#)

Establish Your Critical KPIs

1. Consider your goals
2. Communicate the KPIs
3. Gather a baseline
4. Monitor and review

REACH	ENGAGEMENT	CONVERSION	SEO-SPECIFIC
Organic Traffic	Bounce Rate	Form Submissions	Keyword rankings
Click-through Rate (CTR)	Time on Page	Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL)	Backlinks
Unique Sessions	Pages per visit	Conversion Rate	Paid Search Equivalent
Demographics	Return visitors/ subscribers	Cost Per Lead	Crawl Errors*

Leverage Tools to Gather Data



Backlink analysis, keyword research, technical audits, SERP tracker, organic traffic insights, on-page SEO recommendations



Site explorer, site audits, keyword explorer, link tracker, rankings tracker



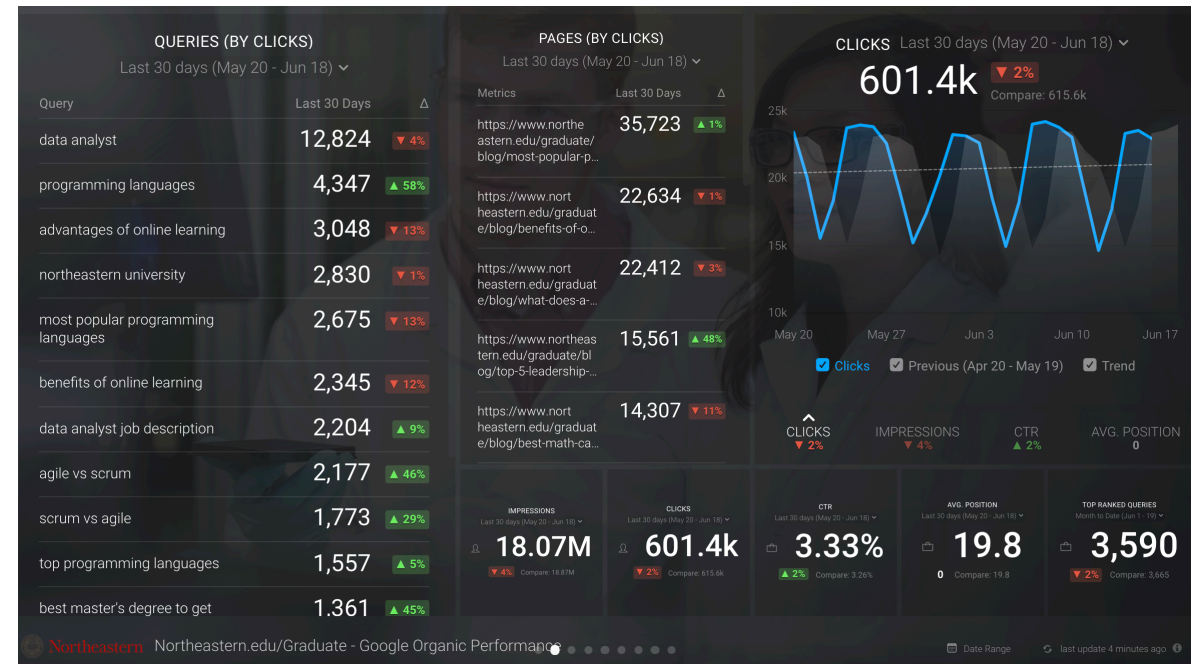
Audience reports, behavioral insights, traffic analytics



Performance overview, campaign-specific tracking, customizable dashboards



Create Dashboards to Identify Successes & Opportunities



Element #4: Continuous Optimization

- Content Audits
- Prioritization

SEARCH QUERY PERFORMANCE: Last Quarter (Jan 1 - Mar 31) ▾

Dimension	Clicks	Δ	Impressions	Δ	CTR	Δ	Position	Δ
data analyst	30,300	▲ 50%	336.1k	▲ 22%	9.01%	▲ 23%	3.7	▲ 12.4
most popular programming languages	14,560	▼ 11%	38,984	▼ 8%	37.35%	▼ 2%	1.4	▼ 13.9
northeastern university	11,197	▲ 3%	785.2k	▲ 8%	1.43%	▼ 5%	2.5	▼ 10.1
benefits of online learning	8,861	▲ 26%	28,591	▼ 4%	30.99%	▲ 30%	1.8	▲ 43.6
advantages of online learning	8,196	▼ 6%	43,749	▼ 4%	18.73%	▼ 2%	3.5	▲ 4
most used programming languages	6,885	▲ 16%	18,363	▲ 14%	37.49%	▲ 2%	1.3	▼ 6.3
data analyst job description	6,852	▲ 30%	61,469	▲ 19%	11.15%	▲ 9%	3.1	▲ 12.7
top programming languages	5,902	▲ 4%	21,455	▲ 11%	27.51%	▼ 6%	2.6	▼ 9.9
international business jobs	4,928	▲ 25%	19,325	▲ 4%	25.5%	▲ 21%	2.3	▲ 15.8
project manager salary	4,843	▼ 20%	114.1k	▲ 6%	4.24%	▼ 24%	3.8	▲ 11.7

Northeastern.edu/Graduate Keyword Movement

View Report: Last Quarter

Reset view

Last updated 4 hours ago

Conduct Regular Content Audits



Evaluate your performance



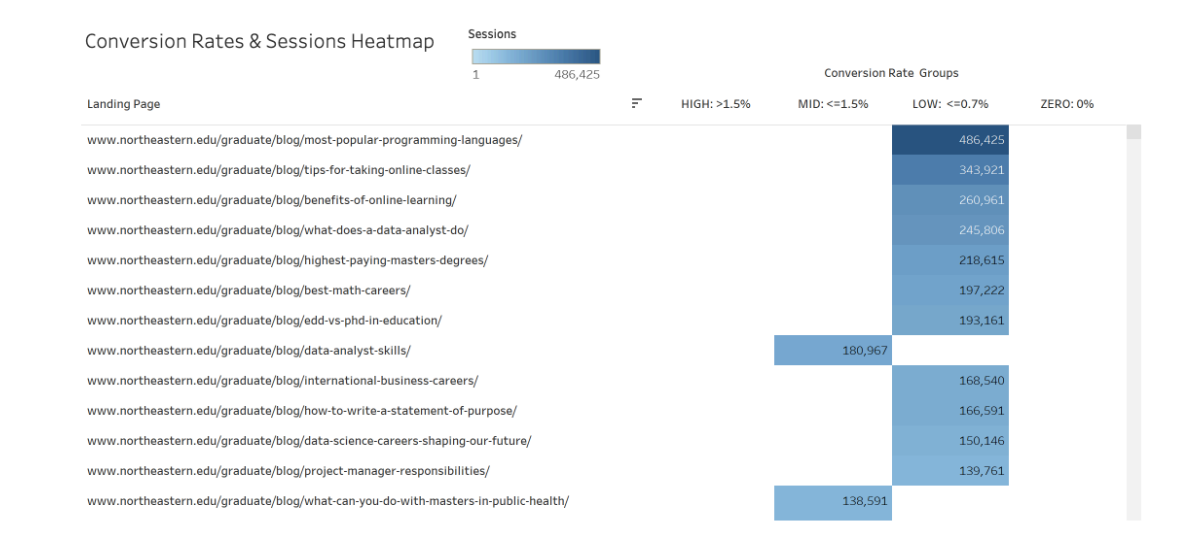
Revisit product and audience messaging changes



Identify content gaps and optimization opportunities

Prioritize Your Optimization Opportunities

- > After a while, publishing new content is *NOT* your biggest growth opportunity.
- > Tiered approach for exponential results:
 - 1) High-traffic content that is decaying (aging, SERP position changes, drop-off in leads)
 - 2) Content that ranks *just* beyond the first page
 - 3) Non-ranking content targeting high-volume/institutionally critical keywords
 - 4) High-traffic, low converting posts



Common Roadblocks

- Getting Buy-In
- Limited Resources



Roadblock #1: Getting Buy-In

5 Reasons to Pursue an Inbound Marketing Strategy

- 1) Search visibility matters—93% of prospective students start their school search on Google.
- 2) An inbound strategy is both efficient and cost-effective.
- 3) SEO strategies level the playing field with larger institutions.
- 4) Simple tools allow teams to analyze performance based on real data.
- 5) Inbound marketing builds trust and credibility with audiences to deliver long-term results.



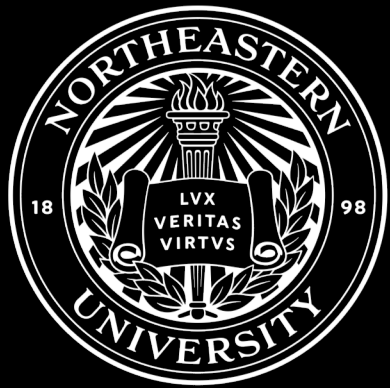
Roadblock #2: Limited Resources

Managing Content Priorities (while keeping everyone happy)

- 1) Consider institutional, enrollment, and marketing priorities (and politics)
- 2) Develop a prioritization framework
- 3) Determine your content production cadence
- 4) Communicate tactfully with stakeholders



Thank You!



Northeastern University

