

THE NEIU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT— BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME!

NEIU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT ALUMNI NEWS

Spring / Summer 2022

From the Chair

The tremendous task for this past spring entailed our first Program Review in over ten years (did we miss the seven-year deadline? Whups!). Seriously: this was a necessary and incredibly important effort, ultimately ensuring our continued accreditation to offer our English degrees at NEIU. Our outside reviewer, **Debra Best**, Chair of English from our peer in California, California State University at Dominguez Hills, was wonderfully cooperative, and after her full-day's visit to campus to meet everyone from undergraduates and graduate students to faculty and administration, she wrote up a report that not only documents our successes but also supports our near-term goals.



Her interviews with students found a high degree of satisfaction with faculty and programming. Given the similar student background at CSUDH, Dr. Best was hugely impressed with the curricular shifts we've made over the past ten years (37 new courses) designed to meet students' interests and needs. She had equally high praise for the work of our Instructors both in supplying courses for our Creative Writing Minor and for their encouragement of student reading and writing through events sponsored by the department and the 82. In fact she ended her report with a recommendation for at least one tenure-track hire in the area of Creative Writing to anchor that program. Dr. Best also recommended an overhaul of department criteria for promotion, as well as a new assessment program that might align student goals and outcomes with career readiness initiatives.

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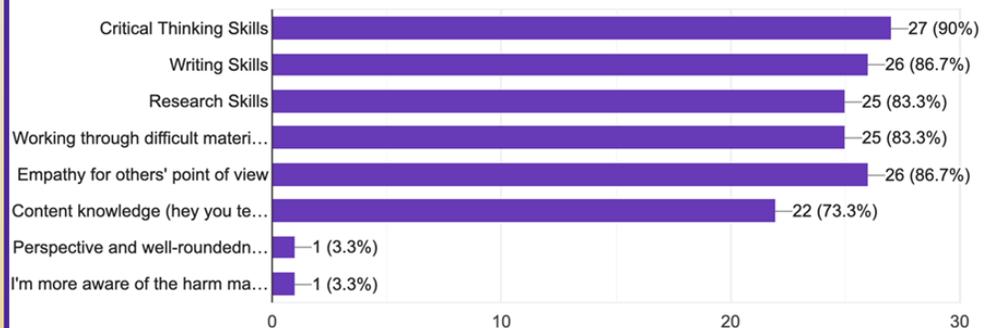
- Program Review Reveals Growing Number of LatinX English Majors
- Founding English Faculty Member Jacquie Krump dies at 101
- The 82's MEGA event features Creative Writing and creative baking
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- NEIU finally delivers on video promotion featuring English alums

“Not a day goes by where I don't use the skills honed in my program”

--one alum's response to the follow up of our survey question on SKILLS

In the work you do today (for money or not) what skills that you acquired *from your work as an English student at NEIU* do you rely on frequently? (check all that apply)

30 responses



The 82's MEGA Event features Creative Writing--and creative baking!

You'd have been a fool not to attend **The 82's** MEGA reading this past April 1, featuring work from undergrad, grad and alumni writers!



THE 82:MEGA
April 1, 5-7:00 pm
Room B152 and via ZOOM
(email Olivia Cronk for link) o-cronk@neu.edu

The Stage is Set!

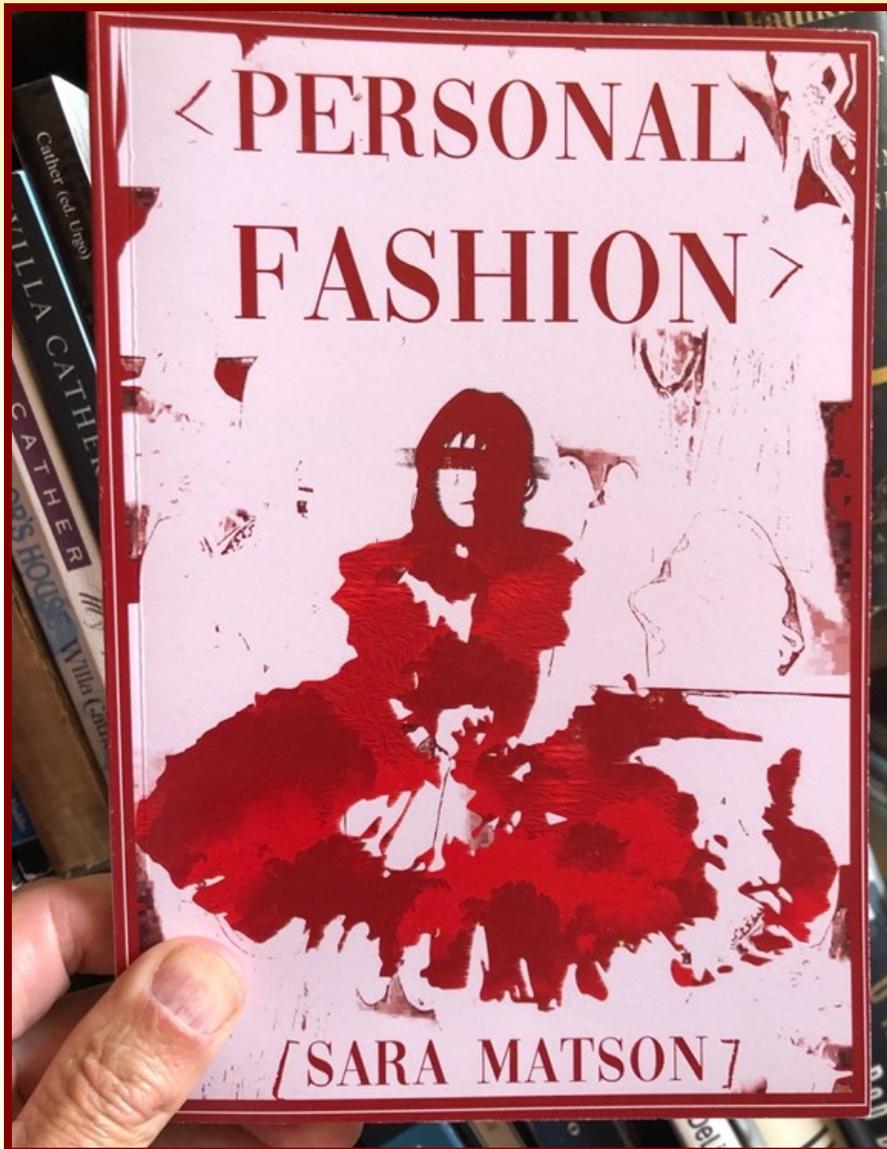
Zahra Sajwani	Ash Miranda
Katrina Underwood	Hana Urban
Sara Matson	Prison + Neighborhood
Najlah Iqbal	Arts/Education Project
Jenn Lee	Mueza Bawany
Raquel Gomez	Claire Cofre
Cathy Colton	Colin Wiersma
Grace Leonard	Philip Kostov
Nick Pecucci	Kathryn Hudson
Lara Levitan	AND MORE..!!!

This event is hosted by the Creative Writing Minor/English Department

A huge added bonus (signaled as a possibility during our get-together mid-Pandemic in May of 21) was catering of the event by alumna Jo Colagiacomi's **New Moon Vegan Bakery**, supplying an array of both sweet and savory treats to enjoy during the reading—and some to take home.



Among poetic treats, the audience heard some of Sara Matson's latest work from <Personal Fashion° (December 2021). Here's one from the collection:



<manicure>

enticing wall of
ice cream acrylics
glittered nails
pounded to fractal dust
diamond shredded violence
like a velvet credit card
(plush + suspended)

shiny swollen childblooms
blending into crystal structures
outlandish reality but a uniform

weight reborn unto itself in simple pastel
dusty foyer an expanse of
self-fulfilling talons hot +
stretched a heavy soaked towel
remains the defunct representation of
(something monumental)

every ten year old finger bled
by the time she was done
swearing under her conversation
w/my mother across the salon

i cried watching the blue light suck out
plasma from each cut cuticle

i learned about oils + trust +
why it's so difficult to remove glitter

Even mothers
of diamond encrusted serpents
will fork their words spitting into
reliant mouths +
across dremeled tips
i remember my puffy pink tips
raking across the cheap plastic
searching for cool comfort

watching my words turn to ash
in aluminum breath

Alumni Talk-back Series Continues to Bloom in Spring 2022 with Excellent Career Advice and Inspiration

The alumni that participate in our Talk-Back Series continue to do us proud! Not only have our former English Majors continued to parlay their skills across a widening variety of fields—both “typical” and unexpected—they have done so while discovering career interests they hadn’t even anticipated (literally—one alumnus pointed out that the career or position you seek may be created five years from now!). In every case, these alumni were able to show how their English skills helped seed the ground for their on-going career goals.



Katie Galmiche

For our first Spring-term Talkback in the month of February we caught up with four alumni who have carved their niche as English teachers: [Duc Le \(BA '10\)](#) from Morgan Park High School; [Katie Galmiche \(BA '16\)](#) at Intrinsic Charter School; 20-year veteran of the halls [Toly Walker \(BA '99\)](#) from Evanston High School; and [Sakina Syeda \(BA '17\)](#) from Kenwood Academy. We asked each of them what One Thing would they like future teachers to know when starting their careers? In fact, everyone had far more than One Thing to say, but what they emphasized the most—what the richness of their experience had revealed—was that **relationships matter** when it comes to teaching. Not just in terms of networking with colleagues, or seeing what students need and working to positively change curriculum from within, but most importantly relationships with the students themselves—seeing what excites them, investing in that, and being open to learning from students in return—not surprising, considering that English majors (and teachers!) have **communication** as a central skill.

The March Talkback convened with perennially faithful alum [Manny Cruz \(BA '09\)](#), Manager in the Implementation Branch of the UAS Integration Office at the FAA; [Lily Calder \(BA '13\)](#), Senior Account Executive at event technology platform HOPIN; and [Nick Langenburg \(BA '16\)](#), client-facing paralegal at Stenger and Stenger law firm. Talk about a broad spectrum of careers that want and use English skills! Interestingly, all three of our guests said they had little prior knowledge of the fields in which they now work—so how were their experiences NOT like “a fish out of water?” It turns out that critical thinking, concise communication skills, and the ability to “unpack language” (Manny’s phrase), to synthesize new, often technical, info and relate it to different audiences made the difference. As English Majors, they were **taught how to learn**, the most portable skill of all.

Manny Cruz



Lily Calder



Abigail Harris-Culver (she/they)

Our April Talkback session welcomed [Abigail Harris-Culver \(BA '13\)](#), of SAGE: Advocacy and Services for LGBTQ+ Elders, [Christine Amezquita \(BA '11\)](#), Career Development Coordinator, Georgia College, and [Santa Torrijo \(BA '16\)](#), Project Coordinator, Department of Finance, City of Chicago.

This particular discussion was downright inspiring. While working in the nonprofit/academic/government worlds has posed unique (and sometimes frustrating) challenges for our guests, not only did their English degrees prepare them to succeed (in Christine's words, "every organization needs a writer and an editor"), but each of them was guided by a strong **sense of public service**.

Abigail is of course invested in serving a vulnerable population; Christine's ultimate goal is to be a public (as opposed to academic) librarian with all the public-facing service that entails; and Santa, after working in and learning about many, many facets of city government services (including policy writing), believes she will run for office someday—and we wish her well!



Christine Amezquita



Tim Garrison, a student with questions

Alumni Notes and News

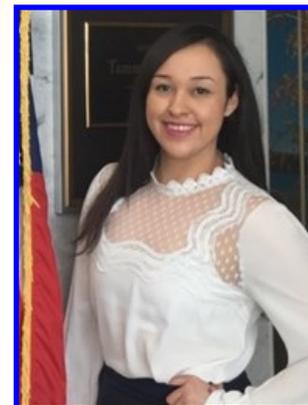


Susan Landwer has continued to excel since entering Marquette with full tuition remission plus stipend in Fall 2020.

Susan Landwer MA '19 and now a Ph.D. candidate at Marquette University, reports that she just passed her Dissertation Qualifying Exam and will now begin writing a dissertation on nineteenth-century equity activist Nancy Prince, research for which she began for her MA thesis here at NEIU. Her goal is to complete her work by 2024. Susan was also the recipient of the **2022 John D. McCabe Award** for excellence in undergraduate teaching from Marquette. She taught the traditional **Foundations in Rhetoric Course** this semester as well as a 4224 advanced writing course when a professor had to take a leave of absence.

It's always nice to hear from students who did not major in English but who fondly recall their time with us in basic writing or GenEd courses. On May 4, Instructor Mike Davros received a nice note from **Sumera Yilmaz**, an English 101 student from spring 2020: "I'm not sure you remember me," she writes, "but your lectures and support were very impactful on my future. I'm a medical student now soon to start my third year in Istanbul, Turkey and I always cherish the memory of being an NEIU student for a while. I left NEIU right when COVID started and I sadly couldn't continue my studies in the US. Anyhow, I wanted to say a thank you from the heart for being a wonderful mentor and instructor. I remember us making jokes about me being Turkish and you being Greek, it was always amazing to be around you, professor!"

On April 4, it was great to hear from **Santa Torrijo (BA '16)**, who continues to work for the City of Chicago, now as Project Coordinator in the Department of Finance. In her current role she manages the employee indebtedness program. Most recently she served as an Administrative Services Officer for the Chicago Department of Public Health—managing the onboarding/hiring process for the COVID-Bureau. A veteran of several agencies in city government, she has also completed internships with the Chicago City Clerk and the Department of Human Resources.



What Has 2016 NEIU Alum Alisa Burris Been Doing Lately...?

WRITING HER FIRST MURDER MYSTERY NOVEL!



"After a sudden fire almost burns down one of their units, neighbors Wanda Lindstrom, Charlotte Murray, and Marcy Seele are thrust into immediate turmoil. But the trauma only worsens when a brutal murder is discovered within the ashes.

As details of the homicide unfold, white nationalism and the various relationships to this controversial victim intertwine, heightening the women's complicated reactions.... Told from the women's vastly different perspectives, **DETACHED** explores an emotional fusion of their guilt, apprehension, and anger."

Available September 27, 2022 from Running Wild Press

Jack Bisbee (BA '13) moved to Lincoln, Nebraska soon after graduation, to be near his wife's family. "It's a good place," he says, "and growing in size. We have two new high schools opening in the next 2 years." Jack has been teaching English and Reading for Lincoln Public Schools, and more recently middle school English. We may be seeing him soon via ZOOM on our next Alumni talk-back for high school teachers...

Remembering an Original

Jacque Krump, a professor in this department from its very beginnings to her retirement in 1991, died this past May 26. She was 101.

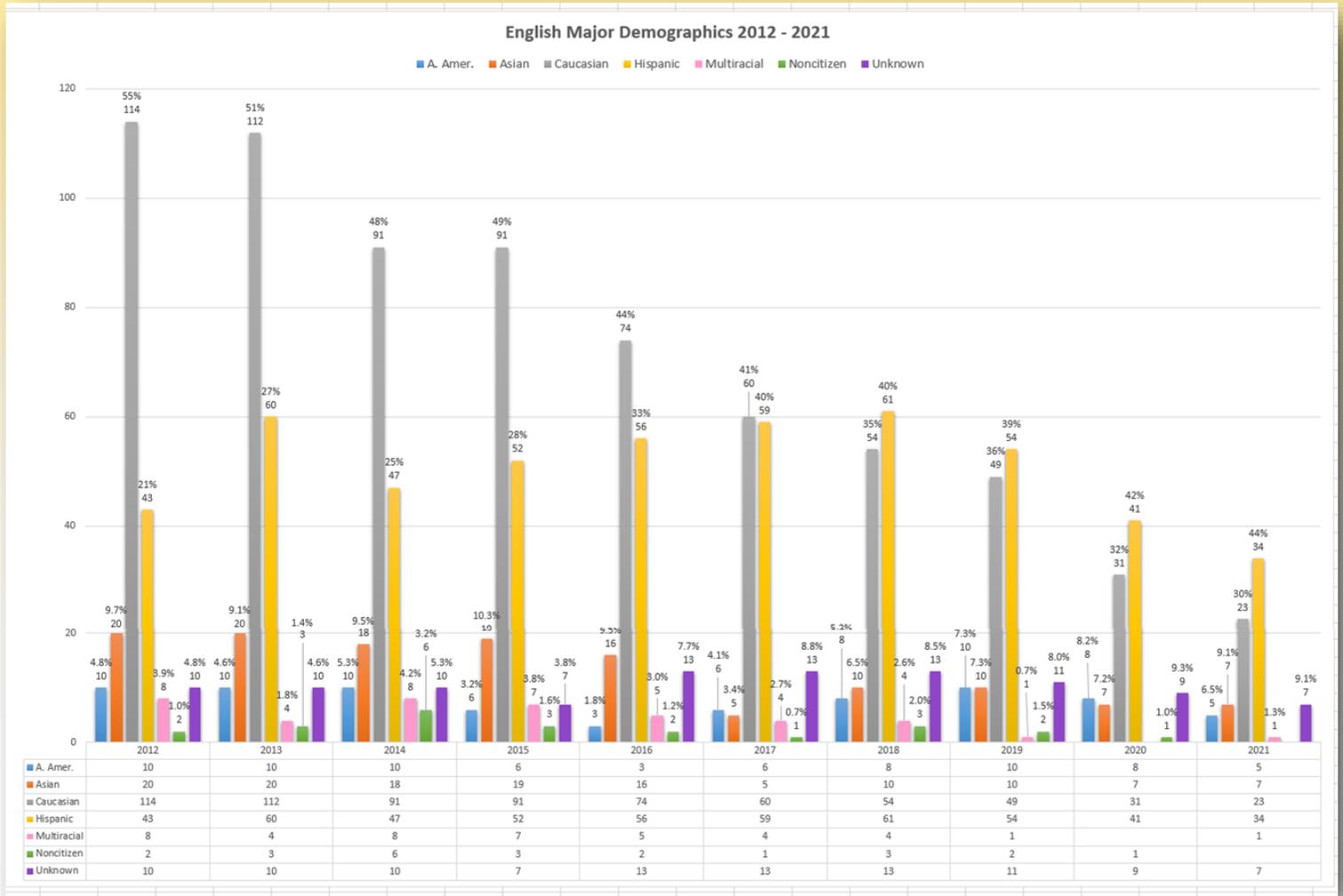
Dr. Krump graduated from Chicago Teachers College (CTC) in Englewood, earned a Ph.D. in English from Northwestern University, and went on to have a successful 40-year career teaching college-level English, starting at CTC in 1951 and ultimately at Northeastern. An accomplished pianist and singer, she demonstrated her love of music through her philanthropy, endowing several scholarships at Northeastern for music majors, as well as scholarships for students majoring in education and in history. Dr. Krump remained very active in retirement, frequently traveling, and was a valued member of the NEIU Foundation Board from 2013-2019. In 2020 she was presented with the President's Circle Award for her visionary philanthropy and commitment to Northeastern.



An inspiring obituary for Jacquie Krump can be found on *Legacy*:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/chicagotribune/name/jacqueline-krump-obituary?id=35020959>

Program Review: A Growing Percentage of Latinx English Majors

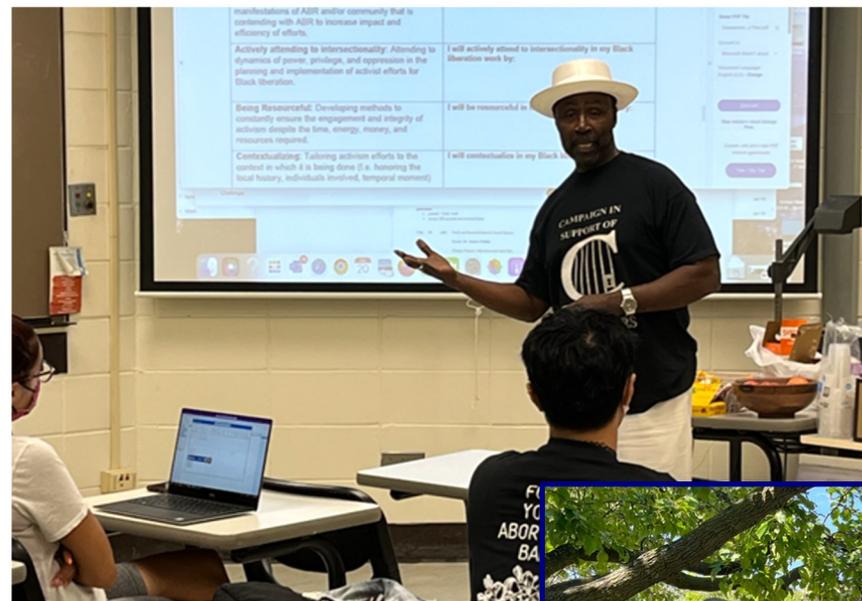


According to a recent article in **Inside Higher Education** the decrease in our number of majors and minors—from just over 200 in 2013 to 77 in 2022—tracks closely with the decrease in students studying “literature” nationally. This decrease can be attributed at least in part to the university’s plunge in enrollment overall in that same period; indeed, the period of this self-study comprises precisely the university’s all-time high enrollment in 2012 and its all-time low this very term. And while the continued success and usefulness of the English degree for graduates is repeatedly bolstered by publications like **Inside Higher Ed** but also **Forbes** and **The Wall Street Journal**, the allure of STEM and Business majors for students looking for “a real job” and the question asked by parents and friends, “so what are you going to do with an English degree?” malingers. The **Alumni Talk-Back** series is our latest, hands-on, response to such enduring myths and prejudices.

More significant for the purposes of this Self-Study and NEIU’s mission as an **Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)**, are the details of these data, which graphically represent a significant trend in the proportion of our majors and minors who are students of Hispanic origin—from 21% in 2012 to more than double that, 44%, in 2022—now exceeding the percentage that these students made up at the university starting in 2017, and increasing over time. To a large degree, we credit this shift to our intentional work, some years before the rise of national EDI efforts, to hire **Emily Garcia**, a professor with whom many of our students of Hispanic origin might identify and who has added significantly since 2010 to our curricular offerings that represent the work of Latinx writers and culture across several centuries. Beyond her own work in the classroom, Professor Garcia’s interactions with other faculty and with students in our programs has inspired and informed the work of many others, who have made significant adaptations of courses already on the books to include new dimensions of Latinx literature and culture.

Summer Course on Race and Gender Reaches Outside NEIU for Voices, Listeners

For many years Dr. Kris Over has taught her ENGL 367/495 course, “Rethinking Race and Gender,” at both undergraduate and graduate levels, as a summer “intensive” course, packing 45 hours of course material into basically two weeks of morning and afternoon classes. This summer, Dr. Over had the course certified by the ISBE and opened the course to high school teachers looking for Professional Development (and 45 CPDU credits), while our Foundation account funded honoraria for invited speakers to share their expertise during the final week of the class.



Mr. Benny Lee, NEIU faculty in Justice Studies and co-founder of the National Alliance for the Formerly Incarcerated, shares his story with students the last day of ENG 367/495.

Orion Meadows, NEIU UWW (University Without Walls) student, writer, and activist for the **Institute for Nonviolence Chicago** and the **Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project**, shared his experiences and his poetry with ENGL 367/495.



Other guests included **Reyna Ortiz**, a Native & Latina author and Trans resource specialist working directly with the trans/ gender non-conforming community of Chicago; and **Isaura Pulido**, an NEIU Professor in Educational Inquiry and Curriculum Studies who teaches teachers, including courses in critical race theory and education.

WHY GIVE?

LISTEN TO FELLOW ALUMS IN OUR [NEW VIDEO](#) ON THE ENGLISH PAGE! ([Neiu.edu/english](#))—Proud of what you hear? Then...

PLEASE help us continue our mission. Here's how:

GIVING. It is, after all, the week of **Giving Tuesday**. Remember it's now much easier to earmark your give to the English Department at [neiu.edu/englishfunds](#). You can donate to our general fund to help across the board; to our **Writers Reading Series**, the **82**; or to our **Student Support Fund**, toward an endowment that would help our majors in the most need.

INTERNSHIPS. You can contact us about offering an internship—paid or unpaid—where you currently work. What skills do you need, and what skills might one of our students gain? Give that some thought!

TALK BACK. Contact us about being part of our ongoing **Alumni Talk-Back Series**, giving both undergraduate and graduate students a real look at careers where the skills of an English major are in high demand—and the confidence that these opportunities are real. (YOU are living proof they are).

To give, go to [neiu.edu/englishfunds](#) or to our website [neiu.edu/English](#) and click on "Giving."

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AND KEEP IN TOUCH!

New JOB?

News in Your LIFE?

Change your email?

Let us know! Send an email to Chair Tim Scherman at: T-Scherman@neiu.edu

OR

Office Admin Hilary Jirka at: h-jirka2@neiu.edu
773/442-5829

Visit us on the web [neiu.edu/English](#) (your stories are up under "Alumni")

JOIN us on Facebook! NEIU Alumni And Friends: Bringing it All Back Home

PLACE
STAMP
HERE