Our mission is to foster meaningful engagement across borders of all kinds.

to the Northwestern Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs.
At our core, we are a catalyst, facilitating the growth and exchange of ideas and research that address global issues, and our mission is to foster meaningful engagement across borders of all kinds.

The world is on the verge of a global reset in which traditionally analog paradigms, political alliances and modes of operation no longer hold. In today’s global environment, innovation and change are coming from collaboration across disciplines, sectors and geographies. Addressing pressing issues like inequality, poverty and environmental degradation require breaking out of traditional modes of inquiry and problem solving.

Northwestern University’s Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs brings together the brightest minds from across Northwestern University and around the world to address critical global challenges that cannot be solved from a singular disciplinary or geographical perspective.

“The new genius is a collaborative genius.”

—Annelise Riles, Executive Director of Northwestern Buffett
Northwestern Buffett’s research collaboration model empowers researchers and thought leaders from all walks of life to tackle complex problems together in a multicultural context. A creative and iterative approach helps groups produce substantive solutions to shared global challenges as defined by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
Northwestern Buffett’s Idea Incubation Process begins with Idea Dialogues that bring together scholars from across disciplines for informal conversations about a research question of global significance. The hope is that these discussions give rise to interdisciplinary global research projects that contribute to progress toward a UN Sustainable Development Goal.

**IDEA DIALOGUES**

Selected by a panel of judges, Global Working Groups receive up to two years of Northwestern Buffett funding and support to conduct research aimed at addressing a global challenge and pursue active measures to mitigate its impact on citizens and communities worldwide.

**GLOBAL WORKING GROUPS**

Our Idea Incubation Workshops bring together scholars and practitioners for a series of iterative work sessions designed to foster the development of research project proposals that address pressing global challenges through research, dialogue, strategic output and action.

“...so the Buffett Institute curated a list of people from all of the different units of the university...they did a great job of sort of culling through and figuring out who might be interested in this kind of interdisciplinary work on global environmental change.”
—Kimberly R. Marion Suiseeya, Assistant Professor, Northwestern Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences
Novel approaches to addressing pressing global challenges aren’t coming from one field or institution, one world leader or one small group of heroes, but rather “network hubs” working to harness expertise from across disciplines, sectors and geographies.

Northwestern Buffett’s Idea Dialogues have catalyzed collaborative, interdisciplinary and cross-sector approaches to addressing the many dimensions of global challenges:

ACADEMICS + ENTREPRENEURS

Northwestern Buffett connected the Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine and Computer Science Department with Rheaply Asset Exchange Manager to foster the development of the Emergency Resource Exchange, an online marketplace that allows health care providers to quickly report their resource needs and suppliers to efficiently donate them.

CHICAGO ➔ MEXICO CITY

We convened faculty from Northwestern’s McCormick School of Engineering and scholars stationed at Mexico’s Universidad Panamericana for a virtual dialogue on personal protective equipment (PPE) engineering challenges, which helped hatch a plan to pilot new smart face mask technology in Mexico. With a grant from the National Science Foundation, Northwestern computer scientist Josiah Hester led a team in developing smart face masks to combat COVID-19. Using energy-harvesting technology, researchers developed sensors that detect when mask wearers are vulnerable to exposure. With Universidad Panamericana in Mexico City, Hester’s team piloted and deployed the technology in the U.S. and Mexico before releasing the designs and software to researchers worldwide.

Amid severe PPE shortages worldwide, we brought Northwestern faculty from engineering and materials science, immunology and pathology, transportation studies, anthropology, law and management studies together with scholars in Mexico to address fraud in global medical supply chains. The conversations led to a set of best practices in international medical supply sourcing, meant to be adapted to local contexts as appropriate based on applicable regulatory and legal requirements.
Disproportionate Impacts of Environmental Challenges Global Working Group

Our Disproportionate Impacts of Environmental Challenges global working group launched work in Fall 2020 exploring how marginalized communities can adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. The group, born out of our Idea Incubation Process, includes leading scholars in disciplines ranging from environmental policy, biology and conservation to anthropology to engineering and business. It also includes leaders from NGOs including the World Wildlife Fund and Nature Conservancy.

The central aim of the group’s research is societal impact—not simply bridging divides within academia, but reaching outside of the academy to co-produce and apply knowledge. In light of that, the group started its work by cultivating deeper community relationships—working with indigenous youth, community elders and knowledge keepers, local practitioners, scientists, engineers and others—to develop an understanding of traditional ecological knowledge and climate change experiences and solutions. This will be used to co-create a knowledge-sharing platform and facilitate co-designed solutions that mitigate—and possibly prevent—the disproportionate impacts of environmental change marginalized communities around the globe now face.

Antibiotic Resistance Global Working Group

The Antibiotic Resistance global working group aims to address the rapid spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) across the world over the last several years. Infections with these resistant bacteria are associated with high mortality and morbidity across all age groups, in both developed and developing countries. Compounding the rapid spread of AMR is the serious dearth of a global coordinated effort, limited antimicrobial stewardship programs in some healthcare systems, overuse and misuse of antimicrobials due to poor healthcare regulation, lack of diagnostics for infectious diseases and, in some cases, misunderstanding of the role of antibiotics in common illnesses. This working group aims to develop basic infrastructure to evaluate AMR across two disparate healthcare systems in different parts of the world and understand how healthcare providers make decisions around the prescription of antibiotics.
What are the ways that the persistence of color and colorism not only inflect different world-systems, but could be said to constitute a particular world-system itself? How do we “translate” (literally and figuratively) discourses of race, caste and color around the world? The Race, Caste, Colorism global working group seeks to explore the cultural and social systems of racism, casteism and colorism worldwide, with a focus on the U.S., South Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. A primary focus on these sites—and their social, political, and religious histories, intellectual traditions, and literary, art, and media cultures—reveals the connective tissues among writers, scholars, artists and activists who foreground the embodied experiences of race, caste and color in their work.

Music is emerging as a powerful and transformative force in cultivating well-being among humans all around the world, particularly among those who have endured trauma. A small but growing body of research has highlighted the developmental disruptions children around the world have experienced due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Trauma, Music and the Breath working group is an interdisciplinary team of clinicians, researchers, musicians and thought leaders dedicated to examining the ways music is used globally to improve the health and well-being of children throughout and following the traumas of COVID-19. Their goal is to establish Northwestern as a global leader in the field of music, health and well-being, pursuing cutting edge, interdisciplinary research that responds directly to the traumas of the recent global pandemic and broadly addresses United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #3: “Good Health and Well-being.”
CATALYZING TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH

OUR WORK

FACILITATING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION & CULTURAL EXCHANGE

GLOBAL LEARNING

Leaders in the 21st century must be agile thinkers and doers who can navigate ambiguity, embrace diverse viewpoints and rapidly adapt to new technologies. Northwestern Buffett’s Global Learning Office prepares students to collaborate effectively across borders of all kinds.

We work with faculty and NGOs to develop international learning experiences that foster cross-cultural communication, collaboration, empathy and humility. Students gain knowledge and experience in a diverse range of areas including global health, energy technology and policy, and political and economic development.

In 2019, our Global Learning Office administered 150 global experiential learning programs in 50 countries.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we are developing novel approaches to facilitating international exchange and global learning.
In Fall 2020, more than 60 undergraduate students from seven Northwestern University schools and 34 areas of academic study participated in a virtual Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) program involving a combination of global coursework and a remote internship. Students explored critical questions related to the history, operation and structure of community development work, and interned with 26 community-based organizations across seven countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guatemala, Uganda and Vietnam. Internship work centered on a range of issues including microfinance, environmental sustainability, women’s empowerment, youth and education, and human rights.

Through this integration of academic coursework and hands-on internship opportunities, the virtual GESI program has allowed students to put international development theory into practice and gain experience collaborating with remote and global teams on project-based work. After the success of the inaugural Fall 2020 program, the virtual GESI program was renewed for the Spring and Summer 2021 academic quarters.
Collaborating with faculty at international institutions:
We are supporting Northwestern faculty in their efforts to collaborate with international partner institutions to provide students with virtual learning and engagement opportunities. Northwestern’s students have the opportunity to engage in cross-cultural, curriculum-based experiences with their peers abroad and build the competencies necessary to become engaged global citizens “at home.” This provides greater access to global learning for students lacking the financial means or the time in their programs to spend a quarter or more abroad.

Engaging in virtual research activities:
Northwestern Buffett supports faculty across the university in initiating or growing international research relationships with faculty at global partner universities. Northwestern Buffett staff work with faculty to convene diverse groups of international scholars to discuss global challenges that require interdisciplinary research endeavors, especially those tied to learning, service or international development initiatives.

GLOBAL SAFETY & SECURITY

Northwestern Buffett’s Office of Global Safety and Security (OGSS) supports students, faculty and staff who travel abroad under university support or sponsorship. OGSS collaborates with leaders across Northwestern, as well as partners in the U.S. and abroad, to develop and ensure compliance with international travel policies and establish best practices in travel risk management.

OGSS also serves as the first responder for all university-sponsored travelers experiencing an emergency abroad, offers security information and support services to Northwestern community members traveling to high-risk locations, develops specialized training materials and sessions related to travel health, safety and security and contributes to the development of study abroad programming.

Our Office of Global Safety and Security and Global Learning Office leaders are experts in international travel risk management and among the contributors to the new book, Undergraduate Research Abroad: Approaches, Models, and Challenges. The book explores various perspectives on global learning program models, best practices and ethics. Learn more about and download the book here.
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

Northwestern Buffett supports a robust global community. Our Office of International Student & Scholar Services (OISS) advises, advocates on behalf of and develops cultural exchange programming for Northwestern’s international populations.

OISS also provides professional support and advising services to international students and scholars at Northwestern University regarding their immigration and academic status in the United States.

In 2020, Northwestern welcomed

942 new international students, and sponsors...

6,700 visitors from nearly...

130 different countries

Northwestern’s International Community
Over the past decade, Northwestern’s international community has grown by nearly 175 percent.
The COVID-19 pandemic has created particular challenges for PhD candidates in global studies, hampering their efforts to progress in their research and narrowing their academic job prospects. In light of these challenges, Northwestern Buffett launched the Global Impacts Graduate Fellowship Program, which provides an interdisciplinary cohort of graduate students with financial support and professional development opportunities for a full academic year. This includes dissertation research support, mentoring and opportunities to explore career paths in international affairs, policy and development. The program also includes a Global Careers Speaker Series open to all Northwestern graduate students. The series connects students with alumni and leaders across sectors for conversations on a wide range of exciting career paths in international affairs, policy and development.

After a successful inaugural run in the 2020-2021 academic year, the Global Impacts Graduate Fellowship program was renewed for the 2021-22 academic year.
As part of our mission to create new models of global collaboration, we’re building a global community for multilingual dialogue. The community, Meridian 180, brings scholars and practitioners together for meaningful collaboration across cultural and linguistic borders, virtually and in-person. Meridian 180 community members cross the divide between the academy, industry and public sector to identify gaps in research and programming in areas where it is vitally needed to address global challenges.

Our members are scholars, lawyers, policymakers, activists and business professionals who convene for the kind of “free form” dialogue and intellectual risk taking that can surface novel approaches to addressing complex global challenges.

Meridian 180 forums explore issues ranging from political and military conflict to inequality and social justice to global environmental and public health crises, including COVID-19. Within each of these issue areas, Meridian 180 members identify key areas to prioritize for collaborative work.

Most recently, Meridian 180 members at universities worldwide, from Finland to the former Soviet Republics to Japan, South Korea and the United States, collaborated with policy makers, citizen activists and nuclear energy operators to explore compensation models and care for victims of nuclear accidents like the Great East Japan and Fukushima Nuclear Disaster of 2011. Their report, released in March 2021, illuminates the real costs of nuclear disasters and severe inadequacies of current public and private insurance mechanisms.

In a similar vein, Meridian 180 members have recently come together to discuss the merits and risks associated with various policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The conversations have shed light on approaches to combatting COVID-19 from Bogotá, Colombia to Taegu, South Korea: the role of central governments and health care providers, the limitations of basic welfare systems, how responses to COVID-19 are exacerbating inequalities and how to incentivize cooperation with public health recommendations, among other issues.
The U7+ Alliance of World Universities is the first coalition of university presidents aimed at defining concrete actions universities can take to collectively address global challenges in coordination with government leaders in G7 countries and beyond. The Paris Institute of Political Studies (SciencesPo) hosted the first U7+ Summit in Paris last year as a precursor to the 2019 G7 Summit. The inaugural Summit included leaders from 20 countries and 47 universities representing more than 2 million students around the world.

In 2020, Northwestern University was the first U.S. university to host the U7+ Summit in partnership with Columbia University, Georgetown University and the University of California, Berkeley. Northwestern Buffett led the cross-university team hosting the Summit, which built on work initiated in France to develop commitments on key issues including climate and energy, inequality, technological transformation and preparation for global health crises, including COVID-19.

Northwestern Buffett also facilitated the first U7+ Worldwide Student Forum, which brought more than 85 students from 22 universities across 12 countries together for a rich discussion on how universities can best prepare them for leadership amid and in the aftermath of COVID-19.

In 2021, Northwestern University was elected to serve as the first Secretariat of the U7+ Alliance for a three-year term. As Secretariat, Northwestern continues to lead the Alliance’s work through activities such as the Intergenerational Roundtable Series and the annual Worldwide Student Forum to foster intergenerational dialogue and encourage policymakers to account for the interests and rights of youth in their efforts to tackle critical global issues. The Secretariat will be housed at Northwestern Buffett and convene a series of intergenerational roundtables on climate change, the global gender gap and more. Northwestern leaders and faculty will also play a role in each of the alliance’s working groups dedicated to fulfilling U7+ university commitments ranging from improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to developing students’ inclusive leadership and global citizenship capacities.
“The global coronavirus pandemic underscores the critical need for collaboration and coordination across disciplines and geographies. Universities are in a unique position to provide intellectual and scientific leadership that advances initiatives to address shared global challenges.”

—Annelise Riles, Executive Director of Northwestern Buffett

Northwestern Buffett’s Equality Development and Globalization Studies (EGDS) program promotes intellectual engagement and public dialogue on issues confronting the post-colonial world, including democracy and equality; conflict, tolerance and rights; and growth and sustainability. Through conferences, workshops, research fellowships and other academic activities, EDGS seeks to create a lively intellectual environment that connects faculty and students, sparks ideas and insights and advances cutting-edge scholarship. EDGS also houses the Arryman Program, which trains emerging Indonesian scholars in the social sciences.
THE KEYMAN MODERN TURKISH STUDIES PROGRAM

The Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program at Northwestern Buffett promotes deep, interdisciplinary knowledge of contemporary Turkey in connection with global developments. Through seminars, conferences, fellowships, visiting scholar programs and more, the Keyman Program fosters critical dialogue on and understanding of Turkey in the context of global social challenges.

To learn more about the Northwestern Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, please visit buffett.northwestern.edu