CAS CONNECTIONS

Spring Term | Issue 25 | May 7, 2026

FROM THE DEAN

Greetings, CAS Community,

As I sat down to pen these greetings, a Psychology student graduating this spring walked through the CAS Dean's office to share with Associate Dean Dr. Dykema-Engblade (a social psychologist by trade and former Chair of the Psychology Department) that she has been accepted into Loyola University's doctoral program and will be starting next fall term. Hers is just one of the myriad success stories, in the CAS and NEIU as a whole, to be told this commencement season.

I begin these greetings *in media res* because this lovely moment beautifully captures what I wanted to communicate anyway in these greetings for the last CAS Connections of this academic year.

With commencement fast upon us, this time of year is about celebrating the growth and achievements of our students as well as the work of faculty, staff, and everyone in the NEIU community who has guided, supported, and taught our students, preparing them to do the good and necessary work of the world for all of us, taking on the many challenges that face us as a people and world, as well as to live meaningful and happy lives.

No matter what forces of repression are at work in the world, you just can't stop the life-affirming processes of learning, growth, and the pursuit of justice and humanity. We are lucky to bear witness to this fact every day in the College of Arts and Sciences, especially at this time of year.

So, congratulations to all of our graduates! And to all our readers, I hope you can enjoy the spring and take inspiration from the good work going on in the CAS, which you'll see below.

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

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STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

Madison Ventura
Justice Studies



What is your current major?

I am a freshman and my current major is Justice Studies, and I plan to double major in Anthropology.

What are your career goals?

While it's still a bit early to define my exact career path, I'm especially interested in pursuing a career related to law, particularly international law. I also hope to gain research experience in the Middle East and further develop my focus in cultural anthropology. In the future, I would love to become a professor, educating others about the cultures of the Middle East and their global significance. Ultimately, I aim to connect international law with cultural anthropology.

What do you like about NEIU so far?

What I like most about NEIU so far is the wide range of opportunities and exposure to different cultures. I've had so many amazing professors and truly meaningful experiences that have already had a strong impact on me.

What are some interesting facts about you?

I'm a huge movie buff, something my friend Nur always points out. I try to watch as many films as I can, not just for entertainment but to analyze and better understand them. I also enjoy video editing, although I haven't been able to do much of it lately because my computer is quite old. In addition, I love graphic design, and I currently serve as the graphic designer for the Human Rights Student Organization, which I really enjoy.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

I'm originally from Southern California and moved here in August for college. Experiencing the cultural differences between Los Angeles and Chicago has been really fascinating and exciting, and I've enjoyed getting exposed to the different cultures here!

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT



McKayla Johnson
Communication, Media & Theatre

What did you study at NEIU?

My major was in CMT and my minor was costume design.

What are you doing now?

I am currently pursuing a Master's of costume design.

What did you like about your time at NEIU?

My friend group met in my technical theatre production course in my first semester at NEIU, and we still meet up once a year for Halloween!

Do you have any advice for current students?

It's never too late to find you passion. I didn't find my passion in costume design untill I met my mentors Sara Fabian and Lizz Otto Cramer in the last 2 years of my undergrad. The story may have a lot of plot twists and turns and it may feel like you're starting over again and again, but it will end. It will end with having accomplished one chapter of your final novel.

FACULTY HIGHLIGHT



Dr. Maria De La Torre
Associate Professor of Justice Studies

What are your research interests?

My interests include immigration, Latin American history and society, social movements, and how emotions shape the way we learn—especially when we are talking about difficult topics like inequality.

What is your favorite thing about NEIU?

What I love most about the College and NEIU is the people. My students constantly inspire me and give me a reason to show up ready to think, question, and learn together. I also feel lucky to work with colleagues who are thoughtful, supportive, and deeply committed to what they do.

Why did you decide to work in an academic environment?

I came to academia because I wanted a space where asking hard questions matters, and where learning can be shared. I enjoy being in the classroom, not just teaching, but figuring things out alongside students.

What are your hobbies?

One of my favorite things to do outside of work is swimming. I swim at my community's public pool, and I only learned how to swim as an adult. Before that, I did not even realize what I was missing. I share that with students sometimes as a reminder that it is never too late to try something new—and that learning something unfamiliar can end up being one of the most rewarding experiences.

GRADUATING STUDENT FEATURE



Tara Markovic
Biology

What degree will you be graduating with?

I am majoring in Biology and minoring in Biomathematics with a focus in Microbiology.

What do you plan to do after graduation?

Next fall, I will begin my PhD at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in their Molecular and Cellular Biology program. Afterwards, my career goals are to work in research, at the intersection of Microbiology and Biochemistry. More specifically, research involving extremophiles and microorganisms in aquatic environments.

What was your favorite thing about NEIU?

I have never experienced a more welcoming, kind, and supportive environment than at NEIU. My mentors and friends I met here have always stuck by my side and I wouldn't be where I am today without their encouragement. I am incredibly grateful to have met such wonderful people, had amazing opportunities, and to have had an unforgettable experience here.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

I would like to share one of my favorite quotes that I tell myself in challenging times.

"If the path to what you want seems too easy, then you're on the wrong path."

This simple yet powerful phrase serves as a reminder for me to stay resilient and strong, because I know I am on the right path.

HUMAN RIGHTS SING ALONG









On April 21st, the College of Arts and Sciences partnered with the International Servant Leaders Museum and the NEIU Choir to put on a Human Rights Sing Along. The evening began with great food catered by local Alumni-owned business Sfera Sicilian Street Food, as well as a silent auction with items donated by our CAS community and the Museum. We also had a 50/50 raffle going, led by student volunteers Anabelle Jimenez and John Sayson. All proceeds from the event were split between the CAS's College Undergraduate Scholars Program and the Museum.

After dinner, participants moved into the sanctuary for a beautiful performance by the NEIU Choir. Dr. Christopher Owen explained the history of each song before the choir put on each moving performance. For certain songs, the audience joined in, underscoring the power human voices have when we come together.

NEW MURAL



Proposed by Mr. Morris of the Receiving Department, this mural was created to beautify the loading dock while honoring the years of hard work dedicated by student volunteers from Northside Learn Center (NLC).

This artwork was made during last summer's Mural Course taught by Chantala Kommanivanh. During the class, the students met with NLC's Principal, Mrs. Michelle Kopke, who gave them a tour of their school before the students began design work. The class designed the mural based on information from NLC (and they all wanted to incorporate the Husky mascot). The design was a class brainstorm and they generated a few mock ups before the HOWL design was approved by NLC.

At its center, NLC's Husky mascot wears a recycling medallion, symbolizing the students' essential duties and daily contributions. The accompanying text celebrates more than 30 years of collaboration between NEIU and NLC on our campus. Above the mascot, NLC's moto acronym H.O.W.L. (Help Others, Own Your Actions, Work Hard, Love to Learn) is displayed on paw prints. Finally, the mural incorporates flowers to represent growth and gratitude, alongside puzzle pieces that signify both autism awareness and the unique parts that make our community whole.

UPCOMING IN THE CAS

BANK OF AMERICA
CHICAGO 13.1

Calling all NEIU students, faculty, staff and friends of the College of Arts and Sciences!

Join the CAS volunteer team for the Bank of America Chicago Half Marathon on Sunday, June 7, from 5:00am - 10:30am to give back to the community and show your NEIU/CAS spirit. Support runners by handing out hydration and earn a FREE Nike hat and t-shirt!

You don't need to be a runner! Just bring your enthusiasm and willingness to help. The more volunteers, the merrier! All volunteers must RSVP by Sunday, May 31. Please only sign up if you are able to volunteer on Sunday, June 7 from 5:00am - 10:30am.

If you have questions about the volunteer opportunity, please email CAS Acting Associate Dean, Amanda Dykema-Engblade at a-dykema-engblade@neiu.edu.



Click here to RSVP!

CORRIDA DEL MARIACHI 5K

Join us for a festive 5k and help us make strides in supporting student and faculty research in the College of Arts and Sciences!



Saturday, August 15, 2026

8am – 1pm

North Berwyn Park District

Enjoy food, music, community, and more!



Come run or walk with us–the CAS community–in the Corrida del Mariarchi 5K in Berwyn this August 15, 2026 and help us raise money to support student and faculty research in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The race is a festive day, featuring not just a lovely 5k you can run or walk through the tree-lined streets of Berwyn's neighborhoods, but also great food, music, vendors, community associations and more. The festivities continue well after the morning 5k, and NEIU is a sponsor of the event and will have a tent. It's a great time, and a great event for the whole family!

If you'd like to join the NEIU CAS team and learn how you can help us raise at least $10,000 in one day to support students and faculty, please contact Tim Libretti at t-libretti@neiu.edu for details.

Click here to learn more!

Northeastern
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

WE'RE LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS

Open Members
Welcome!

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION
NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Become an Advocate
Support Campaigns
Organize Events
Share New Ideas

DIGNITY. JUSTICE. RESPECT. FOR ALL

HAVE A PASSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS?

SCAN OUR QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION

Pathways toward
University
Education that
Navigate
Transitions
Essential for
Spanish speakers

NEW FOR FALL 2026: BILINGUAL COURSES TAUGHT IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH

ENG 101: Writing I
T/R 1:40-2:55 | Ruth Llana

ARTH 106: Introduction to Art History
T/R 9:25-10:40 | Ana Nieves

SPAN 109: FYE - Chicago's Latino/a Cultures
T/R 10:50-12:05 | Emily Masó

BIO 104: The Changing Natural Environment
M/W 12:55-2:10 | Jorge Cantú

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.

Northeastern ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Post-Baccalaureate

Certificate in Pre-Health

catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/biology/post-baccalaureate-certificate-pre-health



The Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Pre-Health at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) is tailored for career changers with a bachelor's degree who need to complete the prerequisites for health professional programs. This comprehensive certificate fulfills the core requirements for admission to health professional programs, including:

Medicine • Dentistry • Optometry
Physician Assistant • Physical Therapy
Pharmacy • Veterinary Medicine

Why complete the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Pre-Health at Northeastern?

- Dedicated Pre-Health Advising
- Personalized Support
- Intimate Learning Environment
- Faculty-Mentored Research Opportunities
- Hands-on Laboratory Experience
- Networking and Leadership Opportunities
- Pre-Health Events
- Entrance Exam Preparation
- Tutoring Services

Admission Requirements

- Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college or university
- Cumulative GPA of 2.5 or above.

David Nissim-Sabat
Director of Pre-Professional Advising
College of Arts and Sciences, BBH 148A
dnissim@neiu.edu | (773) 442-0000

neiu

Northeastern ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Pre-Law Minor

The Pre-Law minor supports undergraduate students pursuing law school, as well as those interested in understanding the design and impact of our legal system. Acquire skills and knowledge relevant to legal careers, while drilling down into areas of law most fascinating to *you*. With course offerings across eight different NEIU programs, the Pre-Law minor will help you see our legal system in a whole new, interdisciplinary light!





Required Courses

JUST-205: Law & Society

Law permeates every aspect of our lives, permitting and banning, safeguarding and prosecuting, legitimizing and stigmatizing. This course concerns the roles that laws play in all of our daily lives. We will examine theories of law and justice, the role of legal actors and institutions in constructing and enforcing laws, the main types of law, how the law shapes and is shaped by inequality and social change, and pathways into legal careers.

PHIL-201: Logic I

Introductory course in symbolic logic, dealing with propositional calculus, quantification theory and the logic of relations and classes.

PSCI-320: Constitutional Law

The role of the Supreme Court and its impact on the constitutional development of the due process clause, civil liberties, First Amendment freedoms, and the equal protection of the law are traced with particular emphasis on the assessment of the role of the Supreme Court vis-a-vis the states and the national government in protecting and restricting civil liberties.

Plus 3 Pre-Law Electives

The three electives should be taken in at least two different programs, with eight programs to choose from!

Learn More

Contact

Pre-Law@neiu.edu

Requirements & Electives

View requirements of the Pre-Law minor, plus our many electives, by scanning the QR code below!

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!

SCHOLARSHIP RESOURCES

NEIU University and Private Scholarship Opportunities

https://www.neiu.edu/financial-aid/scholarship-opportunities

The links on this page will take you to other scholarship directories, so be sure to explore it thoroughly!

NEIU College of Arts and Sciences Scholarships

https://www.neiu.edu/academics/colleges-departments/arts-and-sciences/college-arts-and-sciences-scholarships

These scholarships are for students in the College of Arts and Sciences. Email cas@neiu.edu with any questions.

Private Scholarship Spotlights

https://www.neiu.edu/financial-aid/scholarship-opportunities/private-scholarship-spotlights

Explore the links on this page to find scholarships that may be available to you from outside of the university.

Northeastern ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences

CONTACTS

College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office

cas@neiu.edu • 773-442-5700
Bernard Brommel Hall 158
5500 N. St. Louis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625

Tim Libretti
Dean
t-libretti@neiu.edu

Ken Voglesonger
Acting Associate Dean
k-voglesonger@neiu.edu

Amanda Dykema-Engblade
Acting Associate Dean
a-dykema-engblade@neiu.edu

Bruce (Alan) Mace
Business Manager
b-mace@neiu.edu

David Nissim-Sabat
Director of Pre-Professional Advising
d-nissimsabat@neiu.edu

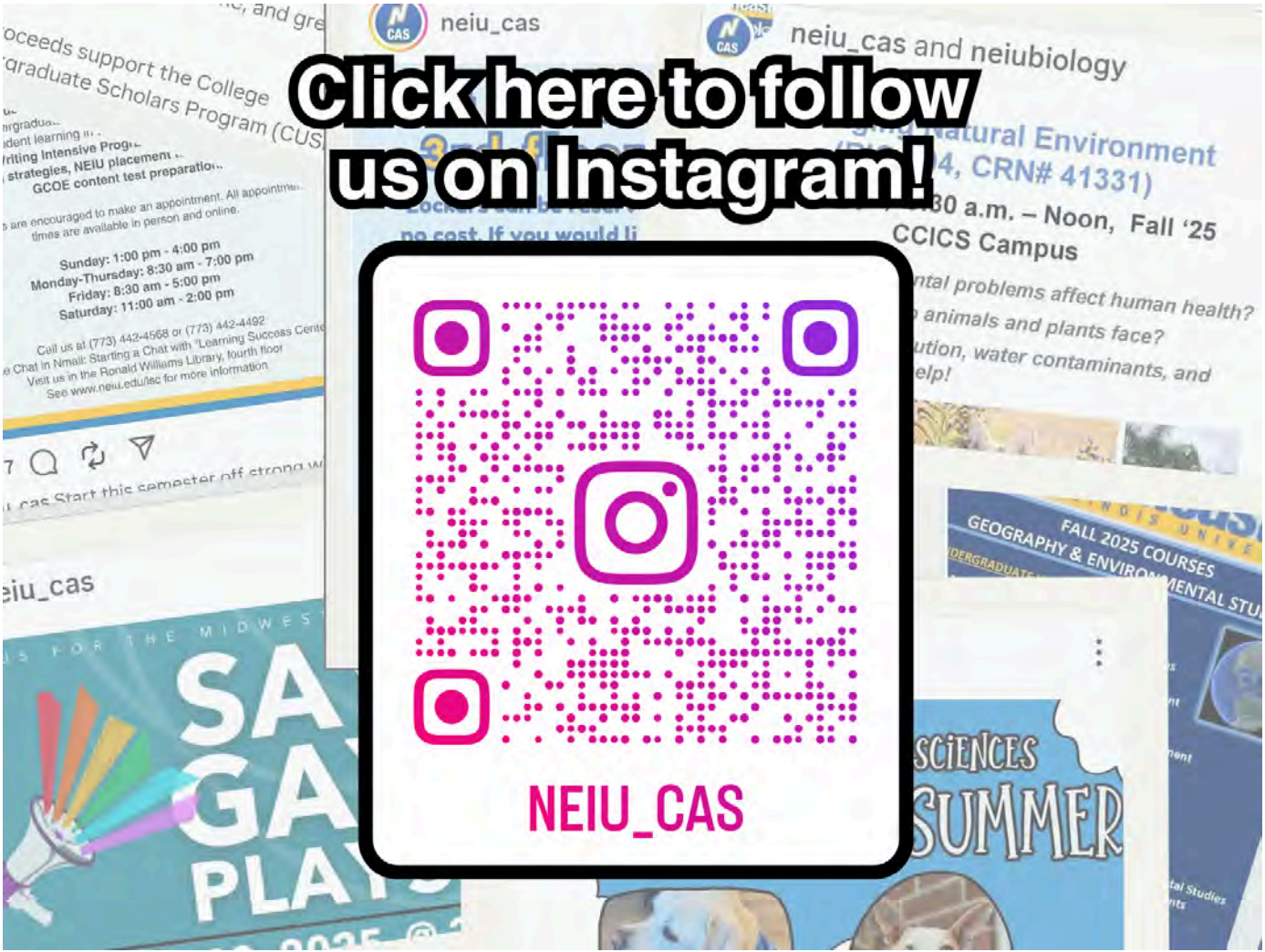
Peter Goldman
Administrative Assistant/Contracts Administrator
p-goldman@neiu.edu

Debra Williams
Student and Faculty Program Support Specialist
d-williams28@neiu.edu

Leah Lewis
Program Assistant
l-lewis23@neiu.edu

Pre-Professional Advising information

CAS Website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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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