Since its inception two years ago, Northeastern University Television (NUTV) has struggled to get off the ground. But their hard work is beginning to pay off.

The campus group has received university funding and is working with Information Services to begin distributing its material online later this year.

Bob Weir, vice president for Information Services, first approached the group about broadcasting videos through the myNEU portal last fall. Since then, Information Services has been developing a system to deliver NUTV shows online.

Content will be available through streaming Windows Media Video, a format that, despite its name, is compatible with both Windows and Macintosh computers, Weir said.

"Any one of the over 50,000 people with a myNEU account will be able to log in and watch any of NUTV's videos on demand, whenever and wherever they want," Weir said.

The image quality will not be the equivalent of cable television, but will still be high, said Information Services project manager Beth-Anne Dancause.

The service is currently scheduled for a late spring launch. This will give NUTV time over the summer to learn the system and prepare for the start of the academic year, Weir said.

The new service will be available at no extra cost. It should not create any bandwidth or speed problems, Weir said, as the network is "very robust."

Last year NUTV was considering broadcasting through the on-campus cable television network, but negotiations with Comcast failed to produce a feasible arrangement.

"Part of the problem is that Northeastern is expanding at such a fast rate. The on-campus cable system is actually a part of three different grids, which would make creating a channel difficult," said NUTV President Jonathan Cunha.

Weir said in many ways Webcasting offers advantages over an entire cable television channel.
"Broadcasting will not be limited to just cable subscribers on campus. Additionally, NUTV will not have to worry about filling an entire network with content," Weir said.

While the group continues to work toward having their content online, they are also addressing budget concerns. Last summer the group received $5,000 from the Media Board and $10,000 from the Budget Review Committee (BRC), Cunha said. They have used this money to purchase equipment, such as three Cannon GL2 digital video cameras and a Mac G5 computer.

"I'm very excited, the GL2 is one of the best cameras out there today," Cunha said.

The group is also working toward finding a suitable space on campus to produce original material. Such a studio exists in the basement of Shillman Hall, but is currently reserved for academic use only. Cunha and others are working with members of the Student Government Association about allowing additional access to the studio during off-hours and for non-academic use.

"If no one is using that space later in the day or overnight, why can't we?" Cunha said.

This is a major concern for the group, because not having a home studio to produce material has made it difficult to show people what they are capable of, Cunha said.

"Right now we're more of a field production unit because we don't have a home. We tape events around campus," Cunha said. "In the future we're going to be doing more original programming."

The group is currently developing two different shows. One is an informational sex talk show and the other is a comedy.

Combining original content with event coverage is something Cunha said he hopes NUTV will be able to do. Part of this goal will also include broadcasting Northeastern sporting events.

"Ideally, we would like to be the group on campus that other student groups can come to if they want something filmed or broadcast," Cunha said.

In the coming weeks NUTV will be assisting with the Campus MovieFest as well as putting together their Media Board budget proposal for next year.

The group is being cautious with its proposal this year after the rejection of last year's $366,000 budget request.

"We're hoping to get money for new equipment and software. We want to start using the Avid system which is the premiere digital editing software in film and television today," Cunha said.

Weir said he's just as excited about NUTV as the members are.

"They are creating a great answer to an obvious student opportunity," Weir said. "It's just really cool."