

NORTHEASTERN'S ROUX INSTITUTE RECEIVES A 'PHENOMENAL INVESTMENT' FROM THE HAROLD ALFOND FOUNDATION

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Northeastern University's Roux Institute, a new innovation hub devoted to deepening and expanding the digital economy of Maine, has [received a \\$100 million gift from the Harold Alfond Foundation](#), an investment that will provide financial aid for graduate-level students, funding for post-doctoral research, and support for co-ops with Maine employers. The Alfond Scholars Initiative is the second \$100 million gift to Northeastern's Roux Institute in 2020.

The largest portion of the Alfond gift will provide much-needed financial assistance and career support, enabling citizens and their employers throughout Maine to benefit from the Roux Institute's graduate-level programs focused on high-tech fields including artificial intelligence, computer and data science, digital engineering, and the advanced life sciences and medicine.

Northeastern launched the Roux Institute nine months ago with a \$100 million investment made by technology entrepreneur and Maine native David Roux and his wife, Barbara, who joined forces with Northeastern to ignite their vision of a Portland-based hub to educate generations of talent for the digital and life sciences sectors, and create new ideas through research.

"This phenomenal investment from the Harold Alfond Foundation will uplift people and communities across Maine—today, tomorrow and for generations to come," says Joseph E. Aoun, president of Northeastern. "The vision of the Roux Institute is to create economic prosperity and opportunity through innovative research and educational programs. The Alfond Foundation, combined with the founding support of Barb and Dave Roux, will allow us to set our sights even higher and make our impact even more profound."

When David Roux joined with Northeastern officials and civic leaders to unveil the institute at a Portland ceremony in January, he noted that Maine had been lagging in the new digital economy. At a time when one-third of Americans believe they "will need more education to find a comparable job if they were to lose theirs," according to the COVID-19 Work and Education Survey, the Alfond Scholars Initiative is propelling the institute's drive to transform Maine into a destination for new technologies and emerging fields.

“We are deeply grateful for the monumental commitment the Harold Alfond Foundation has made to the Roux Institute at Northeastern on behalf of the people of Maine,” says Roux. “The establishment of the Alfond Scholars program—with its focus on Maine job creation and generous financial aid—will provide transformational access for deserving students to all our program offerings.”

Of the \$100 million gift by the Harold Alfond Foundation, \$63.4 million will go toward tuition scholarships over 10 years. Its beneficiaries will form a talent pool that is poised to attract new companies and an additional workforce to Maine.

Need-based financial aid dollars will support up to 100 percent of first-year tuition for 200 learners in year one of the initiative, and 300 learners in year two. In year three, 500 learners will have up to half of their first-year tuition covered.

Veterans will be among the groups prioritized to receive the new scholarships. Maine offers generous benefits to attract and serve veterans, who comprise 11 percent of the state’s population (which is close to double the national average), and more than 12,000 of the veterans in Maine are younger than 40.

Other prioritized groups will include graduates from New England colleges and universities; women and members of demographic groups that are under-represented in the technology and science economy; and rural Mainers, with the goal of achieving a student body at the Roux Institute that represents the demographics of Maine.

The Harold Alfond Foundation gift also provides \$16.1 million in post-doctoral research grants over the next 10 years to hire and develop 51 researchers who have arrived to the Roux Institute with a PhD. A two-year mentoring and educational program in AI and machine learning will enable them to become researchers at the institute.

The gift also includes \$4.2 million to fund 200 six-month co-ops with Maine employers during the next three years, including 150 co-op scholarships that are being awarded over the initial 18 months. Maine employers will have the opportunity to match the scholarships, thereby doubling the impact of the initiative.

“It’s a grow-your-own-talent strategy,” says Chris Mallett, chief administrative officer at the Roux Institute. “It’s about getting new talent to Maine while also developing and retaining the amazing talent already here.”

The Alfond Scholars Initiative also provides for free career coaching for Mainers and New England undergraduate students and recent graduates.

The remaining \$16.3 million of the Harold Alfond Foundation gift will go toward operational costs at the Roux Institute over the next 10 years. Later this month, the Roux Institute will move into a new building, operated by WEX, a founding corporate partner, which will offer 44,000 square feet of dedicated space with views of Portland Harbor.

Many learners who are currently enrolled at the Roux Institute—including 76 graduate students—have already been benefiting from the tuition support of the Alfond gift. The average scholarship award for the inaugural class was more than \$18,800, supporting the institute’s promise to provide programs for learners drawn from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances.

Business and government leaders throughout Maine have shown enthusiastic support for the Roux Institute. Eleven corporations based in Maine have partnered with the institute to educate current and future employees in programs tailored to industry needs, and several more are negotiating to join the team. Not only will the Alfond Scholarship Initiative reduce the financial burden on corporate partners, but the benefits of higher education in emerging fields will be extended beyond the institute’s partnerships in order to help sustain and grow companies throughout Maine’s economy.

The Roux Institute’s pioneering curriculum is being designed by a collaboration of faculty, business leaders, and researchers. To date, 123 students—including 47 taking customized courses designed with their employers—are already making good on the Roux Institute’s promise to provide programs for learners drawn from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances.

The Alfond Scholars Initiative serves as a profound expression of support for the Roux Institute from Maine’s most influential philanthropist. Since its establishment in 1950, the Harold Alfond Foundation has expressed the ideals of Harold Alfond, founder of Dexter Shoe Company, who committed almost all of his wealth to the foundation upon his death in 2007. The foundation’s board invests in education, health care, and youth and community development causes that hold the promise of making enduring, transformative contributions to the community and state of Maine.

“Our state faces unprecedented challenges,” says Greg Powell, chairman of

the Harold Alfond Foundation in an announcement on Tuesday. “In the face of these challenges, we still see a bright, prosperous future for the people of Maine. Today’s grants are to vital, high-performing Maine institutions who will help build that future.”

The \$100 million gift to the Roux Institute is part of a \$500 million gift the Harold Alfond Foundation, benefitting eight Maine colleges, universities and organizations—the largest set of investments ever by the foundation.

“What is really inspiring is that the board of the Harold Alfond Foundation is really, really focused on Maine,” says Diane MacGillivray, senior vice president for university advancement at Northeastern. “They have strengthened the mission of the Roux Institute by way of their partnership. This can be a phenomenal development for the city of Portland and the state of Maine.”