

CAS CONNECTIONS

Spring Term / Issue 13 / January 24, 2025

FROM THE DEAN

Dear CAS Community,

First, let me welcome all of our new students starting with us this Spring 2025 semester and welcome back our continuing students. We are excited that you're here giving us the opportunity to work with you and help you achieve your goals. We like to think you made the right choice in enrolling at NEIU! To our friends and supporters, we are also excited to have you as part of our growing community! It feels like it's been a while since we in the CAS have been in touch with you, and I hope all of you in our community were able to experience some measure of peace and joy with your families and friends over the winter break.

It feels like quite a bit has happened in our world since our last CAS Connections. The world has literally been on fire, the nation inaugurated a new but former president, the globe is embroiled in wars and turbulence... As a nation and people, we certainly face challenges. I am grateful for the College of Arts and Sciences—and NEIU overall—because it serves as a powerful institutional vehicle that enables us who work here to address these challenges and support our students and the communities we serve as we think through, navigate, and act to work through the issues we face.

Our 30-plus programs in the CAS are all about understanding the world in which we live with the goal of transforming the world into the most humane and habitable place we can make it by addressing our most pressing issues and confronting the forces that are less than life-affirming.

As we enter this new moment, we want to assure students that NEIU is not just here to serve your academic needs but that we offer resources to support you as whole human beings. If you ever feel overwhelmed or unsure of your next steps, please know that you're not alone. The CAS Dean's Office (BBH 158) is here to help. Don't hesitate to reach out to me or my colleagues for guidance and support.

I was struck recently by the sermon Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde delivered last Tuesday during a prayer service for the Presidential Inauguration. She directly addressed the President, calling on him to exercise mercy and compassion toward the “people in our country who are scared now,” making specific reference to LGBTQ people and immigrants, two populations especially targeted by this administration's announced agenda and policies.

I want to assure our students and broader community that no matter which way the political winds shift, the College of Arts and Sciences remains committed to the university values of diversity and equity, meaning we serve and support all who come through our doors with the goal of cultivating each and every student's full potential and humanity in ways that benefit the individual student, obviously, but also our society overall. That is our mission as a regional comprehensive university, and that hasn't changed.

From our perspective, mercy and compassion aren't sufficient. We need to honor, celebrate, and support our LGBTQ and immigrant students, indeed all of our students, many of whom experience vulnerabilities in the world. When we help each person fully and freely develop themselves, we know we are also supporting the free and full development of our society as a whole.

Looking ahead this term, we are excited about some of our signature events this term that help us fulfill our mission and center our students' success. Here are just a few:

- We will host the [Chicago River Student Congress](#) at NEIU on Saturday, February 22. This event will bring nearly 500 visitors to our campus, with most being junior high and high school students (with their teachers and parents) who are beginning to explore college options. The 2025 theme is career-oriented: “Building for the Future.” This broad theme allows for connections to careers that improve health, promote environmental justice, or enhance environmental quality, in a wide variety of STEM, Social Science, Fine Arts, and Humanities disciplines.
- The week of March 3rd, we will host the 8th Annual [Women and Science Conference](#), focusing this year on incredible women in the field of computer science and featuring a Math Modeling workshop and Datathon Competition, career panels, plenary speakers, and more. On March 6, Technolochicas, a program that introduces young women to inspiring role models and STEM careers, will run a video game building workshop for middle and high school students. (Contact Tim Libretti, t-libretti@neiu.edu, if you work at a school and want your students to participate. Seats are limited!)
- On May 2nd, we will host our annual Professor John Al-Bazi Student Research and Creative Activities Symposium where our students showcase their research or share their creative work. High schools are welcome to have students attend. Just contact us for details. Again, space may be limited.
- We continue to work with the Chicago SkyCares Foundation and are planning a Leadership Conference with them for students interested in careers in the sports and entertainment industries. If you were unable to attend the Sky game with us last September, keep your eyes peeled as we are planning another night at a Sky game in September!

There's a world to win! Let's make it!

All the best,
Tim Libretti
Interim Dean

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STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

David Delgado
Social Work



What are your career goals?

My passion is geriatric care. I love interacting with and providing services to older adults, and my career will be a reflection of such. My goal is to earn an MSW, obtain an LCSW, and provide mental health services to older adults experiencing loss and grief. My experience in the field has taught me that the role of a social worker can vary based on the approach of care, and my approach is to see a human being before a client or their diagnosis. I plan on developing the skills necessary to provide therapeutic services within a clinical role in a community for older adults or a hospital, and I plan on beginning my career in a group home or government agency like IDPH or IDoA.

What do you like about NEIU so far?

What I like most about NEIU is the person centered education model used by faculty. Now, it could just be the social work department (I may say this with a slight bias but social workers are literally the best), but the instructors and professors truly care about the success of their students. When I am asked where I attend school, I start off by stating that I am not sponsored by NEIU, I then go on to praise the small class sizes, the diversity in the student body, and the mission of primarily providing education to Latinx transfer students.

Anything else we should know about you?

I enjoy going to the gym and getting in a good workout. I think that the discipline from keeping up with my health translates into my personal and professional life. I also love food, and I love to try new places, often in other cities and locations (mainly NY). I love listening to people's stories, and I believe the meaning of life revolves around the connections we make and the people we meet.

FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

*Dr. Chris Merchant
Psychology*



What are your research interests?

My research interests—like the wind—are ever-changing. At the moment, I am working on a study about people’s relationship to their religious/spiritual texts and their beliefs about climate change, supernatural causation, and other socio-political issues. This came from my previous research interests in identity development and social media engagement, which was subsequent to my graduate research training in suicide intervention among adolescents.

What is your favorite thing about NEIU?

The world we live in is constantly picking on people. I love that working here offers me a chance to help those people stand up for themselves. From incarcerated students, to undocumented students; Black, Latinx, disabled, queer, Palestinian, neurodivergent, and all of the working-class students. Being here lets me work and be in community with them in a way that is important to me.

What are your hobbies?

Plotting the overthrowing of our oligarchs. Also crafts. I dabble in woodworking, bookbinding, 3d printing, painting, collage... In truth I collect hobbies. I’ve got my eye on linocut printing for 2025.

Why did you choose an academic environment?

I originally saw myself as working primarily with data, but during graduate school I was required to do a teaching assistantship. Despite being at a larger institution, I found a lot of gratification in working closely with students from time to time. And I fell in love with the look on someone’s face when they get something they had been struggling with.

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT



*Diana Huizar
M.S. Political Science*

What was your undergraduate degree?

I earned a B.A. in Politics and Government from North Park University.

What are you doing now?

I serve as a Public Relations Specialist for the Secretary to the Board of Commissioners and the Forest Preserves of Cook County Government. In this role, I manage public-facing and inter-governmental communications, promote transparency and support fostering positive relationships between the county government and its constituents. Additionally, I collaborate with our archives team to find ways in which we can highlight and share valuable and interesting history with our constituents and beyond.

As a volunteer, I currently serve as a medical advocate for Our Resilience, a sexual assault crisis center, offering medical, legal, and mental health resources to survivors.

Additionally, I am an Illinois Master Naturalist Intern, I work on various projects throughout the Forest Preserves to restore protected natural areas such as prairies and woodlands.

What did you like about your time at NEIU?

When I started at NEIU, it was during the tail end of COVID. We still had to wear masks in class and sit apart from each other, which made normal interactions with students challenging to cultivate. I was initially worried about making others feel uncomfortable, as I wasn't sure how people had been impacted by COVID or how safe they felt on campus.

To overcome this, I decided to get more involved on campus and as result, I started working on campus as a tutor at the Learning Success Center and as an intern at IRAD in the library's lower level. My time there allowed me to connect with many students, faculty, and community members.

Through these experiences I have walked away with many beautiful friendships which I continue to nurture and consider a privilege to carry with me into the future. Tapping into the community at school completely transformed my experience there for the better and having that additional support system, and guaranteed laughs here and there was amazing during what was a very stressful time for me.

Do you have any advice for current students?

Inevitably, being a student comes with many stressors many times they are compounded, such as financial, mental, emotional, etc. It is very hard to balance school work with family, work, and other commitments you may have. You are not alone, many people around you are in that same boat. I encourage students to find faculty and other students to lean on, there are some absolutely incredible people on campus that genuinely care about students' well-being (I can attest to this!!). Identify those people who greet you with a smile, that are happy to see you and are investing in you, get to know them and cultivate those relationships. NEIU is so diverse in many ways, there are people there with great life stories and experience, tap into that! If you find yourself struggling, ask someone for help, help is always there!

Finally, a mandatory shoutout: the Learning Success Center is pretty great! They offer free tutoring to all students and are flexible with remote participation, all the tutors are also students (and they are pretty cool folks).

CUSP STUDENT FEATURE

The College of Arts and Sciences aims to raise \$150,000 for the College Undergraduate Scholars Program (CUSP).

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:



Sung Yoon
Physics and Computer Science

“I am grateful to SCSE for the opportunity to participate in the 16th Annual Student Research Symposium. It was a challenging yet fun experience that gave me a glimpse into the world of academic science. The support system (thank you Dr. Cantu, Laura, Luke and Agustina) and resources made available to student researchers ensured our success.

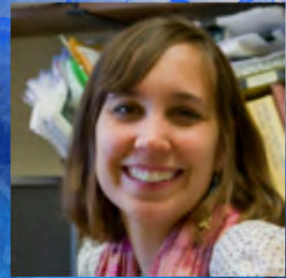
I thank Dr. Greg Anderson for inviting me to join the CROCUS Summer Research Program and for guiding my cohort throughout. I gained invaluable, first-hand experience in scientific endeavors such as participating in a journal club (where we learned to systematically read and understand research journals), delving into python programming and gaining access to EPA, DOE, Census Bureau, etc. datasets, and working with Argonne Nat'l Lab/U of I/UIC/Valpo scientists in the Urban Canyon Field Campaign. I had no idea how enriching this experience would be, and it all started with taking a chance on an invitation.

I urge my fellow students to take a chance on such invitations - you'll find them everywhere on campus if you're willing to look/listen/ask. I almost didn't due to work and other obligations, and it was challenging at times, but it was so worth it in the end, and every step of the way throughout.”

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

CONGRATULATIONS

Olivia Cronk



Congratulations to Olivia Cronk, instructor in English and creative writing, for being featured twice on the Poetry Foundation's 2024 Staff Picks for her new book, *Gwenda, Rodney*. One mention describes it as “a soap opera family drama in all its dizzying junk-drawer glamor. Most certainly a wild ride.”

The other mention goes further into detail, giving the following review: “Olivia Cronk's *Gwenda, Rodney* is a rare blend of poetry and narrative that explores themes of art and the act of reading. Often described as a ‘poetry novel,’ *Gwenda, Rodney* draws inspiration from the beauty of theater, horror films, and paintings, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. With its vivid imagery and haunting style, the work captures the experience of being immersed in art and emotion. This poetry book is an intriguing and thought-provoking read for those who appreciate beautiful, experimental writing. *Gwenda, Rodney* was a captivating read and is one of my favorite poetry books of 2024.”

Her novel was also featured on the list “‘Cheers to the Weirdos! Trinity’: Jesi Bender Presents a Heavy Feather Favorites List for 2024” twice. Those reviews can be read here.

Congratulations Olivia on this achievement!

CONGRATULATIONS

Dr. Mateo Farzaneh



Congratulations to Dr. Mateo Farzaneh for being selected to serve on the American Historical Association's Committee on International Historical Activities for a full term (2025-28). The five member committee is tasked to "help carry out the international relations of the AHA, including its relation with the International Committee of Historical Sciences," as part of the Research Division of the AHA.

Dr. Farzaneh is a professor in and Chair of the History Department, Chair of the Political Science Department, and Principal of The Mossadegh Initiative at NEIU.

Congratulations to Associate Professor of Mathematics Dr. Joseph Hibdon for being featured by the American Mathematical Society in their MEET a Mathematician collection! See their poster or visit their site below.

There's no one right way to being a mathematician. Whenever you do math you are a mathematician in that moment.



Dr. silvana amethyst

Work and engage with people that accept you for who you are and it will make your math a lot better!



Dr. Joseph Hibdon



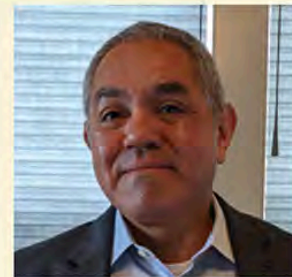
Dr. Sami Assaf

The greatest gift that you can give to mathematics is [...] your unique way of solving problems.



"MEET a Mathematician!" is a collection of video interviews with mathematicians.

The mission of MEET a Mathematician is to share stories of mathematicians from different backgrounds, especially from historically excluded groups, with the aim of introducing students to role models and fostering a sense of community.



Dr. Herbert Medina

Mathematics is not a solitary endeavor. It's a team effort!



Dr. Chad Topaz

With the right support and a determined spirit, everyone has the capability to master mathematics and harness its power to serve the greater good.

Watch our interviews at
www.meetamathematician.com
or scan below



Dr. Tarik Aougab

You have control over your own destiny. You can decide what it is that you want to do.

Share your knowledge and wisdom. You never know who [...] needs to hear what you have to say.



Dr. Keisha Cook



Dr. Ngoc Tran

Great math is inseparable from play. Just enjoy playing with math.



Visit meetamathematician.com

Visit the website here

The background is a vibrant blue watercolor wash, transitioning from a darker, almost blackish-blue on the left to a lighter, more saturated blue on the right. The texture is soft and painterly, with some darker spots and a few small white specks scattered throughout, particularly on the right side.

*UPCOMING EVENTS
IN THE CAS*



Stage Center Theater auditions, Spring 2025

[Stage Center Theatre](#) (SCT) is excited to hold auditions for our upcoming Spring 2025 production, “Witch” by Jen Silverman and directed by [Communication, Media and Theatre](#) (CMT) faculty member Dan Wirth. We are so excited to produce such an impactful work that originated here in Chicago on our stage!

SCT welcomes all actors from our University community from all majors and all experience levels to participate in all of our productions. Join us in telling these amazing stories this spring and make SCT your creative home! Additionally, actors and collaborators can engage in SCT productions for credit!

Audition dates, times and remote options

Please note: While walk-ins are welcome, we **highly** encourage you to make an appointment for in-person auditions or notify us to submit a recorded self-tape, which is also a great option if you can't join us in person. You can choose the audition option that works best for you.

In-person auditions (held in Building F, Room F 109):

- 6-8 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 28

Please email neiuauditions@gmail.com to schedule your appointment or contact Adam Goldstein at a-goldstein@neiu.edu.

Callbacks

Callback times for individual actors are to be determined by the directors. Actors who are called back will be contacted directly by production personnel for scheduling.

Self-taped auditions!

If you are not available for in-person auditions, or if you prefer a remote option, no worries! You may also submit self-taped auditions remotely. Simply reach out to Adam Goldstein at a-goldstein@neiu.edu to arrange.

Audition instructions

Please click [here](#) for the audition info sheet which includes casting breakdowns, step-by-step instructions for auditioning and links to audition materials! You can also find this and more info on the [Stage Center Theatre](#) webpage.

Questions and audition support

If you'd like assistance in preparing for your audition, locating material self-taping or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Adam Goldstein at a-goldstein@neiu.edu.

Check us out!

Engage with us on social media as well via Facebook and Instagram! Our handle is @stagecentertheatre. Interested in meeting other passionate theatre students? Join our Theatre Club Group Me: [Theatre Club Group Me](#).



CHICAGO FILM SOCIETY

Spring 2025 Film Series

Wednesday, January 22 @ 7:30pm
THE GRAPES OF WRATH
Directed by John Ford (1940)

Wednesday, January 29 @ 7:30pm
MY WINNIPEG
Directed by Guy Maddin (2007)

Wednesday, February 5 @ 7:30pm
CHOOSE ME
Directed by Alan Rudolph (1984)



Wednesday, February 19 @ 7:30pm
THE LOVE PARADE
Directed by Ernst Lubitsch (1929)

Wednesday, February 26 @ 7:30pm
LIGHT OF DAY
Directed by Paul Schrader (1987)

Wednesday, March 5 @ 7:30pm
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE
Directed by A. Edward Sutherland (1933)

Wednesday, March 26 @ 7:30pm
HISTORY IS MADE AT NIGHT
Directed by Frank Borzage (1937)

Wednesday, April 9 @ 7:30pm
SPRING NIGHT, SUMMER NIGHT
Directed by J. L. Anderson (1967)

Wednesday, May 7 @ 7:30pm
CORN'S-A-POPPIN'
Directed by Robert Woodburn (1955)

Wednesday, May 14 @ 7:30pm
THE BAND WAGON
Directed by Vincente Minnelli (1953)



Wednesday Nights in the NEIU Auditorium (E-106)

Sponsored by the
Department of Communication, Media and Theatre



NEIU Philosophy Colloquium Series Presents....

Stephen Engelmann, Ph.D.

*University of Illinois at Chicago,
Department of Political Science*



Co-sponsored by NEIU Biology!
Refreshments will be provided

"Doing Oligarchy Better: On the Politics of Effective Altruism"

Join us in BBH 102 
Thursday, February 13, 2025
3:00-4:30 PM



 **Northeastern**
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY



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



Friends of the Chicago River



POLISH-AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC & ACADEMIC COOPERATION

MEETUP CHICAGO 2025

SAVE THE DATE!

24TH FEBRUARY 2025

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS ON THE EVENT!



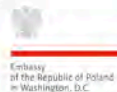
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INSPIRING TRIVIA

THE SARAH L. HOAGLAND SPEAKER SERIES PRESENTS

Dr. Luvell Anderson

*Professor of Philosophy at
the University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign*



"COMEDIC RESISTANCE"

.....
JOIN US IN BBH 102
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2025
3:05 PM - 5:00 PM
.....





COMPUTER SCIENCE

WOMEN IN SCIENCE

8TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MARCH 3 - 6

 **Northeastern**
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**CENTER OF
HEALTH**

MARCH 3, 2025

MARCH 4, 2025



**MATHEMATICAL
& STATISTICAL
MODELING OF
COMPLEX SYSTEMS WORKSHOP**



MARCH 3, 2025

MARCH 4, 2025

MARCH 5, 2025

MARCH 6, 2025



COMPUTER SCIENCE
WOMEN IN SCIENCE
8TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

LOCATION:

**NEIU STUDENT UNION
ALMUNI HALL**

[Click here for more information](#)

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!

[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.

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!](#)

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CAS Website

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