

A close-up, profile view of a young man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue beanie and a blue hoodie, smiling as he works on a wooden project in a workshop. He is using a hand plane on a piece of wood held in a vise. In the background, another student is visible, working at a different station. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a well-lit workshop environment.

NORTH
BENNET ST.
SCHOOL

SUMMER 2026

BENCH MARKS

RADICAL TRADITION



In this edition of Benchmarks, we are excited to celebrate how North Bennet Street School students gain essential expertise, take their skills into the world, and connect to vibrant communities beyond the school walls.

THROUGHOUT THIS EDITION, you will find sparks of technical moments that reflect key skills required for students to succeed in their fields. You may recognize that diligence, the coming together of disparate skills, an understanding of timing, and knowing how to meet a challenge, are key features of the NBSS experience.

We are proud that our students take these skills into our communities. One of our partnerships has lasted for 15 years, as Piano Technology students travel to Boston Public Schools to make sure teachers and students have working pianos. In another example, an entrepreneurial construction firm, Morse Constructions, connects to sponsor students who gain NBSS training and come back to the company with expanded skills and understanding. In yet another example, the remarkable conservation lab in the Boston Athenaeum has a fellowship specifically for NBSS graduates to train in conservation techniques. These partnerships demonstrate why being part of the NBSS community can be transformative to a career and a life.

This knack for taking hard-earned skills into the world is demonstrated by Distinguished Alumni Award winner Erin Fletcher BB '12. While remaining deeply connected to NBSS, Erin has been a leader within the Guild of Bookworkers community as well as sharing her expertise more broadly through writing and conducting workshops all across the U.S., whether in person or online. We are grateful for

the many talented students and alumni, like Erin, who keep NBSS connected to trade communities, alert us—through our Program Advisory Committees—to changing industries and provide insights to the field.

This winter, we mourned the passing of Boston education leader Gwen Cochran Hadden. Gwen had a gift for shaping communities, building innovation programs, and inspiring school culture through leadership coaching. Gwen's father trained as a piano technician in the '40s. She would later support the School to build a strategy for inclusive and educational excellence. She had a deep understanding of NBSS through her family connection and often went above and beyond to assist us with the challenges wrought by the COVID era. We offer tribute to her in these pages.

We could not offer tremendous resources, student services, and materials to students without the support of a remarkable group of donors who take time to give back to the School. These gifts come from outstanding, caring members of our community who know that we can be more ambitious and do more to

support our students with more financial resources. A 2024–2026 endowment challenge exceeded a goal of \$3.5m, and as of this publication has yielded \$6.3m in new endowment funds. We carry these efforts into the future, as the increasing cost of living creates challenges for our students. We celebrate gifts at every level, as an expression of the commitment of any donor to the value of NBSS in a highly competitive philanthropic landscape.

Please enjoy the stories in these pages and feel welcome to reconnect with NBSS, come by for a visit, or join us for one of our remarkable exhibitions. In this wave of AI, we are finding new connections to practitioners across the country to preserve these important fields and carry on with the business of masterful making.



DR. SARAH B. CUNNINGHAM
PRESIDENT

2026 UPDATES

STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS





As new president, I met with leaders across the School to evaluate what we have achieved, what has been added, and what has changed due to an evolving world.

The data reflects an extraordinary commitment from board members, staff, and faculty to support organizational excellence. We are an active and dynamic organization, often adding new goals to respond to challenges and opportunities to best support incoming students, alumni, and our trade communities.

OUR COMMUNITY WORKS VERY HARD AND HAS ACHIEVED MORE THAN THE PROPOSED GOALS:

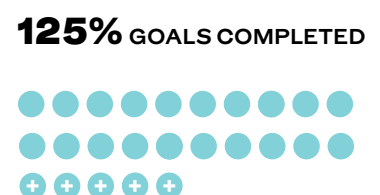
1 To increase diversity, expand offerings, and expand our range of partnerships



2 To improve educational experience by deepening faculty & student support



3 To build operations to support employees



Opposite: Second-year Carpentry students on a job site constructing an exoskeleton of walls and roof, built on top of a 29' x 29' timber frame great room.

HIGHLIGHTS



Reid Salyards JM '27



95

GRADUATES IN THE CLASS
OF 2026, OUR LARGEST
CLASS SINCE 2018

Left: Jingjing Yang BB '26

- ↑ Increased enrollment
- ↑ Increased scholarship support through new funding sources
- ↑ Increased wellness and career support resources



Alex Kickham CA '26 and Peter DelRose CA '25

Since 2023, we've onboarded at least 15 new members of our community, who bring talent and promise to our future:

- President
- Controller
- 4 Department Heads
- 5 Faculty Members
- Director, Student Support & Career Services
- Assistant Director, Community Education
- Academic Administrator
- Bursar



Casey Quirk CF '27 and Rich Wood CF '27

In addition to exceeding our endowment challenge targets, we:

- Launched a Teaching Assistant program across the **Career Training Programs**
- Transformed and expanded **Community Education**, including launch of teen programs
- Piloted new **strategic partnerships** to develop innovative projects with industry leaders



Kameron Straine VM '27

UPCOMING GOALS

Increase resources to meet the challenges of increased costs

Expand Career Training Programs in alignment with industry opportunities

Demonstrate our social impact through alumni career success

Amplify our role as champion of beauty and craft excellence

We look forward to working with you and friends of North Bennet Street School to achieve new successes as we head into the final years of this strategic plan.





INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S CARPENTERS

Morse Constructions fast-tracked one employee's career, modeling how other companies can partner with NBSS to advance their workforce and continue reaching their goals well into the future.

IN 2019, Eric Keyes and his wife, Kristi Keyes, took over Morse Constructions, a family-owned, design-build firm with an established reputation in Greater Boston. Five years into leading their 15-person team, the Keyes had built a thriving business defined by integrity and smooth communication with clients. But they were also facing a looming industry-wide problem: the dwindling number of skilled carpenters entering the field, just as many veteran carpenters prepare to retire.

"It is really difficult to find skilled carpenters, and as a small company, we don't have the capacity to run an apprenticeship program on our own," explains Kristi, who leads marketing at Morse.

That's when Eric got an idea.

**“WHAT IF WE OFFER
AN INDIVIDUAL AN
OPPORTUNITY FOR US
TO INVEST IN THEM
BY SPONSORING THEM
TO GO TO NBSS, AND
THEN, IN RETURN, THEY
WORK FOR US FOR A
FEW YEARS?”**

ERIC KEYES, OWNER, MORSE CONSTRUCTIONS

Decades earlier, Eric, then a real estate consultant and owner's representative on commercial construction projects, had taken a Community Education woodworking class at NBSS. "Eric built three shaker boxes and thought NBSS was an incredible place," Kristi recalls. "We've followed the School since then, reading Benchmarks magazine and email updates. Now in a position of employing carpenters, Eric wondered, 'What if we offer an individual an opportunity for us to invest in them by sponsoring them to go to NBSS, and then, in return, they work for us for a few years?'"

"I thought it was a fantastic idea," says NBSS Carpentry Instructor Brock Leiendecker PC '16 of his first conversation with the Keyes. "The School is the perfect atmosphere for someone to make huge strides, learn through doing, and drastically increase their skill set and comfort level to then go back to a company and perform at another level. That employee is going to ramp up their education so much more than if they were attempting to learn on-site from veteran carpenters who need to primarily focus on the client's needs." Plus, the model had already been a proven success at NBSS—

in 2023, the Boston Public Library sponsored an outstanding employee to attend the Locksmithing & Security Technology program.

The Keyes knew exactly who they wanted to sponsor: Matty Dickman CA '26, a recently hired Morse employee who impressed them with his character and work ethic.

"I knew going to school would give me so many opportunities," Matty shares. "On a job site, it's hard to let the new guy learn something that could cost money if a mistake is made. When I asked around about NBSS after Eric and Kristi shared their idea, everyone said, 'That's the school to go to, if you can.'"

"Matty is an amazing individual, and we knew it was worth investing in someone like that," Kristi says. "The idea was still a risk for him, because he would only be working on Fridays while in school, but it also offered a big gain. It has turned out to be a wonderful experience."

"The School has been such a great environment," Matty says. "I've become friends with the other students, and the instructors clearly have an interest in the trade that goes beyond the 9-5 workday, and are always excited to help students with new projects or networking. The most beneficial part is that it's not a risk for me to try things. That has been so helpful to my growth."



**"The School has been such a great environment. . . .
The most beneficial part is that it's not a risk for me
to try things. That has been so helpful to my growth."**

MATTY DICKMAN CA '26

INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S CARPENTERS



“The School is the perfect atmosphere for someone to drastically increase their skill set and comfort level, to then go back to a company and perform at another level. That employee is going to ramp up their education so much more than if they were attempting to learn on-site from veteran carpenters who need to primarily focus on the client’s needs.”

BROCK LEIENDECKER PC '16, NBSS CARPENTRY INSTRUCTOR

On Fridays and over breaks, Matty worked with Morse on a house remodel in Beverly, Massachusetts, and also completed his practicum week with Morse in the spring.

“As the year went on, I was able to use what I was learning and hop on new tasks for Morse, like installing doors and windows,” Matty says. “The veteran carpenters were really interested in hearing about the School.”

“During Matty’s spring practicum, our production manager commented that he was so much more sure of himself,” Kristi says. “And we appreciate that the program wants students to be

versatile. An example Brock gave us is that instructors teach students three ways to cope, which means bringing two inside corners of wood together. That way, if they encounter carpenters who have one way of coping, the NBSS grads can say, ‘Sure, let’s do it your way.’ NBSS understands the reality of job sites.”

“Matty has seen all of the curriculum in a very accelerated environment, and he’s absorbed it really well,” Brock notes. “His questions have become more pointed over the course of the year. He’s developed quite a lot of hand skills and is much more comfortable with the tools, milling, and technical work.”

Morse has already decided to send a second early-career employee to NBSS in the fall. “I believe more and more employers are going to come to us looking for solutions to fill the skill gap they’re experiencing, and we welcome them to see NBSS as the apprenticeship program for their company,” Brock says. “For that employee who is the right fit, send them to us for the fundamentals of residential construction. We’ll cover everything from framing and interior and exterior finishes to building codes and how to overlap with sub-contractors. We will provide that foundation so your employee can bring all that back to your company.”

Interested in sponsoring one of your employees to train in any of our eight disciplines? Reach out to our Admissions team at admissions@nbss.edu for more info.



Thanks to a 15-year partnership, NBSS is the primary service provider for acoustic pianos within the Boston Public Schools. Our students gain real-world experience and are paid for their work, while the service remains free to the schools.

MAKING BETTER MUSIC

LAST FALL, Jonathan “Meridian” Clapham PT '25, PA '26, an Advanced Piano Technology (PA) student, packed his toolkit and headed to an elementary school in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood to repair a music teacher's piano. The opportunity came thanks to a 15-year partnership that has seen NBSS become the primary service provider for acoustic pianos within the Boston Public Schools (BPS). PA students gain real-world experience and are paid for their work, while the service is free to BPS.

“I arrived and met the music teacher, who was in her first year at the school,” Meridian recalls. “She hadn’t been able to use the piano in her room, so she’d brought in her own electronic keyboard from home to use for classes.”

109

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

65

PIANOS SERVICED
THROUGHOUT LAST YEAR

15

YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP
SINCE 2011

Right away, Meridian noticed the hammers were blocking against the string. He started adjusting every note, preparing to repeat the step 88 times. "Luckily, after completing a few notes, I realized the rail, which goes across the whole keyboard, had come loose," he says. "I got the rail back in place—and suddenly the whole piano was working! The teacher was thrilled, and it was eye-opening for me because now I always check for a loose rail in upright pianos when hammers are blocking."

As Meridian was packing up his tools, the music teacher said, "I think I'll stay late today and just play this piano for a while."

"That was such a good feeling," Meridian recalls.

"Our PA students grow in so many directions because of this partnership," says Emily Townsend PT '07, PA '08, Piano Technology Department Head and Advanced Piano Technology Instructor. "Our former Department Head, Debbie Cyr PA '93, really stewarded this program into what it is today. It used to be donor-funded, and when that funding ended, Debbie problem-solved and folded it into our own departmental budget so it could continue."

Last year, PA students serviced more than 65 pianos in BPS classrooms, practice rooms, and auditoriums. Tuning is the most requested need, but students also repair keys, pedals, broken strings, hammers, wheels, casters, and more. They handle outreach, confirm appointments, perform the service, and generate an invoice to submit to Emily for processing. After each visit, students share what they learned with the rest of their class.

"Every tuning job is different, and we get a new lesson each time," shares another student Kara Vinchoff PT '25, PA '26, who performed half a dozen site visits over the course of the year. "The BPS tunings are really the first time we're reaching out to a client and going into the big world with only our toolkits—you never know what you're going to find. Some of us are taking over businesses or starting fresh after we graduate, and this is exactly what we'll be doing out in the field."

"For BPS, this is an absolutely essential partnership that supports our educational goals and strengthens the equity of arts resources and services across schools," shares Emmanuel Toledo, Senior Program Director for the BPS Visual and Performing Arts Department. "We have 109 schools in our district, and our teachers are always excited to receive this service—it revitalizes and brings a piano back to how it should sound."



Andrea Notter PT '25, PA '26



Jonathan "Meridian" Clapham PT '25, PA '26

Last year, NBSS students serviced over 65 pianos in BPS classrooms, practice rooms, and auditoriums. Tuning is the most requested need, but students also repair keys, pedals, broken strings, hammers, wheels, casters, and more.

Domenico Quinci PT '25, PA '26



AD Du PT '25, PA '26



“It is so rewarding for us to get these instruments in a working order that can serve a student, rather than be an obstacle to music. It’s incredible that NBSS is using its own resources to fund this partnership, and that it lets us contribute to the school system in Boston.”

KARA VINCHOFF PT '25, PA '26

And a tuned piano can make all the difference in a performance or daily instruction.

“When a piano is out of tune, it is challenging for a student to establish a good tonal center or sing in key,” Emmanuel explains. “A piano that’s well tuned supports the integrity of students’ voices as they’re building key skills for pitch development and vocal quality.”

Beyond their own professional growth, the PA students say it is meaningful to apply their training in the community. “It is so rewarding for us to get these instruments in a working order that can serve a student, rather than be an obstacle to music,” Kara notes. “It’s incredible that NBSS is using its own resources to fund this partnership, and that it lets us contribute to the school system in Boston.”

Moving forward, Emily hopes to give students even more service opportunities and expand the program’s reach. “There are lots of nonprofits out there that want to make better music, and within the constraints of my budget, I would love to help with that,” Emily says. So far, the department has partnered with two other community organizations, West End House and ABCD Mattapan Head Start.

“One of the great things about being a piano technician is seeing that light of inspiration when somebody sits down and suddenly realizes how good a piano can sound—it makes them want to make more music,” Emily reflects. “We hope that we do that for the young BPS students, and I know we could do that for other organizations in the community.”

Do you work for a Boston-area nonprofit or community organization and want to participate in our tuning program? Reach out to piano@nbss.edu to connect!

GRADUATION

PRE-CEREMONY PARADE



OLD NORTH CHURCH CEREMONY



This life of making creates beauty, respect, serendipities, and discoveries that brings within them fellowship, community, and value that will stand the test of time.

DR. SARAH B. CUNNINGHAM, PRESIDENT AND COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

AWARDS

Willia Anderson BB '26 and Jacob Upham PC '26, recipients of the Gladys Brooks Award and Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association Award



Congratulations to the Class of 2026!



2026 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Erin Fletcher^{BB '12}

We are pleased to announce that Erin Fletcher BB '12 is the recipient of the 2026 Distinguished Alumni Award. This award is given annually to an NBSS graduate who demonstrates outstanding professional achievements, contributes meaningfully to their industry, and supports the broader craft community through education and mentorship.

SINCE GRADUATING from the Bookbinding program in 2012, Erin has played a significant role in shaping the education and careers of bookbinders across the country. She has taught numerous NBSS Community Education (CE) classes, was an instructor in the School's former middle school book arts program, helped NBSS develop and test online short classes during the pandemic, and recently deepened her involvement by joining the Bookbinding Program Advisory Committee. Her teaching extends nationally through workshops at colleges and nonprofits.

Beyond the classroom, Erin is a leader in the bookbinding community. She served as the Guild of Bookworkers (GBW) New England Chapter's Programs Co-Chair from 2012 to 2016, and then as Chapter President from 2016 to 2021, organizing lectures, workshops, and outreach for both members and the public.

Erin maintains a vibrant private practice, creating work for both clients and exhibitions. Her work has been exhibited internationally and acquired by private collectors. She is particularly known for her innovative and intricate embroidered leather fine bindings.

Erin's passion, skill, and generosity have profoundly shaped the careers of many aspiring bookbinders. Navigating the challenges of self-employment in such a niche craft, she continues to thrive—teaching widely, creating exceptional work, and constantly expanding her own knowledge through ongoing research and professional development.

For all of her accomplishments and talents, we are proud to honor Erin with the 2026 Distinguished Alumni Award and recognize her work in the field.

Erin's passion, skill, and generosity have profoundly shaped the careers of many aspiring bookbinders.

STEPPING INTO MASTERY

WE ASKED OUR FACULTY:

Which project, lesson, requirement, or moment shows you that a student will “make it” as an NBSS graduate?

SINCE OUR earliest years, the Sloyd system of manual training has been the bedrock of our pedagogy. This Swedish method presents projects of increasing difficulty to focus on the development of character, intellectual capacity, and hand skills—and build a deep understanding of tools, materials, and processes along the way. Our faculty witness moments near the end of an NBSS students' training when they begin to step into the mastery of their field and to earn the title of professional tradesperson.





CARPENTRY

“Carpentry students are well on their way to a successful career when we can describe a task and an outcome, which the students execute with minimal instruction. For example: laying out and cutting rafters for a given project, or making a story stick for a run of cabinets.”

PETER SMITH PC '04, DEPARTMENT HEAD

BOOKBINDING

Gold tooling

"There are a number of factors that go into successful gold tooling and it takes skill to get it right. And then they need to be able to replicate it again and again. What we're trying to instill in everyone is an ability to solve problems; it's all about problem solving. When I see someone encounter a problem, mistake, a challenge, and they aren't overwhelmed and defeated—but rather embrace it and brainstorm—it marks a change. They are on the right track."

Jeff Altepeter BB '99, Department Head



Hanna Rashidi BB '26

PIANO TECHNOLOGY

First off-site tuning

It's their first time tuning a real piano that real musicians will use—as opposed to our practice rooms, where an unfinished or bad tuning just gets redone by another tuner the next day. They report back the next day full of relief and joy that they can actually complete a tuning on an unfamiliar piano within a time constraint. It's a glimpse of their future career that's exciting for students and instructors alike."

Emily Townsend PT '07, PA '08,
Department Head



Jaden Simmons PT '26



Stella Han VM '28

VIOLIN MAKING & REPAIR

**"One word: diligence.
Our students practice
accuracy and precision
at each and every step,
which will help them
become successful violin
makers and/or restorers."**

ROMAN BARNAS, DEPARTMENT HEAD

STEPPING INTO MASTERY



Mark Reardon LK '26

LOCKSMITHING & SECURITY TECHNOLOGY

Systems thinking

"There's a moment when students are master keying when they move from, 'How do I make these numbers behave?' to 'I could do this to solve a problem for a client.' They see the bigger function of the key in this space, so they know how to set up the keys to interact and function together. They move beyond just seeing numbers, physical objects, and individual pieces to viewing it as a system."

Rick Hendricks LK '18, Department Head

PRESERVATION CARPENTRY

Staircases

"I take the second-year students through an introduction to staircases lesson during the last couple weeks of their year. While that lesson does introduce new terms, math formulas, and techniques, what I expect to see—and yet am always pleased to see—is the use of the fundamentals they've been taught and adaptive learning. The only way to complete this particular lesson in the time allotted is to have absorbed all the basic skills."

**Steven O'Shaughnessy PC '99,
Department Head**





CABINET & FURNITURE MAKING

Drafting

"When a student can take an idea and put it on paper, figure out all the complexity through drafting, and then execute it from start to finish, then the faculty knows that the student is nearly ready. It's the NBSS Cabinet & Furniture Making way: if you can draw it on paper, you can build it. Drafting isn't just an introductory skill, it's fundamental to how we approach every project."

Jamey Pope CF '06, Department Head



JEWELRY MAKING & REPAIR

Fancy shape stone setting

"When they get into their final unit of fancy shape stone setting, it's a huge game changer. They reach a stage where they can take any shape of stone and know how to best set it securely and without damage. At that point they need the least amount of handholding, and it becomes more about production."

Tracey Jenkins Darji JM '05, Department Head



Isabelle Schmit JM '26

BINDING CRAFT AND EXPERIENCE



For the last 22 years, the Driscoll Family & von Clemm Fellowship has helped NBSS Bookbinding (BB) students hone their craft in an iconic setting: the Boston Athenaeum. The full-time, competitive fellowship is awarded to one recent NBSS BB graduate each year and acts as a launching pad to expansive future careers.

THE FELLOWSHIP FOCUSES on treating objects in Special Collections and spending time at the bench, but we also call on each fellow to help out with exhibition preparation, creating custom housings for collections materials, and doing all kinds of preventative conservation work," says Graham Patten, Senior Conservator at the Athenaeum and Director of the fellowship.

In the lab today, India Patel BB '24, temporary conservation technician, is repairing a 1647 edition of *Selenographia* by Johannes Hevelius, while at the next bench, this year's fellow, Yaara Buksbaum BB '25, is treating a 19th-century photography album documenting the history of a Boston cycling club. James Reid-Cunningham BB '90 helped establish the initiative to give recent graduates a breadth of experience. James had been an Athenaeum book conservator as well as long-time NBSS Bookbinding Program Advisor. What began as a 6-month fellowship supported by funding from Lisa von Clemm, a dedicated supporter of the BB program who passed away in 2016, was eventually paired with the Driscoll family's support to create a year-long immersion into conservation.

"My goal was to provide real conservation experience that encouraged nuanced thinking. For any problem, there are 20 different solutions, so a large part of this is learning how to make decisions," James says.



Following are conversations with three fellows about the significance of their experiences and what it enabled them to do next.



NATALIE NAOR ^{BB '17}

**GRAEME WHITELAW FELLOW IN PAPER CONSERVATION
BOOK & PAPER CONSERVATION, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY**

“Not only are you performing treatments yourself, but you’re also documenting photographs, learning art handling, and discussing all of this with curators and other departments to make ethical, informed decisions.”

“An undergrad degree in art history at Tufts University allowed me to pull together some of my many loves: books, history, and fine art. After a summer preservation internship in Italy, I knew book conservation was it for me.

I had heard of North Bennet while already in Boston, and to me, it was worthwhile to first understand how books were made and function before learning how to fix them.

It gave me the chance to learn things that are very hard to understand unless you’re actually experiencing them firsthand. Not only are you performing treatments yourself, but you’re also documenting photographs, learning art handling, and discussing all of this with curators and other departments to make ethical, informed decisions. It allowed me to apply and build on the skills I learned at North Bennet and see why they matter in a wider environment. I got to witness the different hats that conservators wear within a larger but still intimate institutional context, which was invaluable to me as an emerging professional in the field.

After my fellowship ended, I was a conservation technician at Columbia University Libraries for almost six years. The skills I learned at NBSS and the Athenaeum were used daily as I repaired circulating collections and made custom exhibit mounts and housings for special collections materials. I ultimately wanted to deepen my knowledge to include more of the science side and analytical instrumentation, so I went back to school. I’m currently a rising third-year in NYU’s graduate conservation program at the Institute of Fine Arts.”

Credit: Courtesy The American Philosophical Society

“My goal was to provide real conservation experience that encouraged nuanced thinking. For any problem, there are 20 different solutions, so a large part of this is learning how to make decisions.”

JAMES REID-CUNNINGHAM BB '90



Senior Conservator Graham Patten (right) with former fellow India Patel BB '24 (left) in the Athenaeum's conservation lab.

HENRY HEBERT BB '12

CONSERVATOR FOR SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

"I pretty much grew up in libraries because my mother was a librarian. During undergrad as a studio arts major, I was introduced to conservation in a book arts class and decided to become a library conservator."

"I heard about NBSS through alum Chela Metzger BB '93 and knew that after I completed library science school at UNC Chapel Hill, I needed to spend time developing my hand skills.

The fellowship was the perfect opportunity for me to learn skills that you can only learn on the job, under the supervision of a professional conservator, which prepared me for the next steps of my career. It opened my eyes to all of the working parts of a conservation project—meetings with curators, documentation, input from collection managers. Most importantly, it allowed me to work on complex projects that helped me understand the decision-making process and use my time, resources, and treatments most effectively on an individual basis.

At the end of my fellowship, I accepted a position as a rare book conservator at University of Illinois. I spent several years there before transitioning to my current role as Conservator for Special Collections at Duke University Libraries, where I work with a team that supports all the needs of the university special collections."



INDIA PATEL BB '24

TEMPORARY CONSERVATION ASSISTANT, BOSTON ATHENAEUM
CURRENT NBSS BOOKBINDING TEACHING ASSISTANT

“In college, I was introduced to special collections and archives, and the idea that you could study books as material objects seemed mind-blowing.”

“While working in the bindery of a small publishing operation, I fell in love with the hand-skill aspect of the work. An intern there was an NBSS student, and she suggested the Bookbinding program.

The joy of the fellowship to me is defined by the range of experiences it offered. It's really special—and important—that I got insight into collections care more broadly: things like humidity, temperature control, and understanding how institutions handle big projects. You get to work on so many different

types of tasks, which means more treatment options, strategizing, and decision-making opportunities. Every book picks up different elements of disrepair over its lifetime, and getting to do this work repeatedly is how you get better at it.

After I finished my fellowship last year, I rolled into a temporary conservation technician position here. I'm getting a chance to expand on the work I did during the fellowship while deepening my skills. Next, I'd love to be a conservation technician at an institution.”



DISCIPLINES

Our 2026 exhibition shed light on the origins of our nine Career Training Programs and how our students are trained today.



Niall Shannon CF '26

ACROSS



Dominic Valente, NBSIS 1948–1953,
made chair pictured at age 10

DECADES







Baleigh Acebo JM '14



Jingjing Yang BB '26

The exhibition featured the best work of our student and alumni community, their connections to techniques used at the start of their program, a timeline of NBSS history, and artifacts from the early years of each program.

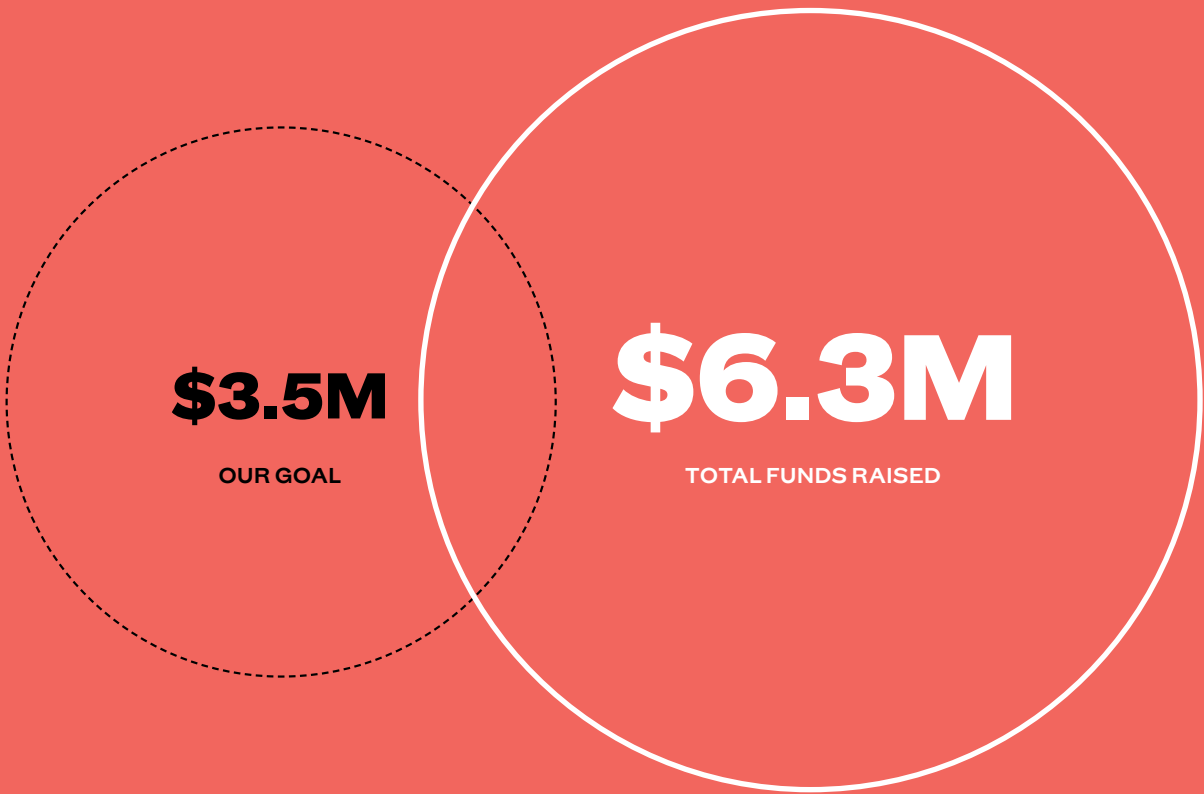
Nicoline Meyer BB '23



Alec Foresta CF '26

MEANINGFUL WORK

Between 2024 and 2026, NBSS advanced a focused effort to strengthen endowment support and annual fundraising capacity. A major anonymous grant and fundraising challenge helped accelerate this work, inspiring new and increased giving across the School's philanthropic community.



\$3.3M

ADDITIONAL GIFTS
FROM NBSS DONORS

\$2M

LARGEST BEQUEST
IN NBSS HISTORY

\$1M

CHALLENGE GRANT FROM
ANONYMOUS FOUNDATION



Cabinet & Furniture Making cohort

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the NBSS community, the School exceeded its challenge goal and raised \$6.3 million in total support.

The challenge aligned with two institutional priorities: increasing direct capital support for essential needs of the School and strengthening the endowment to support long-term sustainability. With this awareness, the foundation pledged a \$3.5 million grant to NBSS in support of capital needs and the endowment:

\$2.5 MILLION in direct capital funds, separate from the endowment, to support a facilities maintenance project planned to begin in Summer 2026.

\$1 MILLION to the School's endowment, contingent upon NBSS raising \$3.5 million for the endowment by the end of the 2026 fiscal year.

At the launch of the challenge, the School's endowment stood at approximately \$30 million, supporting both general operations and student scholarships—which contributes to approximately 15% of the school's operating budget.

Members of the NBSS philanthropic community came together to strengthen the School's endowment and expand support for its long-term sustainability. Anchored by a major challenge grant, this focused effort inspired new and increased giving from longtime supporters and donors making transformational commitments to NBSS for the first time.

For more information on giving, please contact our Development team at development@nbss.edu.

NBSS FUNDRAISING

Forty-five donors—including four new major donors—made gifts at every level, which enabled NBSS to exceed the goal of the fundraising challenge and raise \$6.3 million. With strategic investing and careful stewardship, those contributions were amplified and helped to grow the School's endowment from \$30 million to \$42 million between 2024–2026.



Maya Rosenfeld CA '26

This challenge demonstrated the significant good will, generosity, and capacity for major and principal gifts in our existing community of donors, at all levels of giving.

FUNDS CREATED AND GROWN

- NEW** Norm Abram Scholarship for Carpentry
- NEW** Samuel B. Ellenport Award for Bookbinding Excellence
- NEW** Kirk and Kathy Hachigian Family Scholarship for Fine Woodworking
- NEW** James J. Jovenich CF '15 Scholarship for Cabinet & Furniture Making
- NEW** Lance Patterson Scholarship for Cabinet & Furniture Making
- David Betts Scholarship for Basic Piano Technology
- General Endowment Fund
- Hauser Family Fund
- Marilyn L. Heskett Scholarship
- Alex Krutsky Memorial Fund
- Walter McDonald Scholarship Fund
- Amelia Peabody Facilities Endowment
- Surdam Fund for Piano Technology
- Lisa von Clemm Bookbinding Scholarship
- Western Ohio Woodworkers Endowment



Fisher Roman CA '26

Together, we can continue to shape a future that propels our programs forward, nurtures the success of each individual who learns in our shops, and unlocks the boundless potential of our exceptional school.

IN MEMORY OF

GWEN COCHRAN HADDEN

Gwen's approach to culture work was inclusive itself, valuing many voices and giving room for many perspectives. She knew that change doesn't happen overnight, and her approach took a long view to creating meaningful, lasting growth.

1943-2026



Our community is honoring the memory of one of our long-time consultants and mentors, Gwen Cochran Hadden, who passed away early this year.

DURING THE SUMMER of 2020, North Bennet Street School set out to deepen and accelerate priorities to welcome a wider range of people and perspectives. As the School set its sights on creating long-term, sustainable, and meaningful change, we decided to bring Gwen Cochran Hadden on board to shepherd this work. Gwen had a personal connection to the School: her father Sam Cochran, a professional musician, had trained as a piano technician at NBSS in the 1940s and was a graduate.

Gwen's decades of experience working with clients in healthcare, nonprofit, arts, culture, government, and other sectors would deeply inform her leadership advice to North Bennet. For example, Gwen worked as the Director of Civil Rights for the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) to implement the first phase of the BHA's Charlestown Integration Plan. Since then, she worked with The Boston Children's Museum, The Rose Kennedy Greenway, Friends of the Boston Public Garden, and The Broadway League, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, Theatre Development Fund, all of New York. This meant she brought a deep knowledge of the history of integration efforts in Boston and

experience with a wide variety of sectors including human services, healthcare, culture, and performing arts—which showed us how culture work can have a wider effect beyond our School community.

Gwen was hired in late summer of 2020, and quickly got started on the work at hand. She formalized a working group, convened regular monthly meetings, assigned readings and other tasks for committee and community members to reflect upon, and began setting goals for our work together. She started the work with many conversations and listening sessions with faculty, staff, board members, students, and alumni to deeply understand our community—a practice she continued throughout her tenure with NBSS.

Over her five years with us, her work included drafting and publishing Vision and Values statements with deep community input, offering insight and guidance on national and local policy changes in higher education, extensive conversation and learning to help us understand our institutional culture and working environment, and providing feedback on new and existing programs including the Teaching

Assistant program, strategic planning, hiring practices, partnerships, and student wellness. She also advised School leaders closely—multiple Presidents, Provost, and Board Chairs—profoundly guiding leadership to change management in equity and just practices in education.

Gwen's approach to culture work was inclusive itself, valuing many voices and giving room for many perspectives. She skillfully created a space where people could feel ready to share and participate without judgement, and in this way, set a model approach for inclusive, ambitious work. Gwen knew that change doesn't happen overnight, and her approach took a long view to creating meaningful, lasting growth.

To many at NBSS, she became more than simply a consultant: she was a confidante, convener, thinker, leader, friend, and mentor—and endlessly generous with her wisdom and experience. Her vibrancy, optimism, honesty, keen mind, and compassion will be deeply missed.

Paste paper bookmarks by India Patel BB '24
and Hanna Rashidi BB '26

NBSS beanie

Various scissors
from Studio Carta

Beeswax Puck from
Nick Maraldo CF '07's bees

No. 101 Violin Maker's Plane
by Lie-Nielsen

Miniature Brass Bar Clamps

Glass pencil sharpener

240mm Japanese Ryoba Razorsaw

Bridled Glue Brushes $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1"

Moglea Notepad

European Ox-Hair Shellac Brush

36" Svedbro Pry Bar (This bar can move a house!)

VISIT OUR ONLINE STORE AT [NBSS.EDU/STORE](https://www.nbss.edu/store)

Wood is Good 12oz. Mallet



Meaningful Work Notepads,
printed and fabricated by Jingjing Yang BB '26
and Hanna Rashidi BB '26



Handmade Paste Paper by
Ash Nunez BB '25



Anti-Static Wisk



Lutz Utility Knife



Tiny Drill Index



Camellia oil



Water bottle



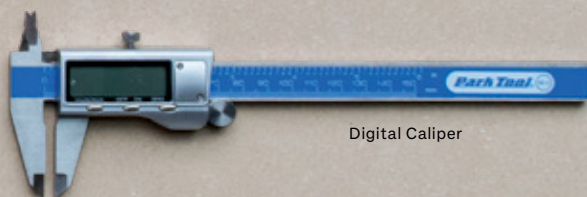
Beech Coaster Set
by Bob Miller CF '11 and
Mickey McGarrity JM '20



NBSIS Cookbook 1936



6-in-1 Lutz screwdriver



Digital Caliper

"Notes & Planner" notebooks made
by Ash Nunez BB '25



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Explore nine career training programs, discover dozens of community classes, shop our artisan market of student and alumni goods, tour our expansive facility, connect with students and faculty, and more!

DECEMBER 4 + 5 FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



Nicholas Tanzi CF '27