

# CAS CONNECTIONS

*Fall Term | Issue 12 | December 19, 2024*

## *From the Dean*

Greetings CAS community,

As we head into the holidays, I simply want to wish you all a happy season with your friends and family, on behalf of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The end of the year always brings a lot of special times and moments that bring to the forefront all that I value and love about Northeastern, our students, and the work we do collectively among our faculty, staff, and administration to educate people and improve life for everybody in this corner of the state.

As we close out CAS Connections for 2024, I'll share a few end-of-the-year highlights.

Certainly, our commencement ceremony never ceases to be a thrill, along with the many other ceremonies we have at this time to celebrate our students' achievements. In these ceremonies, the point of all the work of our students and faculty becomes wonderfully evident. As Interim Dean, I am especially careful to cherish my moments on stage with our students as they receive their diplomas and enjoy their moment in the sun.

Also, here at Northeastern, you may know, many of our programs and Colleges have year-end parties as the semester winds down to celebrate the holidays. And our President, of course, treats the NEIU community to a wonderful holiday meal and celebration. Seeing so many of my good colleagues in these more relaxed settings is always gratifying and reinforces the powerful and close-knit community that Northeastern is and that makes us such a wonderful learning and teaching environment, enabling our students to have meaningful and supportive relationships with our caring faculty.

And another year-end event that stands out is the production of *Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars* at the Stage Center Theatre earlier this month. This production was a collaboration between our theatre program and Teatro Vista, a Latina-led theatre company located in Jefferson Park. Teatro Vista was founded in 1990 to address the lack of opportunities for Latinx artists and other artists of color, and to explore the new work of Latinx writers. Just as with our collaboration with Silk Road Cultural Center last Spring in producing *Black Bear Island* at the Stage Center Theater, *Hundreds and Hundreds of Stars* featured professional actors from Teatro Vista's company along with our student actors. We have a profound sense of shared mission with Teatro Vista, and it was so gratifying to witness their deep delight in partnering with us.

Our mission is to serve this region in every way possible with the resources we have, so we encourage any community organization to reach out to us to explore how we can serve you or how we can partner. Indeed, the CAS Deans (Ken, Amanda, and Tim) had a great visit this week to Peterson Elementary School just down the block from us, and we brainstormed the many ways we could support their work and nurture their students' learning experiences.

In the spirit of the holidays, let us extend our good will to you all. As always, our doors are open to you!

All the best,  
Tim Libretti  
Interim Dean

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# STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

*Kevin Kelly | Chemistry*



## What are your career goals?

My immediate career goal is to work as an analytical chemist for the Stepan Company at their R&D facility in Northfield, IL. They don't know this yet. My overall career goal is to work as an analytical chemist, and to be good at it. Some analytical chem jobs are rewarding and engaging; others can be mind-numbingly repetitive. I figure the better I am at the work, the greater my chances of eventually landing one of the former.

Analytical chemistry is by nature somewhat tedious and exacting, so you'll never escape that. But I do like to solve physical problems, fix things, restore old tools, figure out cheaper ways to do things better, etc. I'm happiest when I'm MacGyvering. A job that incorporates some degree of that would be ideal.

## What do you like about NEIU so far?

Being an adult "2nd degree" student (with two young boys at home), the flexibility of the chemistry program at NEIU, and the helpful approach of the faculty are what make this feasible for me. A lot of chem programs have a set, rigid progression of classes, designed for traditional full-time college students. While I see the merits of that, it would be overwhelming in my situation.

The professors I've had at NEIU also strike a good balance between rigor and lenience. The physical sciences are not "Easy A" classes. If you get too accommodating, you're effectively no longer teaching Orgo or Physics. On the other hand, if your class is nothing more than a Gaussian weed-wacker, or the swimsuit-competition of an intelligence pageant, I would argue that the same holds true. The professors here put a lot of thought and care into getting this right.

I've also had the opportunity to do research with Dr. Brown-Xu on polymer recycling. It was rewarding, hands-on, and I learned a lot. She gave us about as much rope as you can give an undergrad working with halogenated solvents and delicate six-figure instruments.

## Is there anything else you'd like to share?

This course work has been more "intellectually satisfying" than I expected. For example, physics turned out to be mind-opening (if you can bear to bomb some tests). You finally understand why you've been taking all the trig and calc classes. You see all these pieces of knowledge that formally seemed disjointed and random start clicking together. Very cool.

Studying chemistry has also given me a less superficial understanding of what "science" is, in general (I'm using the Francis Bacon definition here). For example, the last time I thought about a hypothesis was in the 6th grade science fair. But if we take science as a "record of things we know" (about the physical nature of the universe), I now understand why a hypothesis is, ultimately, central to the process. Science is the gold-standard of human knowledge about the physical nature of universe because the currency of science is proof.

# FACULTY HIGHLIGHT



*Tim Barnett | English*

## Why did you choose English?

I study language, writing especially, because I think it is the most powerful force in the world. I love to see people expand their voices and to look at language and themselves in new ways. NEIU has been a great place for this kind of work because of its diversity and the unique voices our students bring to the world. I have learned more than I ever expected from them and from the great faculty and staff at our university.

## What do you like about NEIU?

I've been extremely lucky to be in a tenured position at NEIU. Tenure provides a lot of freedom to think and to explore the relationships between ideas and actions; it's given me the opportunity to try—and both succeed and fail at—many different sorts of projects and initiatives over my 27 years as a professor. It is one of the things all academics should have to guarantee academic independence.

## What part of your work are you most proud of?

Three of the things I am most proud of are working with the Prison+Neighborhood Arts/Education Project and Erica Meiners to bring a college degree program to Stateville Prison, helping to lead our faculty/staff union, and working in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Those experiences have reinforced for me the idea that education needs to be responsive to politics and social inequities. They have helped me think of schools as places for individual growth (however individual students might define that term) and as places to imagine and initiate social change, even as we also help students find the careers they need to make it in the world as it exists today. We know, though, that we don't have to settle for the world as it is, and that keeps our work exciting.

# ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT



*Sonia Hussain*

## What is your educational background?

I received my Bachelor of Arts in English with Honors at Northeastern Illinois University in May of 2020 and my Masters of Science in Higher Administration and Policy from Northwestern University in August of 2021.

## What are you doing now?

I am the Assistant Director of the Chicago Field Studies (CFS) Program, which is within the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern University. The CFS Program is an academic internship program where undergraduate students intern with various companies or organizations for up to 25+ hours a week. While students engage in their internships and contribute to project goals, they also attend a CFS course in the evening that aligns with their interests. In the CFS course students reflect on, discuss, and debate workplace issues that count toward their degree requirements. The CFS program helps students advance both academically and professionally!

In my role, I provide internship and career advising support to students in the CFS program which includes assisting them with interview preparation, resume development, job searches and much more! I also work on maintaining professional relationships with our employer partners and work on developing new partnerships. I offer valuable insights and strategies to both students and employers, ensuring the program's continued success.

## What are your best memories from NEIU?

One of my favorite memories from NEIU is participating in the University Honors Program (UHP). This experience was invaluable as it helped me discover qualities and strengths I didn't know I had. The UHP provided a supportive yet challenging academic environment that encouraged my learning and growth.

Through the program, I grew intellectually, gained practical experience, worked on a thesis, developed professional relationships with faculty members, presented at conferences, published my research, and much more. I had the opportunity to work on an honors thesis titled "First-Year Students in Summer Bridge: Improving Academic and Mathematical Success" alongside Dr. Francisco X. Gaytan, the Associate Provost for Student Success and Retention. I also presented my research during a 45-minute session at the 39th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience in Washington, D.C.

Completing a thesis and presenting at a major conference not only helped me gain admission to my graduate program at Northwestern University but also impressed potential employers during my job search. The UHP is a fantastic program at NEIU, and I highly recommend that students apply!

## Do you have any advice for current students?

My best advice for current students is to understand that many career paths are not linear. Your experiences and involvement will help you discover your passions and interests, guiding you toward your long-term career. Everyone's journey is unique in its own way, so try to make the most out of your various experiences.

Take advantage of the numerous resources available at NEIU; participate in internships, gain work experience, join the University Honors Program, present your work at conferences, and meet with your professors during office hours to build mentoring relationships. The more you get involved, gain experiences, and develop professional relationships, the better you will be at finding and achieving your dream career path.

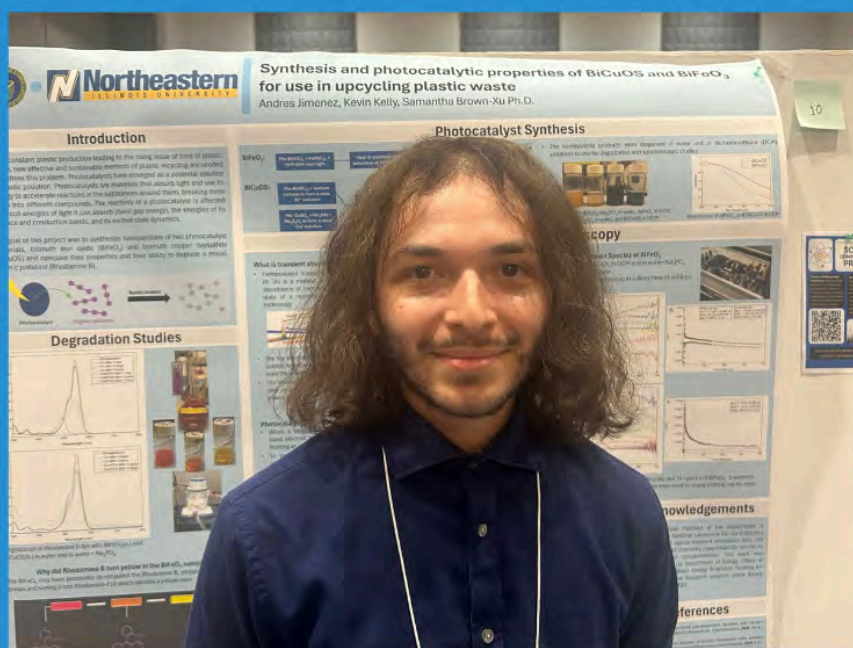
## Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Never allow challenges and set-backs to discourage you from achieving your dreams. Rejection is only redirection!

# CUSP STUDENT FEATURE

The College of Arts and Sciences aims to raise \$150,000 for the College Undergraduate Scholars Program (CUSP). As a bonus, if we take in another \$7,500 by the end of year, we have a donor who will pledge an additional \$5,000!

This program will support student research and creative opportunities that are vital to student success. But don't just take it from us—see what one of our students has to say about their CAS-funded experience:



*Andres Jimenez - Biology*

“The research that I conducted over the summer introduced me to new concepts and solidified my passion for research. It was great to work with Dr. Brown-Xu and Kevin Kelly to complete our projects, and it was also a great experience to be able to visit Argonne National Laboratory to run some of our tests. The work that I did felt very fulfilling as I was contributing to something important to me, which is finding a solution to plastic pollution.

Conducting research over the summer gave me valuable experience in working in a lab and reading scientific literature. It also allowed me to present my research at the SCSE symposium and the SACNAS Conference. These opportunities will be greatly valuable as I can learn about other research and improve my public speaking and science communication skills.”

[Click here to support students like Andres!](#)

# SCSE

## *Science Communication Day*



Five NEIU students—Paulina Garcia, Sana Habiya, LaWannah Boyden, Zubia Zainab, and Noel Bosco—participated in the Science Communication Project over the Fall semester where they prepared projects, received mentorship, and attended workshops on how to communicate science topics. On December 7th, they hosted their first event at the Budlong Public Library where they connected with the local community and shared many key science concepts with the public.

This group is led by the Student Center for Science Engagement STEM Advisor Luke Devereux and Biology faculty member Dr. Beth Reinke. The program will continue in the spring and students will receive a stipend for participation thanks to the ARCOS grant. If you have questions or are interested please contact [L-Devereux@neiu.edu](mailto:L-Devereux@neiu.edu).

If you see these students around, congratulate them on their great work as scientists and community members!

# CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!



On Sunday, December 15th, 2024, NEIU held its fall commencement ceremony. Among those to walk were many accomplished College of Arts and Sciences graduates who will now join the ranks of our network of successful alumni. We in the CAS would like to congratulate these graduates on their dedication, perseverance, and success as they take these next great steps in their journey.

And graduates, as you move on from NEIU, don't forget to take the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment's graduation exit survey, open now through January 3rd. This survey will help the IRA understand your satisfaction with your major programs and give us valuable information about your post-graduation plans.

Once again, congratulations!

[Click here to take the exit survey](#)



# GIVING TUESDAY

To our community: thank you, thank you, thank you!  
Because of you, our Giving Tuesday campaign was a HUGE success!

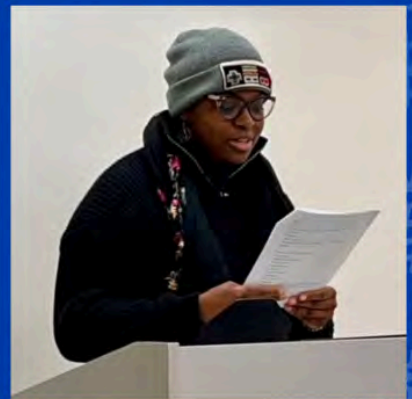
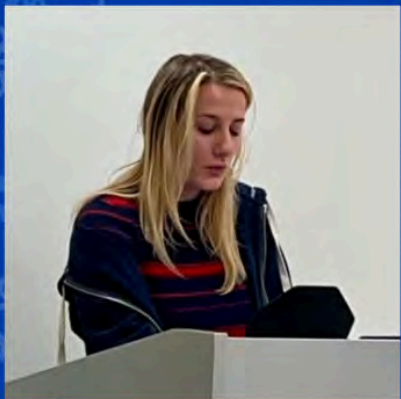
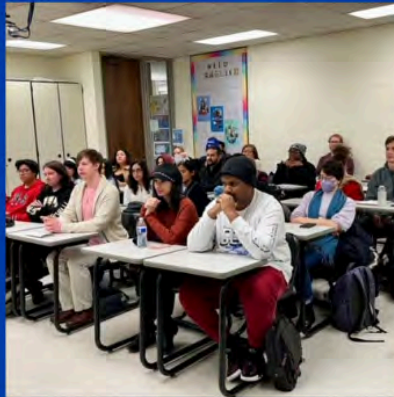
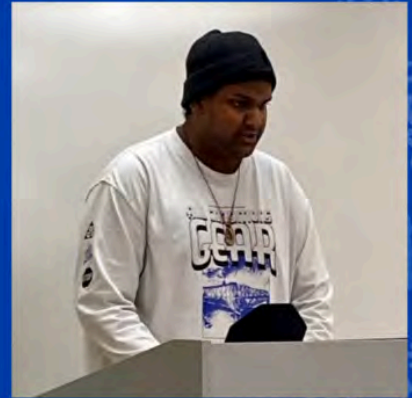
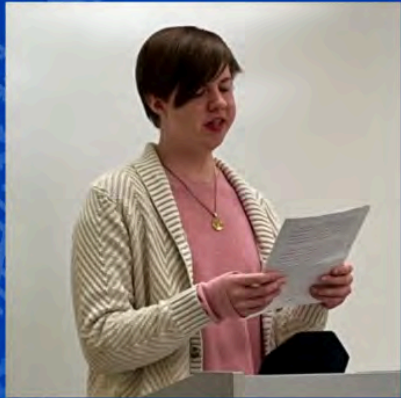
We exceeded our \$5,000 goal and raised \$7,521.09! This was a recording-breaking day in the CAS and we are delighted and honored that you see the value in investing in NEIU students. Thank you so much for your support and belief in the mission.

If you missed #GivingTuesday, you're not too late! We are still raising money for our College Undergraduate Scholars Program (CUSP). There's still time to maximize your gift—if we take in another \$7,500 by the end of year, we have a donor who will pledge an additional \$5,000! Click the link below to learn more and support our cause.

With so much gratitude and on behalf of our students, we thank you!

[Learn more](#)

# THE 82: *Student Edition*



The 82 is the creative writing minor's reading series, featuring distinguished Chicago writers of all genres, Northeastern faculty writers, and Northeastern student writers. The series hosts four to six events per academic year, and is named after the CTA's Kimball bus line, which gets many Chicagoans to our Main Campus and El Centro locations.

Every term, the series includes a special Student Edition, which is open to writers making work within NEIU's creative writing classes. This term's event was a huge success! Thank you to everyone who attended, and great job to every one who read their work.

# UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE CAS

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Chicago River Student Congress

Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025 • Northeastern Illinois University

**Free Food. Free T-Shirt. Live Animals.**

Join other like-minded students to celebrate the Chicago-Calumet River system. Discover its role as a living scientific laboratory and source of inspiration. Learn about college preparedness and career planning. Explore volunteer opportunities and jobs in the environment. Register to attend, present a workshop, display, poetry or river artwork!

**Registration is FREE!**

[chicagoriver.org/education/student-congress](http://chicagoriver.org/education/student-congress)



Friends of the Chicago River



# ADD SUSTAINABILITY, GEOGRAPHY, AND MAPPING TO YOUR RESUME SKILLS



**Enroll in these Spring  
2025 Classes!**  
Open to all majors!



**GES 374 Research Methods:**

Hybrid M 7:05-9:45pm  
(conduct a social science research project)

**GES 345 Medical Geography:**

Hybrid W 7:05-9:45pm  
(spatial / ecologic aspects of disease)

**GES 350 Climate Change: International Policy and Politics:**

Hybrid T & TH 1:40-2:55pm  
\*engaged learning boundary crossing\*  
(climate policy, mitigation, adaptation)

**GES 308 Conservation Psychology:**

Hybrid T & TH 12:15-1:30pm  
\*engaged learning boundary crossing\*  
(env. values, attitudes, behavior)

**GES 359 Environmental Planning:**

TH 7:05-9:45pm  
(land use, resource planning, tools for ecologically-sound planning)

**GES 391 Intro to GIS:**

Hybrid T 7:05-9:45pm  
\*engaged learning boundary crossing\*  
(mapping data, research, display)

**GES 360 Environmental Justice and Activism:**

Hybrid Fridays 9-11:50am  
(equity, grassroots action, organizing)

**GES 328 Wildlife Resource**

**Management:** Saturday 9-11:15am  
(values, conservation principles, policy)

**GES 337 Cultural Geography:**

Online  
(cultural landscape of various world regions)

**GES 390 Remote Sensing and Digital**

**Image Processing:** Online  
(remotely detected data methods / interpretation)

NEED HELP? [GES@NEIU.EDU](mailto:GES@NEIU.EDU)



# NOW MORE THAN EVER!

## M.A. in TESOL at NEIU

- 12 courses (36 credit hours)
- Provides students with an understanding of the nature of language, culture, instruction, assessment, professionalism, and their interrelationships.



- Impact the lives of others at home and abroad.
- Career opportunities: PreK-12 public and private schools, college ESL instruction, international teaching, program administration and more!

 **Northeastern**  
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

TESOL



Fill out a short survey for more information!

# the KF Tuition Scholarships



Apply now for the academic  
year 2025/26

DEADLINE: February 17, 2025

Apply today for the Kosciuszko Foundation Tuition Scholarships!

The KF Tuition Scholarships support American students of Polish descent pursuing full-time undergraduate and graduate studies at colleges and universities in the United States and English Schools of Medicine in Poland.

Scholarships ranging from **\$1,000 to \$12,000** are awarded on a competitive basis for one academic year.

Funding is for full-time studies. Scholarships are for the Fall 2025 - Spring 2026 academic year. All fields and majors are eligible.

Deadline for application and supporting materials: February 17, 2025

[Click here for more information](#)

# Apply for the **SUMMER MERIT SCHOLARSHIP**

**Applications are due February 1st, 2025**

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a limited number of Merit Tuition Scholarships for interested and deserving undergraduates (Second Bachelor's candidates are not eligible) within the College of Arts and Sciences. **These scholarships are generally granted for three to six credit hours and students *must* be enrolled at least half-time.** Scholarships will be granted on the basis of the student's intended major, status, intended Career/Educational Goals, transcripts and/or ACT/SAT scores, and letter of recommendation.

**To be considered for selection, applicants must meet the following criteria:**

- Transfer and NEIU continuing students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.25.
- Students who have earned 45 credit hours at NEIU must be declared majors in the College of Arts and Sciences. Transfer students with over 45 total hours must declare their major in the College of Arts and Sciences by their second semester at NEIU.
- Entering Freshmen must be in the top 15% of their graduating class or have a minimum ACT score of 24 or SAT of 1110.

**Applicants must submit a complete application including:**

- The name and email address of a faculty member who has agreed to complete a faculty recommendation form.

This award may be withdrawn in instances of substantiated academic misconduct or other violations of University standards pertaining to proper student conduct.

**Application Deadlines:**

- **Fall:** May 15
- **Spring:** October 1
- **Summer:** February 1

*The College Merit Tuition Scholarship Committee will review all applications and notify applicants approximately one month after the application deadline. Incomplete applications will not be considered.*

*Awards to prospective and declared majors in the College of Arts and Sciences are highly competitive with the College intent on awarding to the most deserving students.*

[Click here to learn more](#)

*Donate to*

# CUSP

## What is CUSP?

CUSP stands for College Undergraduate Scholars Program. The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) is raising money to provide students with valuable research and creative opportunities they would not otherwise have. We empower students on the CUSP of success!

## What does the CUSP do?

Each year, the College of Arts and Sciences funds dozens of student-faculty research projects and creative endeavors and sends our students to national conferences and exhibitions to present their work. Our students routinely win awards at these events, receiving recognition for their work and standing out from students from all over the nation.

## What's the benefit?

These research and creative opportunities build confidence and capacity in our students and help them realize they can positively impact the world through the learning they are doing with College of Arts and Sciences faculty.

## Why donate?

We want to create a sustainable funding stream to support student research projects, creative endeavors, student conference and exhibition travel, and more. With enough support, we can fund any project a student can dream up! Plus, if we can raise another \$7,500 by the end of the year, we have an anonymous donor who will pledge \$5,000!

[Learn more about CUSP here](#)

[Donate here!](#)



# JOIN OUR FUNDRAISING TEAM

You don't have to donate to help us meet our goal of raising \$150,000 to support the meaningful research and creative activities experiences for our students that we know launch them to success.

**If we take in another \$7,500 by the end of year, we have a donor who will pledge an additional \$5,000!**

You can simply join our fundraising team and help spread the story and attract donors with our easy-to-use CUSP fundraising toolkit, which gives tips on using social media to share the story and provides student testimonials to share with your audiences. **Our students are the best advocates in explaining why supporting them is a great return on investment!**

Let's do this! If we get all of you sharing our student stories and news of our campaign, **we can easily reach our goal with everybody just raising a little bit!** The toolkit explains it all and shows just how easy it is to help out.

**So join the CUSP Campaign!**

[Click here to access our fundraising toolkit!](#)

# CONTACTS

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Pre-Professional Advising information

CAS Website

FOLLOW US ON  
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