

NEIU EL Centro Presents Spring 2023



Discover This Semester...



As El Centro team celebrates the array of accomplishments of our students. El Centro is a focal point for student development, community and success.

Message from Interim Director, Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo



On behalf of the El Centro team, I want to welcome you to our newsletter. The Spring semester was filled with laughter, learning and meaningful connections. The following pages only summarized a part of our daily work providing students, faculty, staff and community a welcoming and safe space. NEIU El Centro students attended 15 weekly cohort meetings, 6 events to celebrate diverse festivities, one very fun outing and attended the ILACHE conference. My favorite workshop this Spring was a faculty panel where students learned about their experiences in achieving their academic and personal goals.

Community Outreach highlights: Since February we are offering Free ESL classes in collaboration with Harry S Truman College and Palenque LSNA, Conversaciones de Educación Superior sessions, Shenix App launch, a Shred & Recycling Day and more.

I want to end this introduction to our newsletter on a high note: Our building was selected by WTTW's award-winning host and producer Geoffrey Baer as one of *The Most Beautiful Places* in Chicago. I leave you with a quote from architect Juan Gabriel Moreno who designed our building. "All of our communities deserve uplifting architecture – not just a downtown or a central business district. You can create such an incredible impact."

I invite you to visit us and see for yourself our beautiful space, learn about our programs and services and meet our students, faculty and El Centro team.

Enjoy your summer!

Providing Access and Educational Opportunities to the Latinx Community Since 1968

For more than 50 years, El Centro has provided students with support to achieve their academic goals. A location with historic origin roots in community outreach, such as citizenship, education, housing, and technology. El Centro continues to stay true to its root as it serves the Avondale community.



FOLLOW OUR SOCIAL MEDIA



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Meet the Team

Jennifer Reyes



Psychology
She/Her/Ella

Emily Sosa



Art Education
She/Her/Ella

Santiago Teran



Marketing
He/Him/El

Aaliyah Blacher



Justice studies
She/Her

Simon Avila



Pre-law
He/Him/El

Alondra Perez



Biology
She/Her

Lizett Galan



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

Brayan Cruz



Justice Studies
He/Him/El

Nancy Martinez



Marketing
Management
she/her/ ella



Office Support Squad!

ABOUT US!



Alma Hernández
She/Her/Ella

I've worked for NEIU for 18 years. What I love about my job is helping our students and the community. My favorite quote is, "Al final del día, podemos aguantar mucho más de lo que pensamos que podemos" by Frida Kahlo.



Cynthia Ceron
She/Her/Ella

I've worked for NEIU for 9 years. What I love about my job is advocating for the needs of the students and being part of their academic success. Working alongside the ELC family and being part of the amazing OSA team. My favorite inspirational quote is "Out of your vulnerabilities will come your strength" by Sigmund Freud



Veronica (Vero) Rodriguez
She/Her/Ella

I've worked 14 years total with NEIU (8 years with Facilities Management department and 6 years with El Centro). What I love about my job as Office Support Associate is providing assistance to our students, faculty, staff and community at-large. As office support, we are the backbone and face of the institution and it brings me joy to be able to represent NEIU El Centro with pride and excellent customer service. I enjoy working at El Centro as it feels like a second family, especially with my fellow OSAs. "Be the change you wish to see in the world" ~ Gandhi



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

30th Ward Aldermanic Forum

January 18th, 2023

ELC Cohort Workshop

January 26th, 2023-April 26, 2023

El Centro freshmen cohort is invited for a weekly Success workshop on Thursdays. The workshop centers community building and university resources.

FEBUARY

Valentin Sin Ti Zumbia

February 11th, 2023

Center for Access and Success (CCAS) held a Valentine Day/ Bad Bunny theme zumbia class.

Early Elections-Municipal Election 2023

February 13- February 28, 2023

El Centro was a designated voting site for the Mayoral elections.

Kelvyn Park High School Visit

February 14th, 2023

Kelvyn Park High School counselors and graduating students visited El Centro.

Valentines's Day Event

February 14th, 2023

Valentines's Day was celebrated at El Centro with sweet treats & refreshing drinks.

Meditation Mondays

February 20th, 2023

El Centro staff initiated a 15 min meditation session every Monday as a form of wellness.

Martes de Menu

February 21st, 2023

Every third Tuesday of the semester, El Centro invited staff, students, and community partners for a delicious hot meal and networking.

Devotional Thursday

Every Thursday, students, staff and community were welcome for a 20 minute dedicated time and space to practice their religious beliefs.

Spring 2023

MARCH

ESL Classes

March 16th, 2023

A partnership established with City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) Truman, English as Second Language (ESL) classes are now offered at El Centro. Please reach out to Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo for more information: M-Lamadrid-Quevedo@neiu.edu

Immunization Day

March 23rd, 2023

Health Services provided students, staff and faculty the opportunity to receive the flu shot and/or COVID booster.



ELC One Love Project

March 31st, 2023

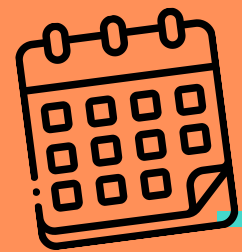
ELC student workers provide El Centro community the opportunity to learn about One Love. One Love focuses on healthy relationships.

APRIL

Stress Free Zone

April 25, 2023

At the end of every semester and with the support of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (OEDI), students have the opportunity to de-stress. Games, paint and sips, and even a massage chair is available.



CCAS Wellness Saturday

Zumba Fiesta

April 29, 2023

Part of CCAS Wellness initiative, once a month there is a Zumba class at El Centro.

MAY

AT&T Hacemos

May 12, 2023

AT&T Hispanic/Latino Employee Resource group, HACEMOS, partnered with OxyGen, CompTIA, Junior Achievement and CAHSI to host students from Roosevelt High School.

Shred & Recycling Day

May 20, 2023

The Office of State Representative Will Guzzardi hosted a community wide shred & recycling day.



Interested in hosting events at El Centro, you can learn about the next steps here:



Joy & Wellness

CARE Lecturer, Dr. Gabriela Veronelli



What is Joy & Wellness?

Joy & Wellness Initiative is led by Dr. Shireen Roshanravan, Executive Director of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Cynthia Ceron, Office Support Associate, is El Centro's liason in executing the series events. Staff, students & faculty were invited to the weekly Walking Wednesdays to increase their daily steps & movement. Martes de Menú brought the campus together over delicious food & music. It was every third Tuesday of the month. At the end of the semester, the Stress-Free Zone invited everyone to arts activites, snacks & a massage chair.

Martes de Menú



Walking Wednesdays





Student Events

VALENTINE'S DAY

February 14, 2023



EL CENTRO CELEBRATED VALENTINE'S DAY BY SHARING SWEET TREATS. CONCHAS, CHURROS, HOT CHOCOLATE AND TEA FOR STUDENTS, STAFF & VISITORS.



ST. PATRICK'S WEEK

March 6 - March 10, 2023



STUDENTS ENJOYED A MINT MATCHA MILKSHAKE ON THEIR WAY TO CLASS. IN THE SAME WEEK, EL CENTRO STUDENT WORKERS, EMILY SOSA & JENNIFER REYES ORGANIZED A ST. PATRICK'S DAY THEMED SCAVENGER HUNT. STUDENTS WERE CHALLENGED TO COMPLETE DIFFERENT DAILY TASKS TO EARN POINTS FOR A FINAL PRIZE. CONGRATULATIONS TO JOVANNY LOPEZ FOR CLAIMING FIRST PLACE.



Women's HERStory Month

EL CENTRO PLAYLIST

March



8



Student Success Story

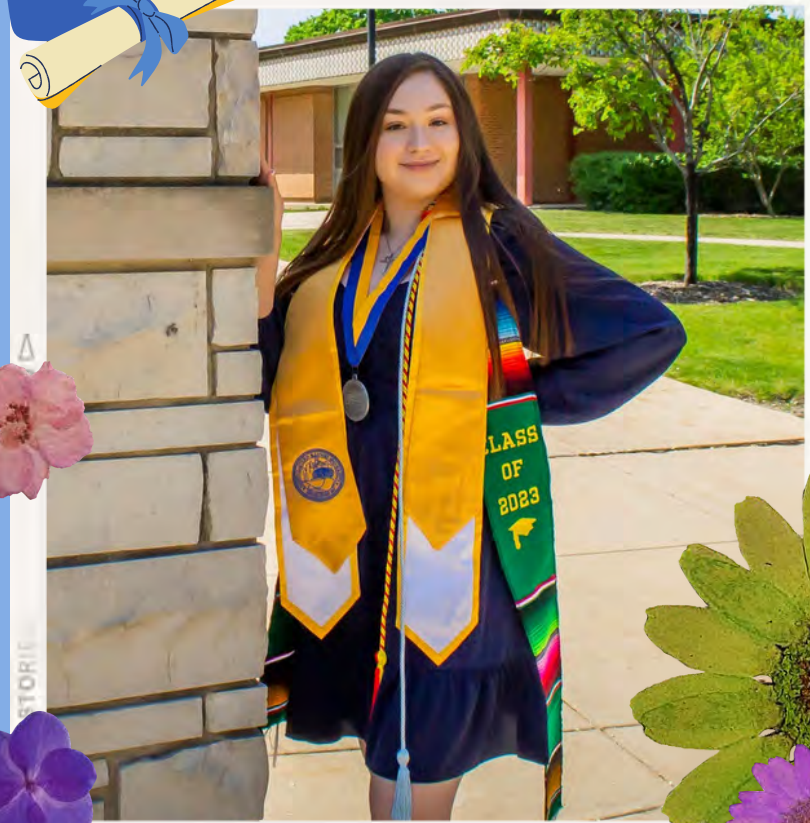


A moment of reflection for Jennifer Reyes-Zepeda, as she completes her final undergraduate semester at NEIU. Jennifer shares how she's "grown a lot as a person, as I have started off as shy, being afraid to talk in class and not socialize with my peers. My self-esteem was low, but little by little I started to grow into a confident person willing to participate in class and make friends...I'm proud of the person I've become, because it gives me a sense of belonging. I'm coming out more mature and open-minded."

Jennifer began her academic journey as an El Centro Scholar in 2018 with dedication and eagerness to learn. While Jennifer shares stories of her timidity, she was one of El Centro commuter students from the Southwest side of Chicago. She reminisces on the days she would solely attend class and home. Jennifer recognized being a student was not only about the GPA requirement, but to challenge oneself in becoming a well-rounded individual. Jennifer's piece of advice to future NEIU students is to "make the most of your time here from the first day as a freshmen, not during your junior or senior year. Make it count!".

Jennifer graduated with a Bachelor's in Psychology and a minor in Entrepreneurship and is on the pursuit towards Child Counseling. She is passionate about having an impact on youth's mental health. She wants to help children express and navigate their emotions in a healthy manner and be available for crisis interventions.

Jennifer cultivated many friendships and mentorships throughout her time at NEIU. Jennifer returned back to El Centro as a student worker. She found herself developing a sense of confidence within herself and a desire to continue learning. She was instrumental in supporting El Centro's success. She led campus tours, participated in student panels, and even engaged with parents during our Open House events. El Centro challenged her to step into her extroverted side, and she began to take on leadership roles, "like [projects] for the newsletter and a One Love workshop. I've organized events, such as a campus-wide scavenger hunt and have designed flyers." Jennifer was also selected to participate in a Spring-break Alternative program, where students traveled to Arizona to learn about immigration.



College has been a time to explore and take on new opportunities. Being a first-generation student comes with many stresses, however, Jennifer still manages to find time to attend Bible classes and Church. She is currently learning to play the piano, and once she graduates, she hopes to spend more time with her family and friends. A well deserved reward after four and a half years of hard work and dedication.

We are so proud of you, Jennifer! We wish you only the very best in everything you do!



SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Britney Jimenez

Britney Jimenez, sophomore NEIU student majoring in Social Justice and minoring in Criminology. Britney is a first-generation college student. When the El Centro Tuition scholarship became available, one of the driving factors that led her to apply was the financial relief it would grant her father, especially since her father has been financially supporting her college career. Being awarded the El Centro Tuition scholarship also granted her more time to concentrate on her assignments.

Britney explains the application process is composed of a writing prompt and an opportunity to share her story rather than solely be merit based, which often disqualifies many working-class students. Since her transition to NEIU El Centro, Britney shares “the advisors made me feel like I was more than just a check for their school; they were looking out for my best interests. The instructors here are helpful and always willing to help you pass.” Congratulations, Britney, for being one of the Spring 2023 Scholarship recipients.

"It's been a huge blessing to be able to come here to El Centro, because it feels like a second home."

- Britney Jimenez

Benjamin Cervantes

Benjamin Cervantes is a junior majoring in Computer Science with a concentration in Cyber Security. He has lived in Logan Square his entire life. Benjamin became an El Centro tuition scholarship recipient in Spring 2022. He accredits his advisor, Lizett Galan, for encouraging him to apply for scholarships. Once the scholarship became available, he realized it was an opportunity that lessened his out-of-pocket cost. The scholarship also requires students to complete volunteer hours. Benjamin completed his hours at a screen printing site, supported facility maintenance and order logistics. He also had the opportunity to work with customers and supported them with bringing their ideas to life.

Benjamin describes his experience with El Centro as amazing. He states, “I see that they care about the students and the community.” El Centro provides innovating ways to bring a community together and allow students to have their space for assignments and classes. Benjamin began at El Centro as part of the NEIU X Google CSSI 2020 program. He was offered an opportunity to be an NEIU Peer Mentor for Google Summer CSSI 2022. The opportunities continue to unravel for Benjamin.



"El Centro is more than a campus, it provides a great sense of community." - Benjamin Cervantes

FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

MARTIN GIESO

**PHD., ANTHROPOLOGY &
ARCHEOLOGY**



Martin Gieso has been teaching at El Centro since Fall 2007. Professor Martin Gieso has taught Anthropology and Archaeology. Since he was a young child, Professor Gieso has been interested in ancient civilizations. His interest continues to flourish as a life-time learner and traveler. When asked about his most memorable travel destinations, he shared that he visited Easter Island, a Chilean territory, and saw the island's historical enormous towering statues. The most impactful piece of advice Professor Gieso received was from his father, "pocas ideas, pero claras." Professor Gieso carries this mantra as a reminder to self to remain focus and have clarity.

Professor Gieso has now taught hundreds of students, and he shares a similar piece of advice to get through their undergraduate chapter. "Put your effort into what you like, go to office hours, and always ask questions...make yourself known!"

Thank you, Professor Gieso, for your continuous support of El Centro Scholars.

MAURICE MCFARLIN

**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
MASTERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**



Maurice McFarlin has been teaching at El Centro for 13 years. He is currently an attorney in a private practice in Chicago, and was a former Senior Trial attorney and municipal prosecutor for the City of Chicago Law department. Professor McFarlin decided to have a career in law, because he wanted to provide representation for people that did not have resources. Professor McFarlin continues to teach an FYE (First Year Experience) course, specifically Justice Studies, because it is an opportunity for students to learn about justice practices and how to support others. Professor McFarlin reminds students that "you can do it." If you are patient and consistent, you can do it. When Professor McFarlin is not teaching, he enjoys his time reading, attending lectures, traveling and walking.

Thank you, Professor Maurice McFarlin, for your dedication to the El Centro community.

EL CENTRO PARTNERS WITH

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

Gage Park High School Visit



We partnered with Junior Achievement Chicago and welcomed graduating seniors from Gage Park High School. Gage Park High School is located on the Southwest side of Chicago. Students had the opportunity to learn about the El Centro Scholars program, tour the campus, and a chance to win a teddy bear via our trivia.

Our current El Centro Scholars, Emily Sosa and Britney Jimenez, shared the countless educational opportunities they've received. Both as CPS (Chicago Public School) graduates first-generation students, they accredited their confidence as a freshman to the support they received from El Centro. Emily Sosa's first semester was Fall 2020, the peak of remote learning, and Britney Jimenez's first semester was Fall 2021 when returning to in-person began. Gage Park seniors engaged with curiosity and eagerness to learn from their peers.



Our cohort students also learned about financial literacy and planning through a financial literacy workshop led by Junior Achievement. Our appreciation to Gage Park High school counselors, students and Junior Achievement for trusting and allowing El Centro to share our history, location and experiences.

We look forward to all the future collaborations.



AT&T HAcEMOs



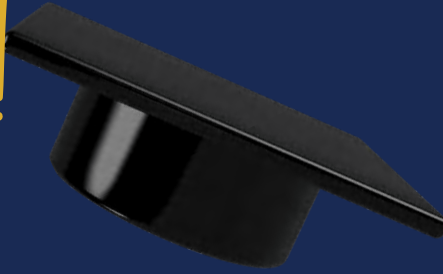
A World of Possibilities

We collaborated with AT&T HAcEMOS, OxyGen, CompTIA, Junior Achievement and CAHSI to host a mini high-tech event for Roosevelt High School students. This event exposed students to careers in technology.



Volunteers from AT&T HAcEMOS Chicago chapter and from CompTIA facilitated two workshops: Micro Bit and Cybersecurity. A panel with NEIU alumni who now work in technology provided students with career opportunities information and advice.

Happy Graduation!



class of

2023



Maritza Tellez, BA
Special Education
with Bilingual
Endorsement

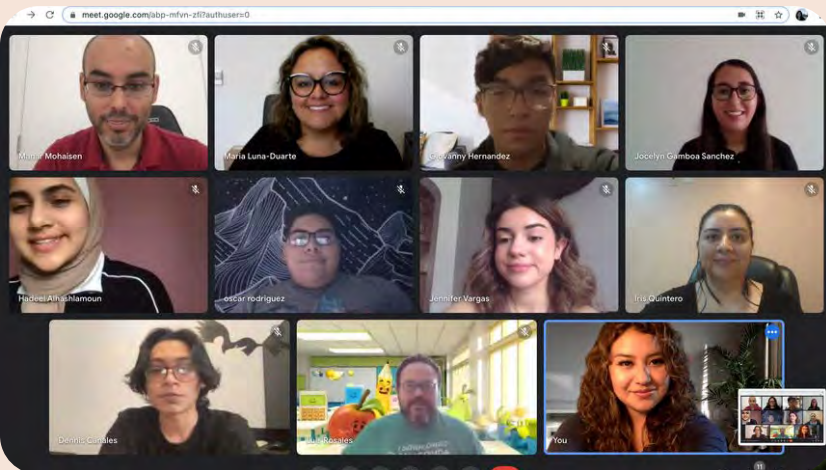


Jennifer Reyez-
Zepeda, BA
Psychology and minor
in Entrepreneurship

EL Centro is proud of
you!



Student Spotlights



Giovanny Hernandez
Computer Science

From participating in NEIU El Centro & Google CSSI 2021 to Software Engineer intern at Microsoft.



Michelle Vargas



Started as an El Centro scholar and became a psychology major and minor in Mathematical and Statistical Modeling for Complex Systems. Her research as a MARC Scholar has taken her to present in Puerto Rico.

Student Success Workshops

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



Orlando Vazquez, Javier Velazquez, Steve Hernandez, Diego Villagomez, freshmen, collectively doodle their feedback + goals for the new semester.



Students work together to keep balloons afloat as a metaphor to support one another when the semester begins to weigh you down.



Ivan Ocampo, senior, captures a Mimi Crespo moment via a doodle.



Student Success Workshops

Storytelling through Photographs



Students shared stories through photographs

Valentine's Day



Students enjoyed a sweet Valentine's Day DIY gift bag and painting

Spring C.A.R.E. Lectures



Dr. Gabriela Veronelli introduced a framework of "coloniality of language" to understand the language-based discrimination facing Latinx communities in education, law, healthcare.

Pedroso Center



Valentina Gamboa-Turner and Fawn Pochel from Angelina Pedroso Center for Diversity & Intercultural Affairs joins El Centro.

NEIU One Love

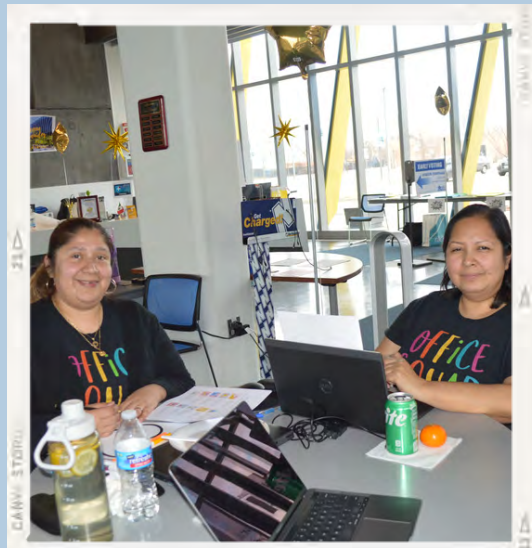


First row: Lizett Galan, Denise Torres-, Emily Sosa, Santiago
Second row: Alma Hernandez, Nancy Martinez, Jennifer Reyes, Simon, Cynthia C, Brayan Cruz, Veronica Rodriguez, Mimi Crespo

El Centro student workers were paired up this semester for a professional development opportunity. Led by Mimi Crespo, students learned about OneLove Foundation, a non-profit organization, focused on empowering young people with the tools and resources to learn about the signs of unhealthy and healthy relationships. Students presented on a range of relationship scenarios. Such as bystander friend of an unhealthy romantic relationship to generational trauma that impacts behavior.



Photographed from left to right: Denise, Simon, OneLove Projected on Screen, Santiago, Nancy, Emily



Photographed from left to right: Cynthia Ceron and Alma Hernandez



Emily Sosa ready for her presentation.



Brayan Cruz and Nancy Martinez sharing key takeaways.



Photographed from left to right: Denise, Simon, OneLove Projected on Screen, Santiago, Nancy, Emily



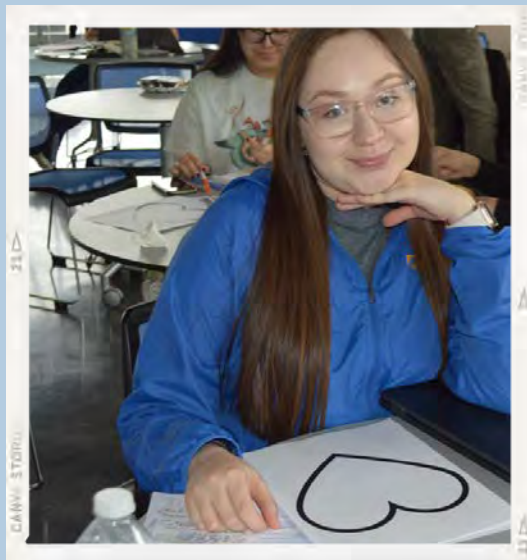
Simon Avila was all smiles after his solo presentation.



Photographed from left to right: Jennifer Reyes-Zepeda and Mimi Crespo



Emily Sosa creating a visual representation of a healthy relationship.



Jennifer Reyes- Zepeda brainstorming for her illustration.



Denise Torres Velasquez jotting down qualities of a healthy relationship.



OPEN HOUSE



Each semester, El Centro hosts an Open House inviting prospective students and their families to explore El Centro campus and learn more about El Centro Scholars program. Various university departments like the Student Counseling, Music, Proyecto Pa'lante, Health Services and our in-campus partners, Center for College Access and Success (CCAS) were present.

Visitors were provided with a tour, games, and the opportunity to learn about all the resources NEIU has to offer.

Be on the lookout for our next semester Open House!



Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education



Simon Avila, Santiago Teran, Brayan Cruz,
Lizett Galan, Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo,
Jennifer Reyes, Aaliyah Blacher,
Emily Sosa, Nancy Martinez



Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez as
afternoon keynote speaker.



The ILACHE Board

La Riqueza de la Raza: Using Collective Wisdom to Dismantle Colonial Practices



ILACHE Board, including El Centro former Director
Maria Luna-Duarte, honoring Aaron Cortes, Director of
TRIO Upward Bound Math and Science.



Simon Avila, Brayan Cruz, Rebeca Lamadrid-
Quevedo and Simon Teran inbetween sessions.



Simon Avila and Santiago Teran



COHORT FIELD TRIP

AT WHIRLEY BALL



El Centro Scholars and staff took a trip to WhirlyBall Chicago for an end-of-semester celebration retreat.



Steve Hernandez, Santiago Terran & Camilo Lais

Guadalupe Alvarado, Cristina Manuel & Emily Gallardo.

Brayan Cruz, Simon Avila, Steve Hernandez, Santiago Terran & Camilo Lais



Nancy Martinez, Aaliyah Blacher, Emily Sosa, and Denise Torres Velasquez

Jennifer Reyes-Zepeda on her final

Jennifer Reyes-Zepeda and Mimi Crespo.

CONVERSACIÓN DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR



Quintiliano Rios Perez (Student Affairs), Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo, Denise Torres- Velasquez, and Dr. Rosita Lopez (El Centro Advisory Board).



Conversations de Educacion Superior was initiated by Interim Director Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo. The community was invited to a Spanish presentation to learn about pathways to further their education.

SHENIX PRE-LAUNCH BRUNCH EVENT



SHENIX® is an innovation financial company built by Latinas/x providing culturally financial services to the Latina/x community for social and economic transformation. On April 1, 2023, SHENIX hosted a brunch at El Centro and two powerful discussion panels with powerful Latina leaders, like SHENIX CEO & Founder, Olga Camargo.

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. The El Centro
Newsletter is
edited by Lizett Galan.**

