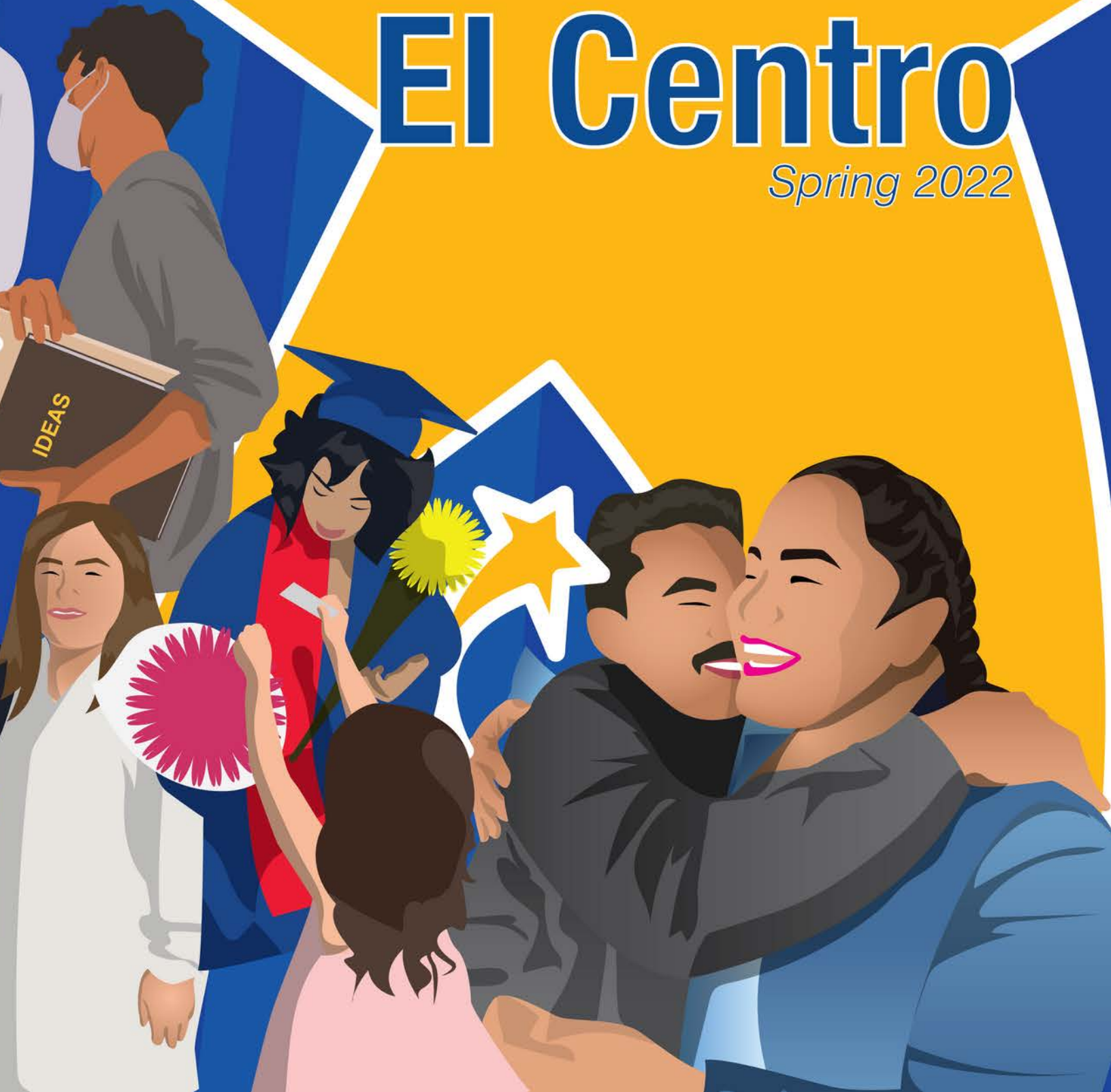


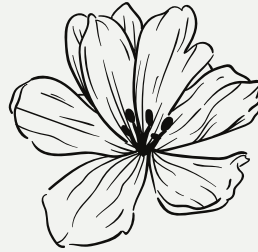


# El Centro

*Spring 2022*



# Message from Maria



This year has been a year of continued work and transitions. It has been almost a year since transitioning from the COVID-19 Pandemic working fully-remote to welcoming our faculty, students and staff on campus. We have a lot to reflect on and a lot to be grateful for as we were able to reconnect in person with our students who were eager to participate in some of our programs. We also were able to connect with our faculty this issue of the Spring 2022 Newsletter focuses on highlighting the achievements of our students, faculty, and staff. With each student we interviewed, they shared how the El Centro community has become the foundation of their accomplishments. Their stories continue to be our reminder of the resilience and determination many of our first-generation students lead with. Our students have entrusted us on their academic journey. I invite you to learn more about their stories.



# Message from Social Media Team

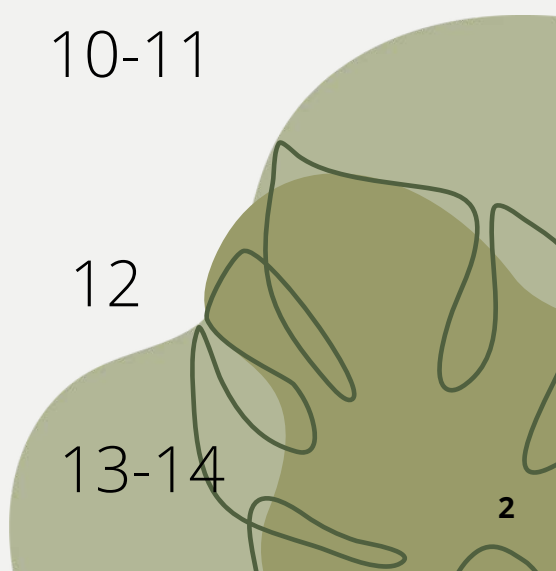
El Centro is excited to share the latest newsletter issue with you. No matter where you are on your journey, El Centro is rooting for you! We're excited to continue celebrating and building community together.





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# Social Media Team



**JEANETTE DELGADO**

*Editor-in-Chief*

**She/Her/Ella**

**Major: Psychology**



**JENNIFER REYES**

**She/Her/Ella**

**Major: Psychology**



**AALIYAH BLACHER**

**She/Her/Ella**

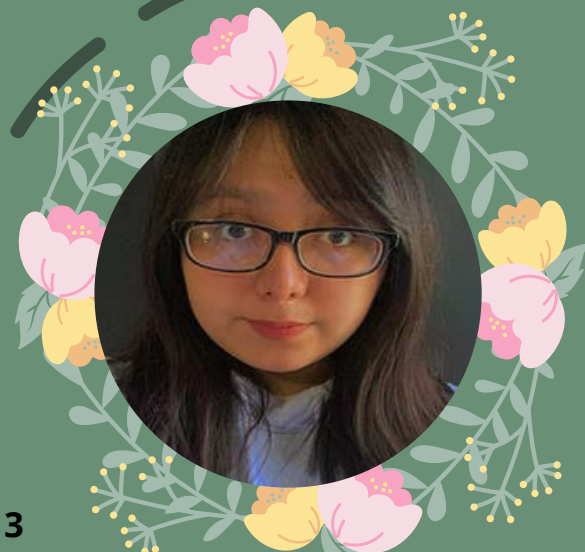
**Major: Social Justice**



**BRAYAN CRUZ**

**He/Him/El**

**Major: Justice Studies**



**EMILY SOSA**

*Template Designer*

**She/Her/Ella**

**Major: Art Education**



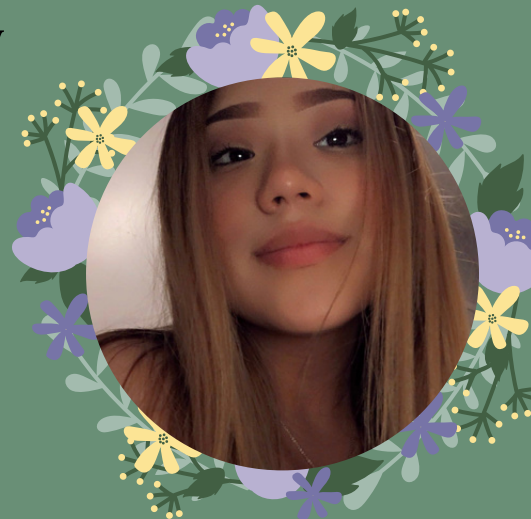
# New Members



**BRITNEY JIMENEZ**

**She/Her/Ella**

**Major: Biology**



**ALONDRA PEREZ**

**She/Her/Ella**

**Major: Biology**



**KEVIN CERDA**

**He/Him/El**

**Major: Computer Science**

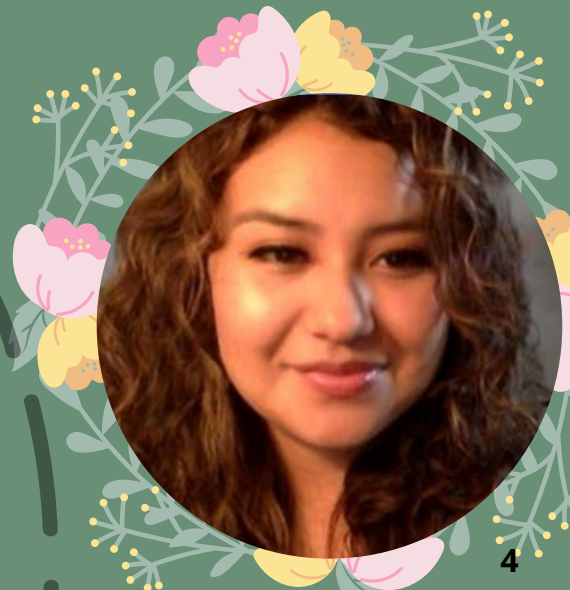
# Staff Advisor



**Lizett C Galan**

**She/ Her/ Ella**

**Coordinator of Student Success  
& Social Media**





# KARINA



## STUDENT SUCCESS STORY



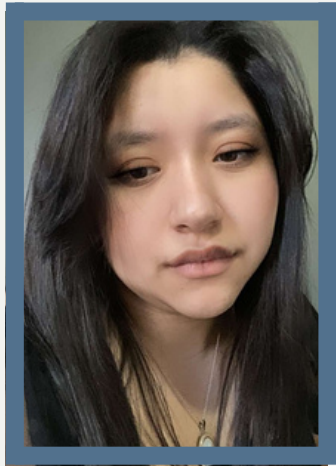
“For me, it is very important to be THAT teacher—the teacher that everyone wishes to have.” As Karina prepared for graduation this past Spring 2022 semester, she reflected back on the experiences that lead up to this moment of receiving her B.A in Early Childhood Education with a minor in Bilingual Education and a TESOL endorsement. As many students understand, an academic journey is not often easy. For Karina, being resilient in the face of adversity as she dedicated time and effort toward her goals were some of the challenges she had to face. However, it never discouraged her from giving up, as she took those difficult situations and used them for her own personal growth and strength. “I consider myself to be a very resilient person for continuing to show up for myself even when life tried to make me doubt my ability to do so.”

While taking on the challenges of life, Karina had many people influence her decision to become an educator, but the thing that set them all apart was many negative experiences that concluded her decision in becoming one. For her, learning is never-ending. Being an educator, she is constantly helping and giving students the tools they need to become successful. The teaching profession affords her many opportunities to learn and grow. She seeks to leave a legacy behind that fosters positive change, especially when it comes to promoting positivity and kindness. “These personal traits help equip the next generation to not only be proactive, civil citizens but also compassionate people”.

While juggling school, work, and student teaching, Karina never missed the opportunity for self-care. She enjoys practicing mindfulness meditation, being in the outdoors, arts and crafts, dancing, exercising, and reading self-reflective books. Although her emotions have not fully set in yet, she is very excited and could not be prouder of herself on her undergraduate journey. After graduation, she plans to pursue her teaching career further. Having experienced many different grade levels she mostly desires to work in a kindergarten bilingual class. “I honestly could not see myself pursuing another career as I genuinely value the relationships I can build and acknowledge the impact I can have on young children as an educator”.

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

# Freshman Highlights



## Catherine Aranda

Catherine Aranda is one of El Centro's Cohort freshman. While her major at the moment is undecided, she has an interest in pursuing something in the art field. Art is something she enjoys and is one of her biggest passions.

As she explores her academic options, one class she might consider taking in the near future is theater. During the month of April, she and her family acted in a play for the Crucifixion of Jesus. This sparked her interest in theatre.

"College isn't like high school. where you have seven classes in one day and you're really tired." For Catherine, transitioning to college was very easy and not as an overwhelming change for her, since her classes are spread apart. One of Catherine's favorite places at El Centro is the library study rooms, where she enjoys spending her free time in between classes. She shared that the space is ideal to have privacy and complete assignments.

As she thinks ahead of her future, something she would love to do is travel around the world. One of her first locations to visit will be Mexico. During November, Mexico celebrates Day of the Dead to honor those who have passed away, Catherine has always wanted to witness such a beautiful event.

Her favorite memories are those of her being with her friends. One of her favorite things to do during this semester was attending the Cohort workshop, particularly the one of Frida Kahlo where students painted Frida Kahlo inspired tote bags. Her favorite class is psychology she said, "the professors are always so nice and they provided experiences that helped me and others relate to the content." Catherine is eager to get her degree and continue with what life has to offer.

Catherine describes herself as quiet, but also very outgoing and enjoys meeting new people. She's witty, enjoys expressing herself, and believes she has the potential to be a stand-up comedian. She also appreciates drawing, listening to music, having fun with friends and family, and walking her dog.

A piece of advice she has for freshman is that, "Everything is going to be alright, you will feel more comfortable in college than in high school,. It's not a lot of pressure, just keep up with the work and have fun and enjoy the semester."

# Oscar Rodriguez



*Interviewed and written by Britney Jimenez  
Edited by Lizett Galan*

Oscar Rodriguez, one of the El Centro's cohort most hard working student has officially finished his first year at NEIU! In summer 2021, he successfully completed the NEIU Google Computer Science Summer Institute (CSSI), where he learned HTML/CSS and JavaScript to co-create a video game. Oscar grew an interest in technology which led him to major in computer science. Since Oscar enjoys hands on learning, Computer Science was the right major for him.

Oscar is an alumni and tutor for TRIO Upward Bound Math and Science at NEIU and an active student in TRIO since his freshman year of high school. He is currently mentoring and also providing tutoring services on robotics for the program. In 2019, Oscar was given the opportunity to travel to Alaska and teach underwater robotics for TRIO's partner school.

His advice for incoming freshmen: "Swallow your pride and go to tutoring. You'll be amazed how much tutoring can help." As a tutor himself, he understands the struggle many students take on alone and often do not know where resources are located or feel embarrassed to seek help.

Oscar values and has great appreciation for his professors including Professor Buell in English 102. As he wrapped up his freshman year, he had expected college to be hectic with a heavy assignment workload. He discovered how to manage his time and assignments, and found the third floor at El Centro to be his favorite study space. Being an El Centro student, Oscar shares his appreciation for events like the Stress Free Zone, which students have taken advantage of to distress from end of semester. He can't wait for more upcoming events that El Centro has to offer!



# SCHOLARSHIP

## Recipients



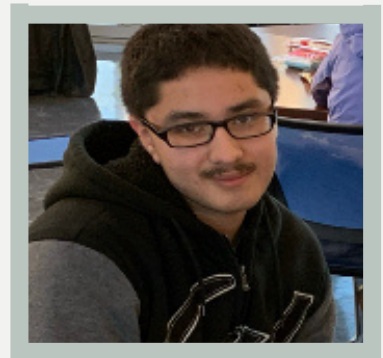
Esme  
VELASQUEZ

Esmeralda Velasquez is a current senior majoring in Community Health. Esmeralda defines herself as hardworking, motivated, and dedicated. She pushes herself through many obstacles that life puts in her way, but never loses sight on the ultimate goal of obtaining her degree and beginning her career.

Esme reflects on the process of obtaining her scholarship. Beginning the processes to apply and filling out all requirements, asking for letters of recommendation, obtaining transcripts, and submitting the application on time although time consuming can feel very rewarding at the end.

The El Centro Tuition Scholarship has helped Esme cover the cost on tuition for one of her semesters this year! Esme looks forward to having the opportunity to apply to more scholarships.

*Interviewed and written by Kevin Cerda  
Edited by Jeanette Delgado*



Jahziel  
GRACIANO

Jahziel Graciano, is a current sophomore majoring in Justice Studies and minoring in Child Advocacy Studies (CAST). Jahziel was awarded the El Centro Tuition Scholarship various times and most recently in the Fall semester of 2021! Jahziel describes himself as motivated, hardworking, serious, and humorous person. He is always looking for opportunities to grow.

Jahziel describes the process of applying for the scholarship as tough. "It was very competitive. They ask for a lot of requirements such as essays, transcripts, and letters of recommendations." Jahziel believes it all depends on how motivated and disciplined someone is to put in the work towards applying. Coming from a low income family, it was important for him to receive as many scholarships as possible to help cover the cost of tuition.

The El Centro Scholarship has given Jahziel the opportunity to continue his studies without the worry of covering the cost of tuition! As Jahziel progresses towards his degree through these upcoming semesters, his goal is to finish college and attend law school, and possibly pursue a PhD! His overall career goal is to become a lawyer or a judge.

*Interviewed and written by Jennifer Reyes  
Edited by Jeanette Delgado*

# SCHOLARSHIP

## Recipients



# Ivan OCAMPO

The journey of defining himself has not been linear. In fact, Ivan Ocampo transferred to NEIU from Harold Washing College (HWC). As a recipient of the El Centro Scholarship for Spring 2022, Ivan shares the financial impact it has brought him in his first semester.

As a former DACA recipient, Ivan is majoring in Graphic Design and minoring in Interactive Design. His journey to discover his passion was accompanied by many challenges. He's healing from a difficult childhood as he continues to grow as a person. The process of applying for scholarships by yourself can be difficult and overwhelming. Ivan shared that the scholarship process can be tedious, where websites may not be updated, with broken links, or missing deadlines. Yet, when he met Denise E. Torres Velasquez, El Centro's Financial Aid Coordinator, he found another person of support at El Centro. With Denise's guidance, Ivan did not miss the opportunity to apply to El Centro Spring 2022 Tuition Scholarship. While the writing process is difficult for Ivan, he discovered that the scholarship prompts were relatable.

Once he received the El Centro Spring 2022 Scholarship, Ivan's financial burden was lifted, and he was able to commit to school full-time. During this period, Ivan also decided to resign from his job of 11 years and "hit the ground running." After so many years of being uncertain about his career path and passion, the scholarship released the financial worry of buying his art supplies or paying for his tuition. Rather, it allowed him to dedicate more focus on his work and projects, all leading to a successful first semester at NEIU.

As a transfer student, Ivan took his time at his community college and found clarity toward his career path. With this clarity, amidst his legal status change to permanent resident, he is now on a journey to expand his graphic design experience and secure a full-time employment to support himself and his partner.



# Student

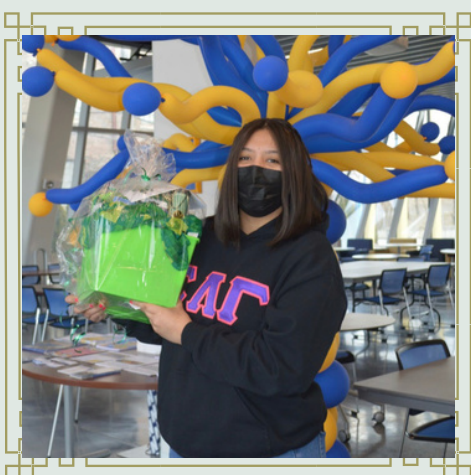


## EVENTS



### **Valentines Week February 14-17, 2022**

Student Aid Jennifer Reyes and Assistant Director, Rebeca participated in El Centro's Valentines Week Special Event! Roses, cards, and treats to spread the love and appreciation for one another!



### **St. Patrick's Week March 7-10, 2022**

El Centro hosted a St. Patrick's themed scavenger hunt! Grand prize was a themed basket filled with awesome goodies! Congratulations to our winner! Organized by Veronica Rodriguez, Alma Hernandez, and Cynthia Ceron.





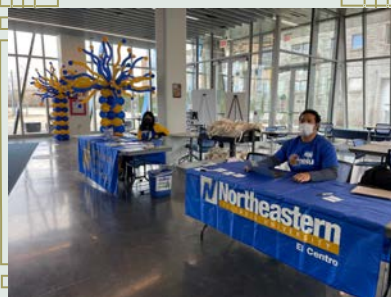


### **Stress Free Zone April 26 & 27, 2022**

El Centro hosts the Spring 2022 Stress Free Zone for students during their finals! A variety of food, games, and music open to all students!

### **ILACHE 2022 Conference April 29, 2022**

Students and staff in the ILACHE Conference! ILACHE recognizes and pushes to increase access, retention, and advancement of Latinx students, staff, and faculty in Illinois Higher Education Institutions.



### **Latinx College Day April 9, 2022**

El Centro, in collaboration with Proyecto Pa'Lante invited admitted and prospective students and their families to an interactive bilingual event designed to transition students to NEIU!



### **LatinX Congratulatory May 7, 2022**

Congratulating and celebrating the 2022 Latinx graduates!

# ***El Centro's Social Medias***



***neiu.edu/academics/el-centro***

***@neiu\_elcentro***



***@NortheasternElCentro***

***@neiu\_elcentro***



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El Centro wants to hear from YOU!

Do you have a story you'd like to share? Email your suggestions to  
lgalan@neiu.edu.





# Noche De





# Estrellas





