

# CUSP

## College Undergraduate Scholars Program

# UPDATES

## From the Dean

Dear College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Community,

We hope these greetings find you beating the heat, enjoying the summer, and living the high life!

Sorry for interrupting summer, but we couldn't resist giving you this important update and extending an invitation to you to join us in our important initiative.

Our campaign to fund our [College Undergraduate Scholars Program \(CUSP\)](#) and to support our students on the CUSP of success has really been gaining momentum, so we wanted to be sure to share the news with you and offer ways for you to participate to keep the momentum going.

To date, folks just like you have donated about \$22,000 or 15% of our overall goal of \$150,000 by the end of 2024, with donations flooding in from all kinds of people—faculty, staff, family, friends, external donors who just want to support meaningful work, and more—and in all sizes, from \$5 to \$5,000. We love it. No donation is too small and, conversely, no donation is too large!

This money, by funding the scholarly efforts of students across the areas of the College (Fine Arts, Humanities, Social & Behavioral Sciences, and Physical & Natural Sciences), directly supports the hallmark CAS undergraduate experiences we know launch our students to rewarding careers, admissions to top graduate programs, and overall successful and impactful lives in which they make meaningful contributions to our world. Whether attending and presenting their work at national conferences where they can interact with top scholars in their field or working closely with our world-class faculty to conduct research or hone their crafts, these experiences—often reserved for doctoral students at top universities—are transformational for our students.

While folks sometimes mistakenly think that because we are a state institution we are flush with money, the truth is that we need your help to support and prepare our students optimally and in the way they deserve.

So, we are excited by the generosity and support we've enjoyed thus far in our campaign and hope to keep the momentum not just going BUT GROWING!

The CAS Deans and their families have made initial donations totaling over 3% of our goal, so we're putting our monies where our mouths are and inviting you to climb on board. This is an all-hands-on-deck effort!

Read below to get a sense of how our donors understand the importance of this mission and why they give, to hear from students why the experiences we support are so critical to their success, and to learn how you can participate and support this mission whether you have the wherewithal to [donate](#) or not!



## Golden Eagles Take Flight! Join us as we cheer on The Sky for NEIU Night!

We are pleased to announce a partnership between NEIU/College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and The Chicago Sky [Sky Cares Foundation](#)

Join NEIU at Wintrust Arena for **NEIU Night** as **The Sky** takes on The Phoenix Mercury during Hispanic Heritage Night. The game is scheduled for Sunday, September 15th at 5:00.

### Here's the exciting offer:

- Enjoy a Sky WNBA game with fellow NEIU fans! We will sit together and cheer! We will sit together and cheer The Sky on to victory in true Golden Eagle style
- Support our NEIU student scientists as they participate in a "Sky-ence Fair" on the concourse. Seriously, how cool is that!?!?
- Provide funds for the NEIU CAS College Undergraduate Scholars Program (CUSP).

### Donation Packages:\*

- \$150 - 1 ticket
- \$250 - 2 tickets
- \$325- 3 tickets
- \$400- 4 tickets

\*You must donate by August 15th in order to be eligible for The Sky tickets; 100% of all donations will be applied to The CAS CUSP fund. Anyone who makes a donation between now and August 15th will be emailed with additional information about receiving their tickets.

Don't miss out! Donate today and support a great cause! You'll have a victory on and off the court by supporting The Sky and NEU students in one shot!



## CUSP will help support students such as alumna Michele



"My research experience at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) was a transformative journey that allowed me to delve into the complexities of our world and directly contribute to community well-being. As a member of the Latine community, we are substantially underrepresented in STEM, making up only 7% of doctorate degrees earners (NSF, 2017). NEIU's inclusive environment was not just empowering—it was pivotal. The university's support for diverse backgrounds and circumstances enabled me and my peers to thrive.

At NEIU, research meant more than academic exploration; it involved testing hypotheses and addressing real-world challenges, underscoring the university's belief in our potential regardless of our past or socio-economic status or what high school we went to. This support was crucial for my growth and contributions to psychology. It's an investment in a society enriched by the intellectual contributions of all its members. I stand as proof of the impact such mentorship can have, starting my own doctorate journey last fall at NYU, an achievement made possible through the guidance of NEIU's psychology department and researchers. This commitment to supporting student research at NEIU reflects a dedication to a more inclusive, innovative future and is essential to support the next generation of thinkers and researchers."

Michele Ocana  
NEIU Alum/NYU Doctorate Candidate

## How can you participate? Let's count the ways...

We know lots of you in our community want to give to support our mission. Donors often tell us they wish they could give more.

The good news is there are so many ways you can give and support this campaign beyond writing a check; and there are even many ways, beyond a one-time donation, to give financially to maximize your contribution.

One of our goals with this campaign is to create a broad participatory fundraising community to generate ongoing and sustainable support for all of our programs in the CAS to provide these transformational experiences for our students. To that end, we are encouraging our faculty, staff, students, and community members to consider involving themselves in a number of ways. For example:

Whether or not you contribute financially, you can commit to helping raise funds. It's quite easy.

1. Get on social media and share the story of the NEIU student as you know it and the importance of the work we do at NEIU, letting your audience know the cause you are raising funds for and why it's important to you.
2. Work with others to develop your own network or fundraising team—other alumni you keep in touch with, fellow students, retirees, friends of the CAS, etc.
3. Think about organizations or businesses with whom you, friends, or family have relationships or connections and who might have an interest in supporting research, scholarship, or creative activities in a particular field or discipline.
4. Friends, families, and acquaintances give to causes because YOU CARE about them. The CAS recently received a \$5,000 donation from a family member of an NEIU community member.
5. If you did contribute a one-time donation (thank you!), please consider ways you might maximize your giving. If, for example, you can manage a one-time \$50 donation, perhaps you could make a \$10 or \$20 monthly donation instead, providing ongoing and stable support in a way you might not even miss.

In a nutshell, our goal is to create a collective culture of support for and commitment to our mission. With each of us giving a little bit in an ongoing way and keeping the communities we each inhabit aware of NEIU and our needs and the social benefits our graduates provide, we can develop a strong fiscal foundation and positive community presence to support our students and our work.

## Why did Dr. Miodragovic decide to support CUSP?



"Nothing makes me happier than to see our CAS students succeed. CAS' long tradition of engaging undergraduate students in research early on changed the lives and perspectives of our students on their career path and role in the world. I looked up to my mother, who had donated to other people all her life. I am inspired to donate to CUSP because more students can research, attend conferences, and be more competitive when applying to graduate schools or jobs."

Denana Miodragovic, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, Chemistry

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## THE ONE-PERCENTER YOU WANT TO BE!

When the CAS Deans set the goal for the CUSP campaign, we thought the \$150,000 was doable and only modestly ambitious, albeit historically ambitious. If one hundred of our committed community members committed either to donating or raising \$1500 (or a combination of both), we'd reach our goal in a snap.

We called one of our devoted alums, Manny Cruz (English, 2009), to see what he thought about the campaign and the goal. Manny was repairing planes in Iraq before attending NEIU, and he will tell you that it is because of his English degree and writing skills that have enabled him to ascend to the position of Senior Technical Advisor in the General Aviation and Commercial Division of the FAA. He understands the NEIU student and the way the CAS seeks to prepare them for success.

Because of this understanding, Manny embraced the mission and goal of the campaign.

Moreover, **HE IMMEDIATELY DONATED THE FIRST ONE PERCENT!**

Can you commit to donating one percent over time? Can you commit to raising one percent over the next 6 months? Can you commit to half a percent?



## Why did Cassandra decide to support CUSP?



"NEIU has afforded me so many amazing opportunities in my academic and professional career. I donated to the College Undergraduate Scholars Program so that other students can also have the chance to participate in their own research and creative projects.

As a graduate student in the College of Arts and Sciences, I was able to take part in many research and grant-funded projects because of the faculty's hard work and fundraising. From my experience, I know how important research is for learning and honing those skills that have been introduced in the classroom. These projects can be out of reach financially for our students.

Many students I work with wouldn't be able to participate in conferences, seminars, and other projects easily without the supplemental or full funding provided by programs like CUSP. These scholarship opportunities are so important. I truly believe in this wonderful program provided by the College of Arts and Sciences and I look forward to seeing the future projects and papers that will come from the students who will participate in the program.

NEIU has been incredibly meaningful to me and this is my way of giving back and supporting the institution that has made a difference in my life."

Cassandra Martinez  
Office Administrator, Mathematics

## The Bank of America Half Marathon



The CAS Deans and a community of supporters volunteered at the Bank of America Half Marathon on Sunday, June 9th. We were able to support the community, showcase our CAS/NEIU spirit and hand out water and Nuun to those competing in the half marathon. This event also allowed us to earn a little money toward our fundraising effort--totally worth the 3:30 am alarm. We love a win-win!