CAS CONNECTIONS

Fall Term | Issue 19 | September 30, 2025

Greetings, CAS Community,

It's been a busy September in the College of Arts and Sciences and at NEIU. Our eager and dedicated students create a vibrant campus environment, and I like to think there's always hope in the world when people are engaging in learning and seeking to know and understand more about our world and ourselves. Amidst the political uncertainty, economic upheavals, and seemingly relentless assault on democracy and civil and human rights, our CAS community continues to work to cultivate and promote human and scientific understanding in the service of improving people's lives in our region and fostering a more humane world (and maybe even a more perfect union).

All that we have accomplished in the CAS this past September really demonstrates how we serve as a vital global, national, and local epicenter for addressing and seeking solutions to the most pressing issues impacting our lives.

Early in September, Dr. Jeanine Ntihirageza (Professor of TESOL and Director of the Center for Genocide and Human Rights Research in Africa and the Diaspora) worked with the Africa Global Chamber of Commerce to host the Global Women in Finance Leading Summit at our El Centro campus. This summit featured experts from around the globe, particularly Africa, South America, and the United States, who are engaged in projects that synthesize economic and human development. The speakers featured at the summit were truly inspiring. Local superstar Jackie Taylor, founder and CEO of the Black Ensemble Theater, was one the speakers, telling her story of seeking $20 million to start her theater with the mission of eradicating racism through the arts. Taylor also plans for a new Free to Be Center in Uptown, which will further this mission by supporting artists with studio space, affordable housing, and more. Overall, the summit highlighted the ways finance can advance and develop, rather than exploit, human life.

On September 20th, the CAS, in partnership with About Face Theatre and Silk Road Cultural Center, staged *Say Gay Plays* to a packed auditorium at the Carruthers Center (CCICS). An initiative of New York City's Voyage Theater Company, *Say Gay Plays* aims to counter harmful anti-LGBTQ legislation and rhetoric, commissioning short plays by queer playwrights and producing royalty-free staged readings across the U.S. The six short plays performed at CCICS, in a range of ways, addressed the real fear generated by anti-LGBTQ state and culturally sanctioned hate and also constituted creative responses to this environment, dramatizing ways we can care for and counsel each other as well as politically resist the growing tide of hate by refusing to be silent. It was fitting to stage these plays at the Carruthers Center, which is itself an historical epicenter for addressing civil and human rights issues.

And there's more! Just last week, the Student Center for Science Engagement (SCSE) held its annual Student Symposium, which featured 36 NEIU undergraduate student presentations highlighting the students' summer research they conducted with faculty. The research was wide-ranging and impactful, seeking insights on cancer, plastic pollution, environmental issues, and more. Our faculty play a vital role in cultivating the next generation of scientists, thinkers, and practitioners to tackle our most pressing challenges.

Also last week, Art + Design held its annual Fall Fest, which drew a huge crowd (250+ students) to campus to enjoy a host of interactive experiences across Art + Design's many departments and mediums. Attendees were able to see, make, and experience art, learning more about NEIU and themselves in the process. The Arts and Sciences were in full effect!

These accomplishments demonstrate yet again how the CAS serves as a crucial epicenter for the kinds of work that improve our world. We achieve all this at NEIU because of the effort and commitment of our faculty. When I think about Jackie Taylor raising $20 million to fund her theater and its mission, I imagine all that we at NEIU could do with such an investment. I take pride in what the CAS already does, and yet the additional students we could educate and support and the work we could fund would be truly astounding.

With this in mind, I invite you to join us in supporting our students and the valuable work that the CAS is able to fund. A donation to our College Undergraduate Scholars Program (CUSP) is a donation toward a student's future. And in the spirit of CAS Connections, we invite you to draw on connections you might have that would be interested in supporting our students. Let's get the work done together!

All the best,
Tim Libretti
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

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FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

Todd Irwin

Art + Design



How did you end up working in an academic environment?

My journey here has been a slow one. I didn't go to college right away, instead spending many years working in the printing industry. When I was ready to switch gears, I began studying art at NEIU and realized that, despite my lack of formal training, I already knew a good deal about making art. I really responded to the freedom that creating art in an academic environment allowed, as well as the support and friendships I gained along the way. When the opportunity arose to return to NEIU as an instructor in 2019, I jumped at the chance—and I've been enjoying every minute of it since.

What are your research interests?

My research is at the intersection of traditional art making (printmaking, sculpture) and digital fabrication and electronic experimentation. I am interested in where traditional techniques merge with newer technologies such as CNC, laser cutting, and 3D printing. Currently, my work has been focused on creating circuit-based audio devices that viewers can interact with to make invisible phenomena like sound and vibration tangible and engaging.

What is your favorite thing about NEIU?

The community! In my opinion, NEIU's Art + Design Department is one of Chicago's best-kept secrets. Well, maybe it's not exactly a secret, but it's an incredible program that often flies under the radar. We have fantastic students and instructors, and countless alumni have gone on to do amazing things (and that goes for NEIU as a whole).

What are your hobbies?

I am heavily into music. I collect speakers, old stereo components, records, synths, musical instruments - you name it. I also play drums in a somewhat conceptual, slightly psychedelic, and very silly rock band. And I compose music in various forms, including a new project soon to come out on cassette at a very local record shop near you!

STUDENT HIGHLIGHT



Ligia Veliciu

Major in Geography

Minor in GIS

What are your career goals?

I want a career where I can be both creative and analytical, with a strong focus on software and computer programming. I see myself working as a Geospatial Analyst, using GIS not only to make urban spaces more accessible but also to gain a deeper understanding of the world around us and how we fit within it. I am especially drawn to Urban Planning, specifically transportation and logistics, where GIS can help create smart and more connected cities.

What do you like about NEIU so far?

What I value most about NEIU is the diversity of my classmates. We come from many different walks of life, and that brings depth and perspective to our classroom discussions. Learning alongside people who have different backgrounds, experiences, and life stages has been one of the most rewarding parts of my time here.

What are some interesting facts about you?

I enjoy kayaking both during the day and at night. It is my goal to one day paddle the entire length of the Des Plaines River. I love being outdoors. I could look for cool rocks, watch wildlife, and explore new trails all day if I could. At night, nothing beats camping in the woods, sitting by a cozy fire, and stargazing. Currently, I am working on my tree identification skills! Catalpas are my favorite so far, but Scotch Pines are a close second. A fun tree I recently learned about is the Pawpaw, which is native to southern Illinois. It produces a unique fruit that I had the chance to try before the season ended, and it tastes like a mix of mango and banana. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but I recommend you try it for the experience!

Something else interesting about me is that I love observing movement of both people and things. When I used to work early mornings (3am-12pm), I would step outside in the early morning and watch the world come alive. Trains, airplanes, trucks, buses, cars, and pedestrians all started to move, gradually building into the rhythm of the day. There's something fascinating to me about watching that flow unfold.

Anything else that you'd like to share?

I've been in school for what feels like forever, switching majors and schools more times than I'd like to admit. After all the ups and downs, I finally feel like I am in the right place. I have a deep empathy for anyone working hard to find a path that truly resonates with who they are and what they want. Not everyone knows what or who they want to be when they grow up, and I argue that many of us are never going to be just one thing. I could see myself as an Urban Planner, and one day decide to wear a different hat. What matters most is never ever giving up on you. Make mistakes, learn from them, and be you with reckless abandon.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHT



Daniel Van Lente

Environmental Studies Major

What are your career goals?

I want to help to preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services for future generations. I would like to focus on helping to build, foster, and maintain sustainability by promoting environmentally responsible behavior through green infrastructure and new policy ideas to ensure access to clean air, water, and food for all. My current goal is to try to get a position with the MWRD (Metropolitan Water Reclamation District).

What do you like about NEIU so far?

I enjoy the diverse student body and location of the main campus. The faculty is caring and very helpful as well.

What are your hobbies?

I have a lot of hobbies! I love to play music (I'm in three bands right now), sports, ride my bicycle, and be outside observing and studying the natural world.

What is a fun fact about you?

I love insects, worms, and all arthropods. I also love composting.

WELCOME NEW CAS FACULTY!



Dr. Amanda Greenbacker-Mitchell
Assistant Professor of Music



Dr. Ruth Llana Fernández
Assistant Professor of World Languages and Cultures



Dr. Emily Esposito
Assistant Professor of Psychology

ART + DESIGN FALL FEST





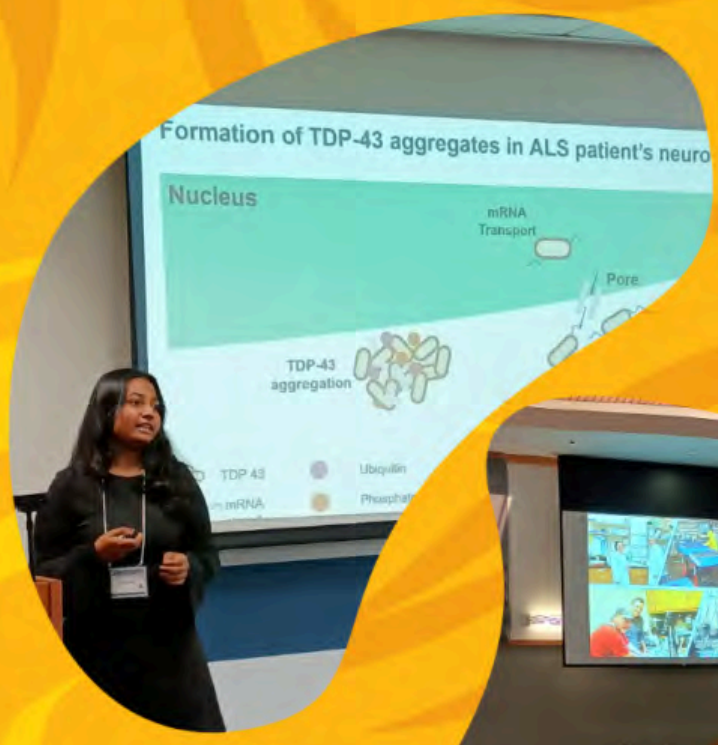




On September 25, the NEIU Art + Design Fall Fest welcomed more than 250 attendees to the Fine Arts Building for a community art party. The event featured interactive activities across the Ceramics, Design, Art + Tech, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture, and Drawing studios, served as an open house for prospective students, and hosted the opening reception for two juried exhibitions showcasing studio art and graphic design work from Illinois community college students.

Thank you to everyone who came out, all the exhibitors, NEIU faculty and students who led the activities across the Department, and to the NADA Leaders!

SCSE STUDENT RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM





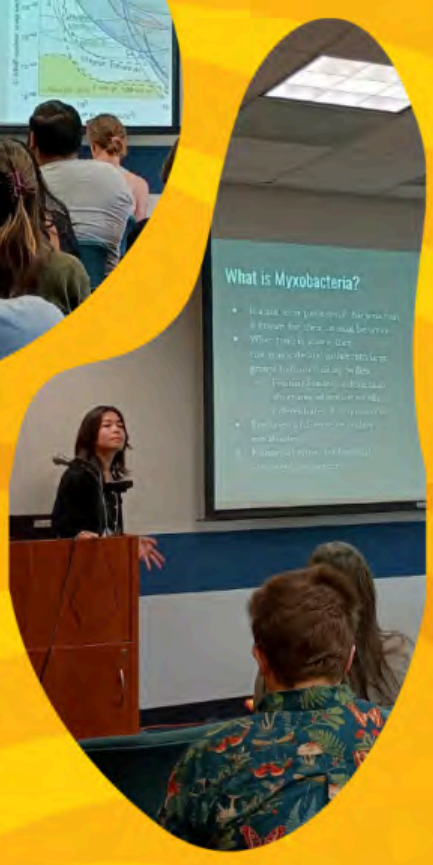
















The Student Center for Science Engagement (SCSE) hosted their 17th Annual SCSE Student Research Symposium on Friday, September 26, 2025. The Symposium is a chance for the SCSE Summer Research students to present their research and findings from their work over the summer. Students were able to present their research in individual oral sessions and in group poster sessions. Both attendees and students were incredibly engaged, and thought-provoking discussions were common throughout the day.

The Symposium also featured keynote speaker Dr. Javier Gonzalez, a research soil scientist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, the primary research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dr. Gonzalez specializes in advancing sustainable American agriculture through innovative soil and crop management research. His keynote speech gave the audience insight into his research and work.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a huge success!

UPCOMING IN THE CAS

Career Development

Explore HACU: Scholarships, Internships & More



Learn about HACU (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities).

Students will learn about HACU's mission, programs, opportunities for professional development, scholarships, internships, and networking.

IN - PERSON EVENT

Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2025
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
SU 003

HACU
HISPANIC ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

HACU Emerging Leaders' Summit



HACU
HISPANIC ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities is accepting applications for its Emerging Leaders' Summit on October 2, 2025. **College students majoring in STEM and business related fields are encouraged to apply.**

IN-PERSON EVENT

Thursday, October 2, 2025.
8:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

University of Illinois Chicago

Student Center East, Illinois Rooms A, B, & C
750 S. Halsted St.
Chicago, IL 60607

Apply at www.hacu.net/programs/emerging-leaders-summit/

CO-HOSTED BY:

UIC LARES UIC UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO

Follow @HACUNews on social media
#LeadWithHACU

We are unable to assist with travel/lodging for those outside of the local area

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Learn about career opportunities from industry professionals
- Gain tips on securing internships
- Identify and build on your skills such as leadership and networking
- Meet and interact with professionals from leading corporations
- College students selected receive an event registration, morning and lunch meals, and free parking.

ELIGIBILITY

- Minimum 2.5 GPA
- Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at a HACU-Member Institution in the Chicago Area
- Open to all majors

AWARDS

Giveaways include e-gift cards.
Must be present to win.

HACU CONTACT

HACU Student Services
students@hacu.net
210-692-3805



PEER Services

STEP UP *for* RECOVERY

Sunday
October 5, 2025
1-3 PM
Evanston Lakefront
Sheridan Rd. and Davis St.

In honor of PEER's 50th Anniversary, join us to **prevent addiction**, **break stigma**, and **make substance use treatment affordable for all!**

Why Step Up?

- RECOVERY
- AFFORDABLE TREATMENT
- REDUCING STIGMA
- SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION
- COMMUNITY WELLNESS
- MENTAL HEALTH

Half-mile walk to raise awareness, free t-shirts*, music, refreshments, family-friendly activities, community resource fair, raffle prizes and more!

*While supplies last

Choose your ticket price:
$50 | $25 | Free
All children 12 & under attend FREE!

PEER SERVICES is a nonprofit leader in **substance use prevention** and **treatment** for youth and adults in the northern suburbs and north side of Chicago.

Your support helps us provide **services to all who need them, regardless of their income or insurance status.**

REGISTER
DONATE
SPONSOR

peerservices.org

STEM COFFEE HOUR



FIRST TUESDAYS

Oct 7th

Nov 4th

Dec 2nd

2:30 – 4pm

ALL ARE WELCOME

Coffee, cookies, and community!

BBH
2ND FLOOR LANDING

Funded by the U.S. Dept. of Ed Grant #P031C21011
Advancing Research and Career Opportunities in STEM

Join the Economics Department
& SHARC for an interdisciplinary discussion:

MONEY MAYHEM:
ECONOMIC ISSUES IN THE "NEW NORMAL"

OCTOBER 9, 2025 IN BBH 202

3:05 – 4:05 PM

MODERATOR
Dr. Martyn DeBruyn

SPEAKERS
Dr. Ryan Gallagher
Dr. Scott Hegerty
Prof. Bryan Curran

Remember when Economics was boring? Now things like the Bureau of Labor Statistics seem to be front and center in a changing world. Join members of the Economics faculty in a discussion of the issues and events that have been dominating the news. **Bring questions—and grab some refreshments!**

Northeastern ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Economics

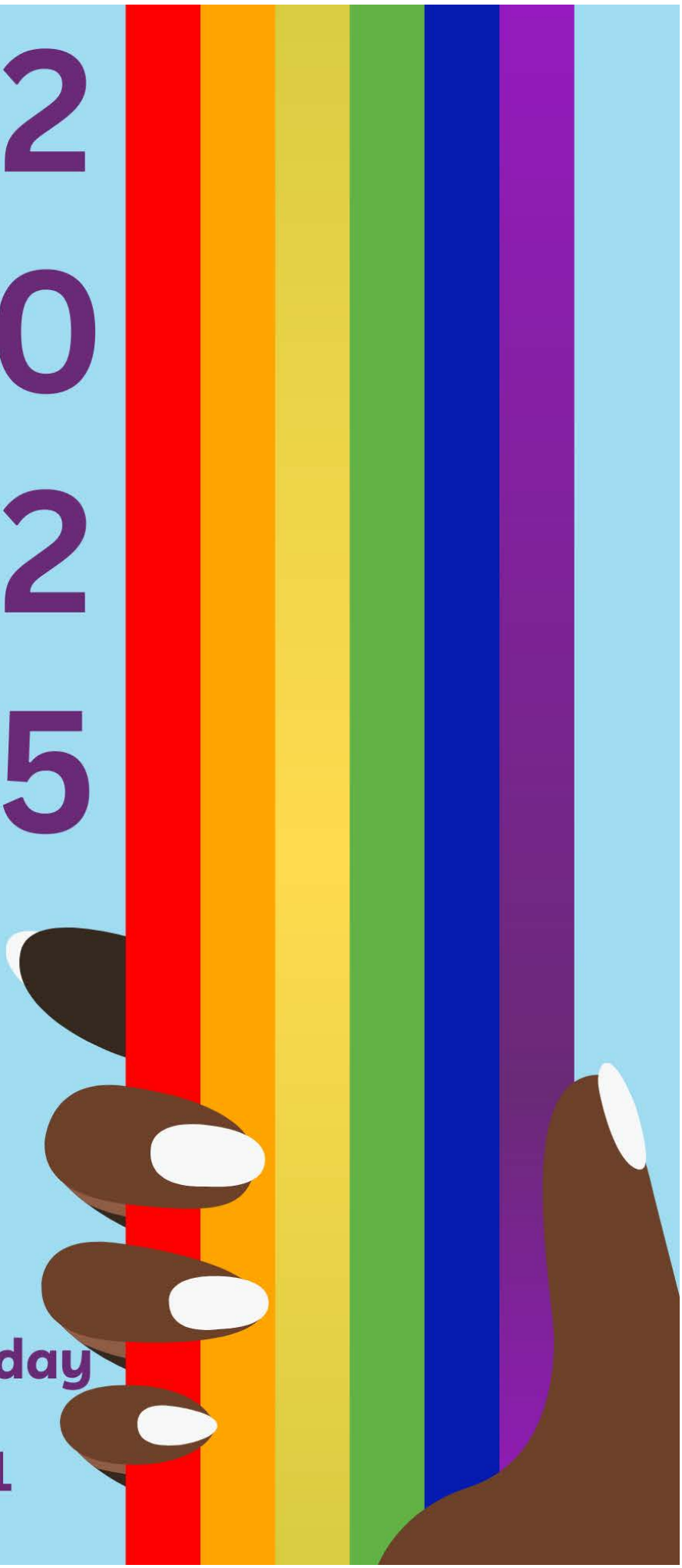
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Center SHARC

PRIDE ALLIANCE 2025

A welcoming & safer space for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community & allies to connect, learn, & make our voices heard

Students, Faculty & Staff welcome

Every Thursday from 3-4p in LWH 2071



NEIU EL CENTRO EVENTS FALL 2025

Saturday, October 4	**FAFSA/Rise Act Workshop** Computer lab, 10:00am-2:00pm
Tuesday, October 7	**Midterm Madness (Esports)** Third floor lobby, 3:00pm-5:00pm
Friday, October 10	**Queer Prom 2025** Third floor lobby, 6:00pm-9:00pm
Saturday, October 25	**FAFSA/Rise Act Workshop** Computer lab, 10:00am-2:00pm
Wednesday, October 29	**Dia De Los Muertos Celebration** First floor lobby, 3:00pm-6:00pm
Thursday, October 30	**Halloween Bash** First floor lobby, 3:00pm-5:00pm
Tuesday, November 4	**Speed Networking** Third floor lobby, 3:00pm-4:30pm
Wednesday, November 12	**Movie Trivia** First floor lobby, 3:00pm-4:30pm
Tuesday, November 18	**Orgullo y Memoria** Third floor lobby, 3:00pm-4:30pm
Thursday, November 20	**Pop-Up Food Pantry** First floor lobby, 2:30pm-4:30pm
Monday, December 1	**Finals Stress Free Zone** First floor lobby, 2:30pm-4:30pm
Tuesday, December 2	**GivingTuesday** Donate online!
Wednesday, December 3	**Holiday Traditions: Las Posadas** First floor lobby, 5:00pm-6:30pm



Get a locker on the 3rd floor of BBH!

Lockers can be reserved for the semester, at no cost. If you would like a locker, then please scan the QR code below to fill out the locker reservation form. Lockers will be assigned first-come, first serve.



tinyurl.com/BBHLOCKERS

SCAN ME

If you have any questions, email icontre2@neiu.edu or stop by BBH-358G.

BIOLOGY ADVISING

Gain advice about course registration, graduation requirements, & career options

In-person *and* ***virtual*** *advising schedule for Aug. 18 – Dec. 23, 2025*

In-person – Located in BBH-342

Just walk in - no appointment necessary

MONDAY	**2:00 – 4:00pm**
TUESDAY	**4:00 – 6:00pm**
THURSDAY	**11:00 – 1:00pm**

Virtual – Use QR code or go to https://tinyurl.com/biologyNEIU to make a Zoom appt. during these time periods:

WED.	**5:00 – 7:00pm**
FRIDAY	**Noon – 2:00pm**

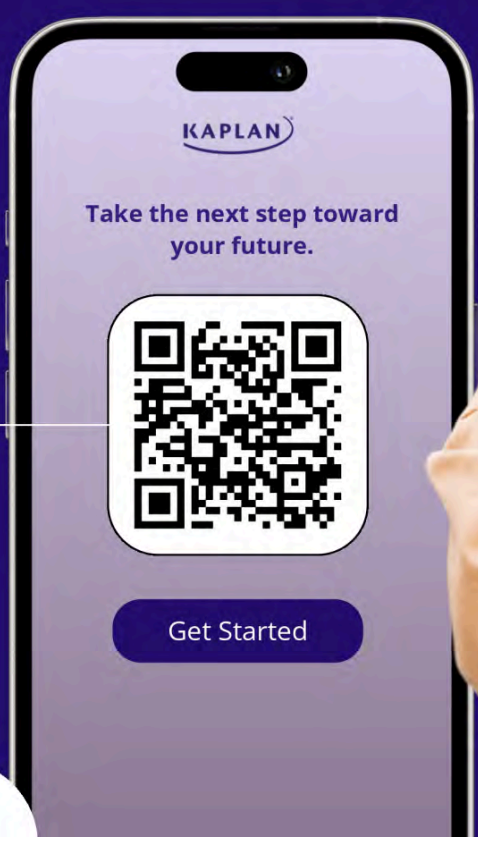
Biology advisors can also answer questions at:
bioadvising@neiu.edu

KAPLAN | Northeastern ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Get Ahead with Free Premium Test Prep

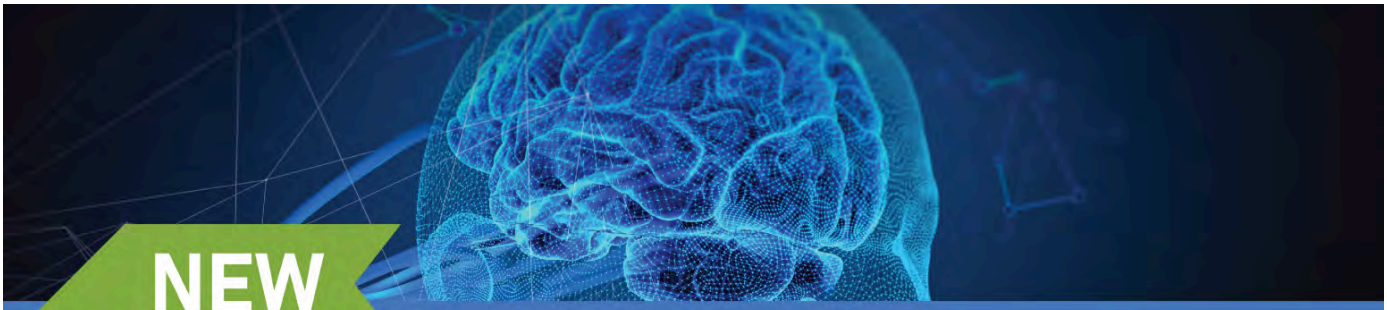
As a Northeastern Illinois University student, you can now take advantage of free access to the most realistic and comprehensive test prep available for grad school, licensure, and career exams. Planning your next move? This is the perfect place to start.

Start preparing today: Go.Kaplan.com/Illinois





Administered by ISAC Illinois Student Assistance Commission



NEW

MINOR IN NEUROSCIENCE

Only 3 PSYC and 3 BIO courses needed:

PSYC 200: General Psychology
PSYC 202: Stats & Research Methods I
300-level elective:
- PSYC 350: Physiological Psychology
- *or* PSYC 371: Neuropsychology

BIO 201: General Biology I
BIO 301: Cell Biology *
300-level elective:
- BIO 365: Neurobiology
- *or* BIO 380H: Sensory Mechanisms

*For students *not* pursuing a biology major or minor, the BIO 250 prerequisite will be waived, and they may substitute CHEM 110 for CHEM 211.



Opportunities

• This interdisciplinary field has growing appoications in healthcare, research, and psychological treatments..



Knowledge

• Understand biological and psychological principles that shape behavior, cognition, and brain function.



Flexibility

• This minor is an easy addition to a psychology or biology major, while also complementing other fields.

Apply for the UNDERGRADUATE MERIT TUITION SCHOLARSHIP

Applications for Spring 2026 are due October 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

Join the CAS Student Advisory Board!

Northeastern Illinois University's College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) has assembled a Student Advisory Board to provide the Dean's Office with insights into student experiences in the CAS and to raise issues/concerns regarding processes on campus.

The board consists of up to 15 undergraduate students (and two alternates) representing a variety of CAS majors and life experiences. The advisory group will meet approximately three times a semester with the CAS Deans and may be asked to provide feedback on urgent matters between meetings. Advisory board members are also expected to be available a few times a semester to promote the college and provide a student voice at various events during the year.

The Student Advisory Board provides students with leadership opportunities, centers students in CAS decision-making, affirms and acknowledges student experiences and allows students to help share and improve processes. Students should be able to commit to one academic year and will not be able to serve more than two years on the board.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and new board members will be announced every September.

Click here to apply!

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!

Donate here!

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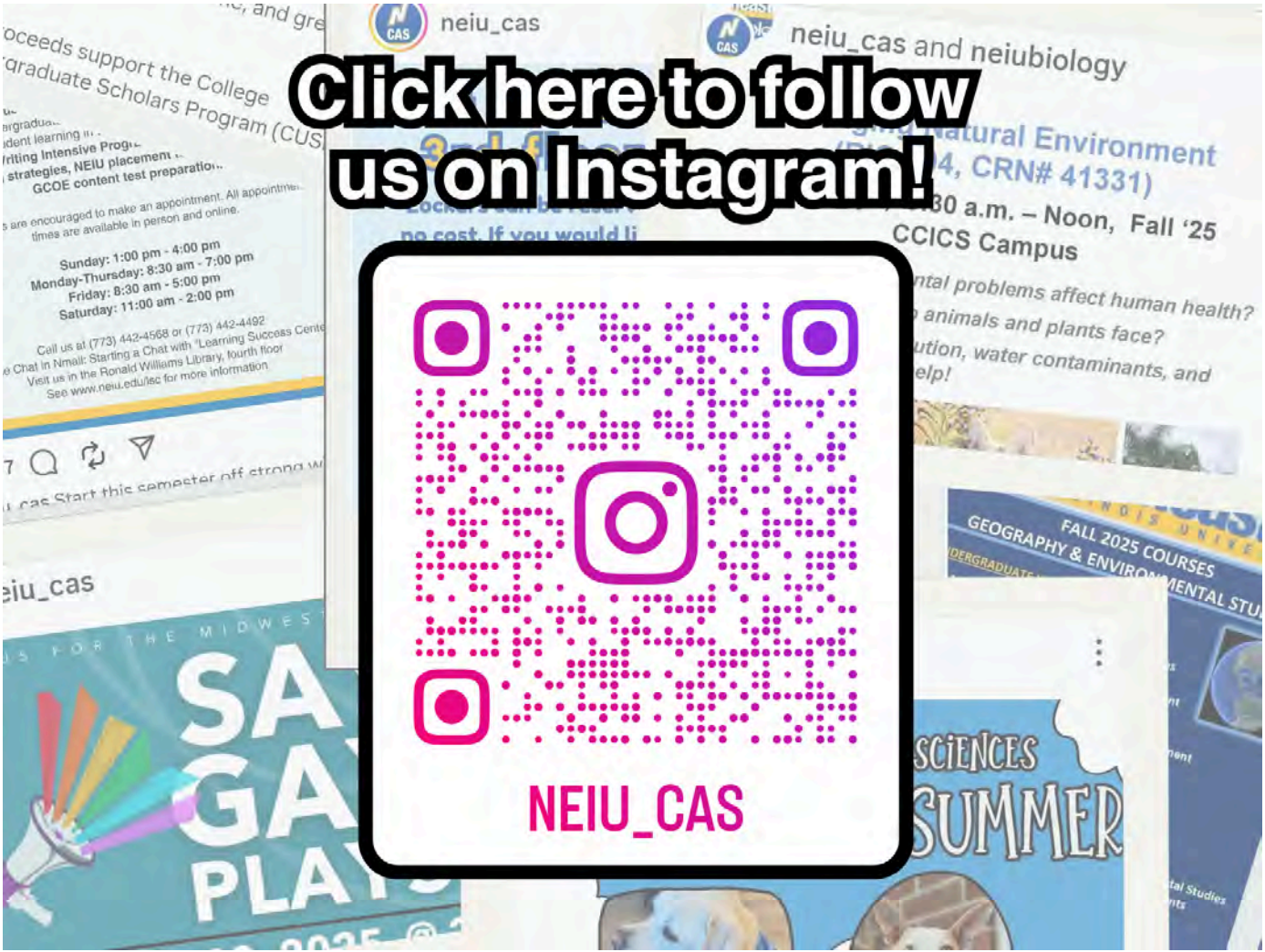
Pre-Professional Advising information

CAS Website


Click here to follow us on Instagram!
NEIU_CAS
neiu_cas
neiu_cas and neiubiology
Sunday: 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Monday-Thursday: 8:30 am - 7:00 pm
Friday: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday: 11:00 am - 2:00 pm
FALL 2025 COURSES
SUMMER

NEIU College of Arts and Sciences

Just now ·

Click here to follow us on Facebook and keep up to date with the CAS!



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