

VOL. 5 | FALL 2022

# 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

- February 6th:** ChicagoCHEC applications due
- February 7th:** MARC seminar speaker Dr. Benjamin Smarr, UCSD
- February 24th and 25th:** Illinois Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Conference
- April 21st:** Joy and Wellness Kickball Tournament



### Attention, Alumni!

Please take our survey, linked above, to help us improve our program.

**Coming from a low-income household, the Drachler Scholarship showed me that I'm *not* limited by financial circumstances.**



**Jason Block  
2022 recipient**

Thank you for all your contributions to Giving Tuesday! You helped us raise over \$1700 dollars, which go directly to our Drachler Scholarship Fund. This fund supports deserving students with financial need. It's not too late to give! No gift is too small!

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



## Undergraduate Student Spotlight



**Odalis Curzio** is completing her second Bachelor's degree in Biology at NEIU.

### Why did you choose NEIU?

I had initially completed my first bachelors in Spanish with a minor in Latino Studies, and decided to come back to NEIU to complete my second bachelor's degree in Biology. I had always wanted to study science, but never got to do it. Returning to NEIU gave me the chance to fulfill that wish. It has been such a great experience. I have enjoyed the courses I took. In addition, I was

presented with opportunities that I would not have known otherwise. I recently got an internship opportunity at the USDA in the summer of 2022. I worked on how different bacterial endophyte traits would affect wheat plant traits. I presented my work at the NEIU symposium and at the SACNAS conference. I was also sponsored to attend to the HACU conference, during which I got to meet and spend time with President Gibson and learned a lot from her as well. I am currently a learning assistant for General Biology I, with Dr. Mungre. Thanks to these opportunities, I have grown as a person and have been able to network with people all over the country.

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

I chose Biology as a major because I have always been interested in my science. I did

not do well academically in my earlier college years, but then I decided to return to school and give it one last try before giving up. Coming back to school has been the best decision of my life and I am thankful for all the help and support I got from NEIU that has contributed to my education.

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

After graduation, I hope to attend dental school. My goal is to become a dentist and go on to specialize in a field of dentistry. I enjoy helping people and hope to continue doing this through the dental field.

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

My favorite thing about science is that it is always evolving. You can continue learning new scientific developments throughout life. Science is everywhere and affects us in our daily lives every day. Science is just amazing!

## Faculty/Staff Spotlight: **Martha Lopez-Salazar**



**Martha Lopez-Salazar** is the naturalist and manager of Gensburg-Markham Prairie (GMP).

### What is your favorite part about working at the prairie?

My favorite part about working at the prairie is that I constantly get to have experiences with nature. One day I can see a crayfish swim by my feet and another, I can see a white fringed orchid in full bloom, or hear king birds sing. I sometimes get to share these experiences with other people and those moments are extra special.

### What is a typical day like for you?

My days depend on the season, but I usually arrive at the office and the first thing I do is check my email, like many folks. I then look at what projects I am currently working on and decide on what to do next. Currently in the winter, I am either doing seed research or spreading seed at GMP.

### What is your vision for the prairie?

My vision for Gensburg-Markham Prairie is to increase the number of visitors including members of the NEIU community, patrons,

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researchers, and community members alike. GMP is such a special place and this beauty should be enjoyed by more people. In terms of ecological restoration, my vision is to continue to improve and maintain the high quality areas.

### What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of the job is that everyday is different. I have not been bored once, because there is so much to do and so much to learn.

### What are you currently reading?

I have been spending a lot of time looking at the "Lake County Seed Collection Guide" by Kelly Schultz & Dale Shields.

### What else do you want students to know about you?

Students should know that I am easy to get in contact with and I am always willing to talk to them if they would like to know about my career journey or about what I do at GMP.

## Positive Feedback Loops

**Dr. Pam Geddes** was awarded the Audrey Reynolds Distinguished Teaching award!

**Dr. Aaron Schirmer** was awarded the Bernard J. Brommel Distinguished Research Professor award!

**Biology students** gave excellent talks and posters at the 15th Annual SCSE Student Research Symposium this October!

Congratulations to **Jon Scott-Haines** and **Sarai Guzman Vela** for winning the Drachler Scholarship this semester!

**Isaiah Thomas** and **Christian Torres** presented at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists in Anaheim, California!

35 students attended the SACNAS conference in Puerto Rico and 3 biology students presented posters!

The Fall plant sale raised over \$2,000 to support the greenhouse! Thank you to all the volunteers who helped out, and to the NEIU community for supporting!

## Applications for the 2023 Summer ChicagoCHEC Fellows Program are open!

Applications are due February 6, 2023 and can be found on the ChicagoCHEC website. Fellows will spend the summer doing research rotations and attending seminars from leading researchers!

## Applications for Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC)

Intend to pursue a doctoral degree in biomedical and/or behavioral research? Check out MARC which provides two years of financial, academic, career and personal support for undergraduates in their junior and senior years!

Applications are due March 1st. For more information on our program, contact [marc@neiu.edu](mailto:marc@neiu.edu).

## December Graduates

We are so proud of you!

### Biology Majors

Kristine Abbo  
Jessica Alvarez  
Monica Acuapina  
Farheen Banu  
Gabriel Elia  
Christian Fajardo  
Danielle Freese  
Jared Gattis  
Yashira Gonzalez

Alexander Grezlik  
Laura Hernandez  
Zoe Hickey  
Vanessa Huitron  
Griffin Johnson  
Adam Kochari  
Jasmin Lopez  
Jocelyn Mayen  
Haider Mehdi  
Angel Menes Ronces  
Natalia Morales

Carmen Quito  
Syedunnisa Reza  
Amber Rojas  
Goravjit Saluja  
Patrick Sanchez  
Kayla Tannehill  
Talin Tawer  
Lorenz Villanosa  
Nicole Youkhanna

### Biology Minors

George Maku  
Amani Mansi

### Biology Masters

Rama Abu Alkheir

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



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