

Case Study

Supporting Students Who Are Navigating, Not Necessarily Struggling Right Now



THE CHALLENGE

Northeastern University is recognized for its experiential learning model, global campus network, and emphasis on preparing students for success through academic excellence and professional experience. Students often balance demanding coursework with co-op placements, internships, research, campus involvement, and career preparation.

For many students, particularly those living independently for the first time or adjusting to a new city or country, college is more than an academic transition. It is also a period of significant personal growth. Students are learning to manage their time, build relationships, make independent decisions, navigate uncertainty, and establish a sense of belonging within a new community. These developmental experiences are a natural part of higher education. However, they are not always addressed through traditional student support services.

THE GAP

The pilot originated from an unexpected conversation during an independent student research project. One student shared an experience that challenged a common assumption about student support.

While this reflected one student's experience, it raised an important institutional question. How can universities better support students who are navigating everyday challenges before those challenges become barriers to engagement, belonging, or academic success?

Rather than requiring intensive intervention, many students may simply benefit from structured conversations that help them reflect, prioritize, develop confidence, and make informed decisions as they adapt to university life. This insight became the foundation for launching ShineQuo at Northeastern.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Organization

Northeastern University

Founded

1898

Location

Boston, MA

Enrollment

~38,000

Launched ShineQuo for Spring 2025



"I'm not struggling. I'm doing fine. I don't think I need therapy. I tried it, but it wasn't what I was looking for. I need someone to help me figure out college. I'm trying to manage everything for the first time, I just want guidance."

Anonymous Student

Before using ShineQuo

THE SOLUTION

The purpose of this new approach was to explore whether proactive coaching could provide students with an additional layer of personalized support throughout their college journey.

Rather than focusing on crisis intervention, this emphasize on continuous student growth by providing access to:

- Action-oriented professional coaching
- Flexible support beyond traditional office hours
- Personalized coach matching based on individual goals and backgrounds
- Practical self-guided resources

The coaching approach encourag students to reflect, strengthen decision-making, build confidence, and develop practical strategies for navigating university life with greater clarity.



STUDENT VOICE

“Seen improvement in sleep and I give credit to my coach who led me from 3 to 3.4 GPA.”

-Undergraduate student



STUDENT VOICE

“I have been able to overcome relationship challenges and focus on academics, also feeling mentally clearer and less heavier.”

-Undergraduate student

What Students Worked on Most

Building healthier relationships

Strengthening confidence and self-esteem

Managing time effectively

Establishing healthier routines

Navigating personal growth and life transitions

Academic Adjustment

Establishing healthier routines

Establishing healthier routines



4.6 /5

Student feedback on average



85%

word of mouth referral from peers



84%

continued sessions after first meeting

IMPACT FOR STUDENTS

Students used coaching as a structured space for reflection, goal setting, and action planning. Working alongside a life coach, they identified personal priorities, explored different perspectives, and developed practical strategies to navigate academic, personal, and professional challenges. Rather than focusing solely on immediate concerns, coaching emphasized building transferable skills, including self-awareness, decision-making, confidence, prioritization, and accountability, that students can continue applying throughout college and beyond.



Greater Self-Awareness & Confidence



Better Academic & Career Momentum



Healthier Habits & Wellbeing

IMPACT FOR INSTITUTION

The pilot demonstrated how proactive coaching can extend an institution's student support ecosystem by providing guidance for everyday developmental challenges that may not require formal intervention.

By creating an accessible pathway for coaching, Northeastern explored a model that helped students build confidence, strengthen relationships, and develop practical life skills while allowing campus support professionals to focus on students requiring more specialized care.



Supported Whole-Student Development



Built Student Trust Through Peer Advocacy



STUDENT VOICE

"I took coaching and therapy together and it worked really well for me. Coaching helped me to stay more realistic instead of overly pessimistic or optimistic and overall helped with my anxiety. My clinical treatments actually progressed faster than anticipated".

-Undergraduate student



WHY THIS MATTERS

Many students do not need intensive intervention. They need a trusted space to think, reflect, and develop the skills required to navigate college with confidence.

The Northeastern pilot suggests that proactive coaching can complement existing student success services by supporting students through the everyday transitions that shape belonging, engagement, and lifelong growth.

As higher education continues to evolve, institutions have an opportunity to expand support beyond moments of crisis and create environments where students are equipped to grow through challenges, not simply recover from them.

LOOKING FORWARD

Student success extends beyond grades and graduation.

Today's graduates must also develop confidence, communication, adaptability, decision-making, and resilience as they prepare for increasingly complex careers and lives.

The Northeastern pilot explored how proactive coaching can strengthen these capacities by meeting students where they are, providing practical guidance, and helping them navigate college with greater clarity and purpose.

Ready to transform your campus?
Book a conversation to learn more.

