

RAINBOW
LIFE'S TOO SHORT
FOR JUST ONE FLAVOR



Northeastern
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

El Centro

Fall 2022



WELCOME MESSAGE



Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo Interim Director

In the issue of the Fall 2022 Newsletter, El Centro celebrates the many achievements of our students, faculty and staff. It has been a year since transitioning from COVID-19 Pandemic to on campus. We are grateful to continuously have students eager and engage in our campus. Students that are beginning their journey to our graduating seniors and every milestone in-between. I invite you to learn more about their stories.



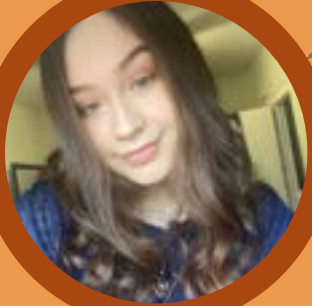
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NEWSLETTER TEAM



Emily Sosa
Art Education
She/her/ella



Jennifer Reyes
Psychology
She/her/ella



Jeanette Delgado
Psychology
She/her/ella



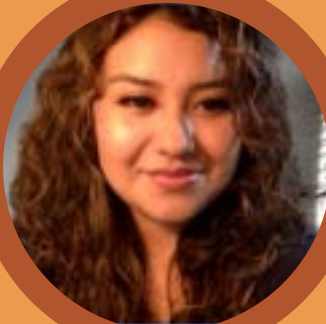
Aaliyah Blacher
Justice Studies
She/her/ella



Alondra Perez
Biology
She/Her/Ella



Brayan Cruz
Justice Studies
He/Him/El



Lizett Galan
Coordinator of Student Success &
Social Media
She/Her/Ella

Oh, The Places You'll Go



After 18 years at NEIU El Centro, Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte accepted a position at UIC College of Education as the Associate Dean for Student Success and Clinical Assistant Professor. Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte's dedication and service to NEIU is embedded to El Centro's legacy.



Dr. Daniel Lopez, Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte & Victor M. Montañez at the painting ceremony in 2006.



Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte celebrating students in 2008.



Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte in front of the construction of El Centro in 2013.



“The educator has the duty of not being neutral.”
— Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*.

During her tenure as Director of El Centro, Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte made a positive impact on students, faculty and staff thanks to her enthusiasm, passion and respect for everyone. She is the perfect combination of a teacher, an experienced administrator, and an inquisitive spirit, the one who never stops learning, El Centro has become a place where student-centered best practices are part of our daily professional lives. We have been very fortunate to have a leader like her and through our work we will make sure her legacy continues.

Dr. Luna-Duarte, we see a bright future for you and, as you fly high, we hope you will keep a place for NEIU in your heart. We miss you.

-Maria Lamadrid-Quevedo

Student Success Story



“You did it! You crossed the finish line!” Jeanette Delgado graduated this Fall 2022, receiving her B.A in Psychology and a minor in Child Advocacy Studies. Jeanette’s NEIU journey comes to an end after walking through the doors of El Centro in 2018 as a freshman. She waited for this moment when she could finally say, “I did it.” She achieved her goal of finishing her Bachelor's within four years. She shared how she had been a student all her life and finally crossing the finish line gave her a mixture of emotions.

“It is a new feeling to me not being a student anymore. It is a bittersweet graduating, since NEIU has been her second home for many years. Lots of people supported Jeanette one way or another. “I have met so many amazing people here, and I’m not ready to give my farewells just yet.”

Jeanette struggled academically growing up, because she felt she wasn’t as smart as everyone around her. Yet, when she began at NEIU, she was determined she approach college differently. She spent countless hours studying and completing homework. Psychology requires an extensive amount of reviewing, writing and conducting her own research. With the help of professors and the amazing Psychology department, she received the help she needed to push through. Jeanette shares, “I’m so thankful for the support system, because it wasn’t easy. Sometimes you need that encouragement and love.” Post-graduation plans for Jeanette include exploring employment within her field. A big step in her life, but she is very excited for what is to come. She plans to return to school after a much-needed break. Jeanette advises students “to not procrastinate and enjoy your [undergraduate] experience as much as you can!”

Student Success Story



“Being first generation comes with its share of hardship, and ‘keeping my head above water when things got tough’ was the true testament to my willpower, to see myself to the finish line.” As Javonti prepared for Fall 2022 graduation, he reflected on his experiences leading up to receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Communication, Media, and Theater.

As many students can relate, an academic journey is not often easy. For Javonti, staying motivated while pursuing his degree was one of the challenges he had to face, however, he persisted. He always made sure to remind himself of why he started his academic journey in the first place and was always thinking of his family.

One of the biggest influences was the Transformers film series, “The action, storyline, music, and visual effects all made a significant impression on me. From that point, I wanted to be a director, but as I got more acclimated in the creative world of film and theater I made the decision that I wanted to pursue acting.” He credits his passion for acting to actors such as Chadwick Boseman and Denzel Washington. He shares, “Seeing them perform their roles in such ways made me want to take the craft more seriously. Acting is a way for me to express myself freely.”

While juggling school and different projects, Javonti enjoyed a variety of activities that kept him smiling. Like hanging out with friends and catching up on Marvel or Netflix shows. Men’s fashion is one of his pastimes. From shopping for the newest fragrances, such as candles or other signature scents, to shopping at his favorite stores such as H&M, ZARA, and Express Men! After graduation, Javonti will seek new job opportunities while also taking the time to relax and decompress before the next phase of his life!

As Javonti celebrates this new milestone, he reflects on his time at NEIU and graduation. “It is a surreal feeling at this moment, lately I have been having these moments where I realize that all of this is coming to an end. This chapter in my life is coming to a complete close. 4-5 years of hard work, dedication, and consistency. I have made so many beautiful memories that I am extremely grateful for, NEIU has given me things that I cannot explain. This is also the start of adult life, which can be intimidating in its own right, nevertheless, I feel as though I have a great support system behind me that will help to guide me through the tribulations of adulthood.”

Congratulations Javonti! We wish you nothing but happiness as you enter this new milestone!

First-Year Experience at ELC

Justice Studies 109 in Chicago



Professor McFarlin has taught at El Centro for more than 7 years. He continues to witness students become excited about their college experience.

This class has been helpful because we discussed issues in society. We also discussed how students that are first generation in their families come to college, and how they can be supported with tutoring, and advisors.

- Gabriela Gonzalez Enriquez, Freshman



The FYE class made me realize that I was not going to be in class with older people, there is people my age that are learning with me and that makes me feel more confident in my abilities.

-Hector Barrera, Freshman



First-Year Experience at ELC

Computer Science 109

The Information Age: Its Impact On Chicago's Culture



Diego Villagomez, freshman, shared how the class taught him the importance of time management and how to balance multiple classes. By completing the academic plan, it showed Diego what to expect the first two semesters of college. One of Diego's favorite parts of the class was when they learned coding languages, like SCS or HTML, to make new games. Diego would recommend it to other students.

Amna Yaseen, freshman, shared how she learned coding languages like Python, which will definitely help her in the future as a CS major. She enjoyed meeting new people and having lunch nearby. She would recommend CS to students interested in coding or CS in general. The professor is patient and explains material effectively for students to learn.



Taquiza



El Centro celebrated Latinx Heritage Month by hosting the second annual Taquiza, in collaboration with NEIU Foundation, Center for College Access and Success, Angelina Pedroso Center for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs and Student Affairs. Community members, students and staff enjoyed games, music, tacos and live entertainment. Many even challenged themselves on the Grand Slammer inflatable.



TRIO Upward Bound's very own Folkloric Ensemble, composed of Kelly High School students, traveled from Southwest Chicago and performed. Even inspired DJ AI to start an improv dance competition.



Weekly Cohort Workshops

The Weekly El Centro Success workshops offer first-year cohort students resources and academic support. Students learn life skills, discover career exploration and become part of a welcoming and supportive community.



"The workshops helped me know what the university offers and what events are happening."

-Omar Vazquez

"My favorite memory was Jennie's [from Health Services) Dental activity because she gave us advice on how to take care of our personal hygiene."

-Gabriela Gonzalez



Joy & Wellness

Joy & Wellness Series led by Dr. Shireen Roshanravan, Executive Director of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Cynthia Ceron, Office Support Associate, was El Centro's liason in executing the series events. Staff, students & faculty were invited to our weekly Walking Wednesdays to increase their daily steps & movement.

On the first Monday of every month, Mix & Mingle brought the campus together over delicious food & music. At the end of the semester, the Stress-Free Zone invited everyone to arts activites, snacks & even a massage chair.

Walking Wednesday



Mix & Mingle



Stress-Free Zone

STUDENT EVENTS



In collaboration with Student Leadership Development, El Centro hosted the famous Original Rainbow Cone. More than 75 students, staff & faculty waited patiently for their delicious scope. Summer's still in full effect at the start of the semester when ice creams in the picture.



Talent Search by the Center for College Access and Success invited Hubbard High School sophomores for a college tour and art activity.



Part of Latino Heritage Month, Representative Delia Ramirez, Senator Omar Aquino, Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas, & Representative Will Guzzardi organized state, city, & community organizations for a job fair opportunity.



In collaboration with the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) through the General Consulate of Mexico in Chicago, El Centro celebrates the 2022 IME Beca recipients and alumni. Since 2016, IME and NEIU has financially supported students. A total of \$25,000 was distributed for the fiscal year 2021/22 recipients ranging from various academic areas of study.

Dia de los Muertos

Day of the Dead~ Dia de los Muertos~ celebrates life. A tradition that involves an alter/ofrenda with gifts to love ones. A way of honoring and maintaining a strong with the dead. Most common offers are Pan de Muerto, calabaza en tacha, calaveras, tamales, and marigolds. Most common to have *La Calavera Catrina*, which means elegant skull. El Centro and fellow departments created an ofrenda honoring love ones, pets, and beloved artists.



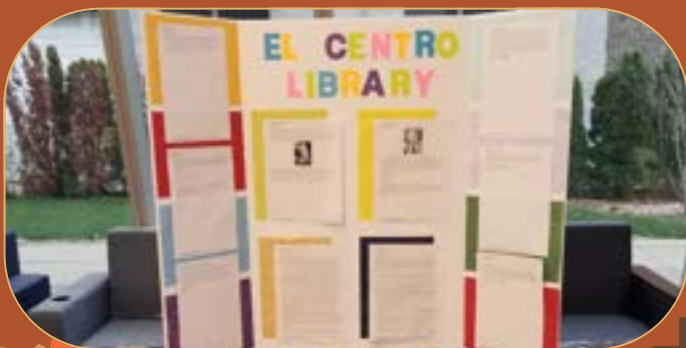
El Centro Ofrenda



College Center for Access & Success
Ofrenda



Justice Studies Ofrenda



El Centro Library Library



College Center for Access & Success Altar
Ofrenda to



Spooky Szn



El Centro hosted a series of student events in the spirit of Halloween. In collaboration with Student Leadership Development and Northeastern Programming Board, students and staff were given the opportunity to compete in a pumpkin carving contest. All the while enjoyed a classic Halloween movie, Scream.



Pumpkin Carving Contest: First place, Jeanette Delgado. Second place, Guadalupe Alvarado. Third place, Hector Barrera.



Fall Open House



El Centro invited prospective students to learn about El Centro Scholars program, meet with university resources, and the opportunity to receive their COVID-19 booster and flu shot.



Emily Sosa and Mimi Crespo invite students to spin the wheel for a chance to win NEIU swag.



Special Education department shared program curriculum.



Britney Jimenez, El Centro Scholar volunteer, welcomed and led campus tours for students and parents.



Students were able to learn about majors; such as Justice Studies, Biology, Special Education and Music. Angelina Pedroso Center for Diversity and Intercultural Affairs and Vice President Dean of Students for Student Affairs shared their resources and programming.



Summer Transition Program (STP) is a 6 week program for first time full-time students admitted to NEIU. Students have the opportunity to experience a free college course and earn three credit hours toward graduation. As well as connect early on with El Centro Scholars team. By receiving the early start, students gain confidence navigating resources, self-advocacy and connecting with peers. Students can benefit from an increase in their math and/or English placement scores, and begin their academic journey in college level classes.



NEIU hosted the entire STP cohorts for a day of exploration and activities.



Google CSSI 2022



For the fourth consecutive year, NEIU El Centro was selected to host the Google Computer Science Summer Institute Extension (Google CSSI). A four week immersive program designed for incoming first-time freshmen and new transfer students admitted to Northeastern and interested in computer science, software engineering or business.

From July 11 to August 5, 2022 fifteen NEIU students dedicated themselves all day and learned HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python and Google App Engine. Northeastern continues to be the only university in the Midwest- and one of five in the United States- to offer Google CSSI as an effort to increase women, underrepresented ethnic minority, first-generation, and income-eligible students to the field of computer science.

For the duration of four weeks, students were given the opportunity to network with Google engineers, attend lunch & learn covering topics prioritizing mental health, career exploration, technical interview preparation, and connect with CSSI alum.

NEIU Computer Science professor, Dr. Yi Yang and Google Engineer, Abraham Fraifeld led the curriculum, with the support of various Google Engineers and NEIU Teaching Assistant, Carolina Vázquez Torress and CSSI 2020 alum, Benjamin Cervantes. Students were tasked with developing a website focused on a social issue and providing a solution. It resulted in a resource guide for undocumented student navigating higher education, ergonomics and guide for pet parenting.

Congratulations to all the 2022 CSSI students for successfully completing the program and beginning your CS journey at NEIU!



Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte and Coordinator Lizett Galan led Google CSSI orientation by welcoming the new cohort class, with the support of instructor Dr. Yi Yang, CSSI 2020 alum, Benjamin Cervantes and CS NEIU Teaching Assistant, Carolina Vázquez Torress.



El Centro Holiday Party

After planning for the Spring 2023 semester, staff and students enjoy a white elephant gift exchange and gingerbread house competition after planning for Spring 2023.



El Centro's Social Medias



neiu.edu/academics/el-centro

@neiu_elcentro



@NortheasternElCentro

@neiu_elcentro



@NEIUElCentro



El Centro wants to hear from YOU!
Do you have a story you'd like to share?
Email your suggestions to
lgalan@neiu.edu.