

VOL. 3 | FALL 2021

# BIOLOGY (NUCLEO)TIDINGS

News from the Biology Department at Northeastern Illinois University



# Northeastern

ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Stay in touch! Email us at [biology@neiu.edu](mailto:biology@neiu.edu) with news, updates, and stories you'd like to share!

# Biology

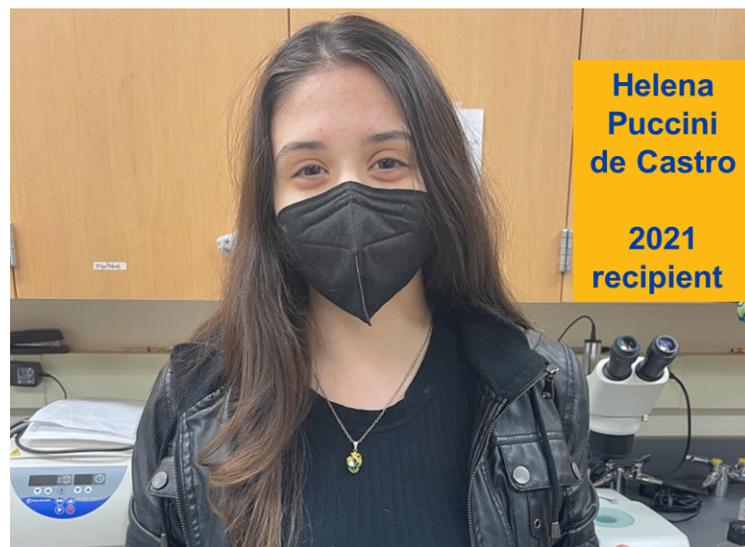
## Department Happenings

November 30th: Giving Tuesday

December 6th: Masters Hooding Ceremony



If you're a current student looking for opportunities, summer internships, and more, use this QR code to check out some options!



Helena  
Puccini  
de Castro

2021  
recipient

*The Drachler Scholarship helps me fund my education at NEIU and pursue my dreams, despite obstacles I face as an international student.*

## Giving Tuesday

Support Biology students at NEIU this Giving Tuesday! We are continuing to raise funds to grow our Drachler Scholarship Fund. This fund supports deserving students with financial need. Please help us raise \$1,000 so we can increase the scholarships that we are able to give to students studying Biology at NEIU!

No gift is too small! Thanks to a generous benefactor, all gifts will be doubled this year!

Check out our social media accounts to learn more and see how to donate:



@NEIUBiology

## Undergraduate Student Spotlight



**Kimberly Nu-Tall** is a senior Biology major at NEIU. She has recently received the **Lincoln Laureate** and **NEIU Future Alumni Leader** awards! She is also a STEM Ambassador for the Title III HSI STEM initiative and vice president of the NEIU Rotaract Club.

### Why did you choose NEIU?

I chose NEIU because of its affordability and small class sizes.

### What made you choose Biology as a major?

I wanted to be better prepared for Dental School!

### What do you hope to do after graduation? I plan to

travel, spend more time with family, and start a business!

### What is your favorite thing about being in science?

My favorite thing about being in science is diversifying it and paving the way for others that look like me!

### Lastly, what class are you most enjoying this semester? Genetics!!!

## Graduate Student Spotlight

**Sarai Guzman Vela** is getting her Masters degree in Biology.

### What is your favorite class you've taken at NEIU?

Genomics and Proteomics! It was life changing. After taking a couple years off school, this course helped me rediscover my true passion for research and genetics, leading me to change my career path.

### What do you think is the most exciting thing about learning biology? The most

exciting thing about learning biology is that because living organisms are so complex and continuously evolving, there will always be something new to learn and discover.

**What would you say to others who are considering graduate studies in Biology? DO IT!** The NEIU graduate biology department is full of great professors who truly care for your success, not just in their class but in your whole academic journey and even beyond. You will find many opportunities to get hands-on experience in biology out in the real world.



## Faculty/Staff Spotlight: Kip Conwell



**Kip Conwell** is the Lab Manager of the NEIU Biology Department.

**What is a typical day like for you?** I like to start the day touching base with everyone who is already here. Often there are urgent issues that reshape my priorities for the day, like when a critical piece of equipment needs repair, or if something doesn't go as planned in lab. I also like to take a little time to check in on lab classes in progress, so I try to drop by classrooms whenever I can. In the office I think about lab safety,

compliance with university policies and state and federal regulations, keeping our shelves stocked with the chemicals, biologicals and basic lab supplies we use every day, researching new equipment that could help train our students, and for better or worse, I deal with a lot of (electronic) paperwork to keep processes running smoothly at the university. By the end of each day, I'm happy if I've had the chance to help a bunch of people who needed a little help to get their science moving forward, all with an eye toward helping our students and NEIU shine.  
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**What is your favorite study system?** Though I love microbiology, and I am fascinated by living organisms, I'm becoming more and more curious about cell biology, specifically in learning more about the ways that organelles in cells interrelate and work together to keep life going.

**How has the science you do influenced who you are?** My grandfather was a chemist, and I really looked up to his lifestyle and career, so from a really young age I've been curious about equipment, apparatus, formulas, and processes. I've also always been naturally curious about how things work. I think I also really like to be challenged, and I've found science to be a field

where there is always more to learn. I like biology partly because I think of it as a poetic or creative science since part of life is the will to survive, and for those who study Biology we embrace the endless possibilities and discoveries that are constantly evolving for us to discover.

In addition to finding happiness working in the NEIU Biology department, my life is also enriched through my family Chloe, Elsie, and Winston, my work with the non-profit Aerial Dance Chicago (@aerialdancechicago), and endurance sports training in running, triathlon and cross country skiing.

## Positive Feedback Loops

**Dr. Samniqueka Halsey** (NEIU Biology, Class of 2011) won the Outstanding GOLD Alumni Award at NEIU's Golden Gala!

**Kelsey Littrell** (NEIU Biology, Class of 2020) got a job as a Museum Educator at The Science Museum in London!

**Helena Puccini de Castro** (2021 Drachler Recipient) won an award for her research at SACNAS!

**Isaiah Thomas, Christina Rouhotas** (MARC scholar), and **Michele Ocana** (MARC scholar) won awards at the Annual Biomedical at Research Conference for Minority Students!

**Nine biology students** gave excellent talks and posters at the 14th Annual SCSE Student Research Symposium this October!

**Dr. Aaron Schirmer** was awarded an NSF grant on incorporating non-model genomes in the classroom!

## Transcriptional Activity

Publications from NEIU Biology  
\*denote NEIU students

Herman MA... **Stojković EA**...N. Yakoby. Unifying framework for understanding biological structures and functions across levels of biological organization. 2021. *Integrative and Comparative Biology*.

Cellini A...**Stojković EA**... S Westenhoff. The three-dimensional structure of *Drosophila melanogaster* (6-4) photolyase at room temperature. 2021. *Acta Crystallographica Section D*.

Dow EG...**Schirmer A**...Arkin AP (2021) Bioinformatic Teaching Resources – For Educators, by Educators – Using KBase, a Free, User-Friendly, Open Source Platform. *Frontiers in Education*.

Smarr, BL,\***Ishami, AL** & **Schirmer, AE**. Lower variability in female students than male students at multiple timescales supports the use of sex as a biological variable in human studies. 2021. *Biology of Sex Differences*.

Lawing, AM...**Reinke, BA**...Wright, D. A framework for investigating rules of life by establishing zones of influence. 2021. *Integrative and Comparative Biology*.

Bronikowski, AM., **Reinke, BA**...Miller, DA. Joint estimation of growth and survival from mark-recapture data to improve estimates of senescence in wild populations: Reply. 2021. *Ecology*.

## Become a MARC scholar!

Are you a current student interested in pursuing Ph.D. programs in the biomedical and behavioral sciences after graduation?

The MARC program is recruiting juniors and seniors. Benefits include tuition waivers, conference travel, training, and a stipend!

Contact Dr. Emina Stojkovic to apply by March 22, 2022 (e-stojkovic@neiu.edu)

Follow us to learn more about what is happening in Biology!



@NEIUBiology