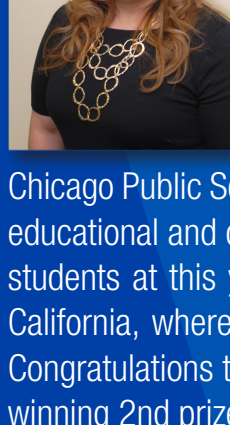


A Message from the Director



El Centro was very busy during the fall semester. From Pasadena, California to Atlanta, Georgia, El Centro is spreading the word about all the great work Northeastern does to support its students.

In October, El Centro participated in three major STEM events. To start, Google visited Northeastern's Main and El Centro locations to recruit students for internships and employment opportunities. Then, El Centro had the pleasure of welcoming over 100 high school students from the Chicago Public Schools for AT&T's HCEMOS 20th Annual International High Technology Day, exposing them to educational and career opportunities in STEM. It was especially exciting for Northeastern to sponsor ten STEM students at this year's Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Awards Conference (HENAAC) in Pasadena, California, where they received training in Applied Cryptography, Penetration Testing, and Digital Forensics. Congratulations to Beth McDonald and John Crissman, two of NEIU's computer science graduate students, for winning 2nd prize at the Data Analytics Competition.

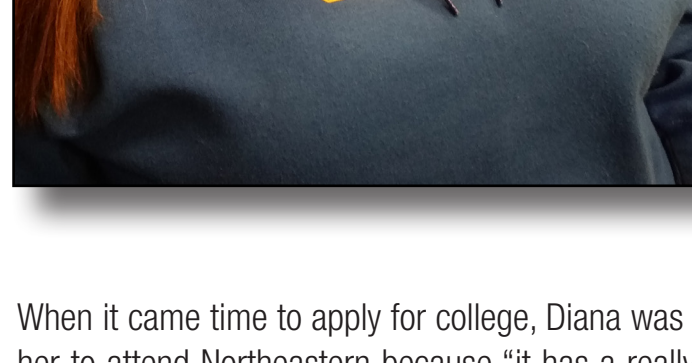
Providing STEM opportunities is not the only way El Centro supports its students. To continue to do great things, our students also need financial support. On Saturday, October 6, in collaboration with the Office of Financial Aid, El Centro hosted a FAFSA workshop which assisted 55 students and their families in completing their FAFSA application.

The same weekend, El Centro team members, Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo, assistant director, and Mimi Crespo, coordinator of the Learning Resource Center, presented at this year's Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) national conference in Atlanta, Georgia, where they showcased El Centro's Scholars Program, a comprehensive support program for first-year students.

And, this semester, El Centro is proud to highlight the success story of Diana Redkva, a student worker, who started as one of our cohort students and is currently pursuing a business degree.

Amazing stories surround us everywhere we turn, stories of students and their drive to achieve. At El Centro we pride ourselves on helping students realize their dreams. As the fall semester concluded, we celebrated our students' achievements and congratulated them for how extraordinary they are.

Sincerely,
 Maria E. Luna-Duarte, Ph.D.
 Director



Diana Redkva understands the power of an education. With her parents and brother cheering her on, Diana is not afraid to pursue her dream of achieving an accounting degree.

Diana was first introduced to the field of accounting in her freshman year at Schurz High School. Every year after that she enrolled in an accounting class. During her senior year, Diana experienced first-hand how to run her own virtual business, using an online accounting program. She says that "running a business is very complicated, but I enjoy juggling numbers and balancing accounts."

When it came time to apply for college, Diana was not sure which college to choose. Diana's brother advised her to attend Northeastern because "it has a really great business school." Diana followed her big brother's advice and, in August 2017, enrolled in El Centro's cohort program. She said that her "experience in the cohort program was amazing. I loved the workshops. They prepared us for college and provided us with the resources we needed to do well in school."

Diana is very grateful to her parents, who immigrated from Ukraine to Chicago in 2009 in search of a better life for their two children. Seeing her parents working hard to support the family motivates Diana to do her best. Diana's mother (and her best friend) encourages her daughter to never be afraid to ask for what she wants. With her mother's wise words guiding her, Diana reached out and asked for a position at El Centro. Impressed by her determination, Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte, director of El Centro, offered her a position as a student worker. For the past year, "Diana has been a pleasure to work with at El Centro. With her strong work ethic, professional attitude, and friendly demeanor, Diana is truly an asset to El Centro," said Luna-Duarte.

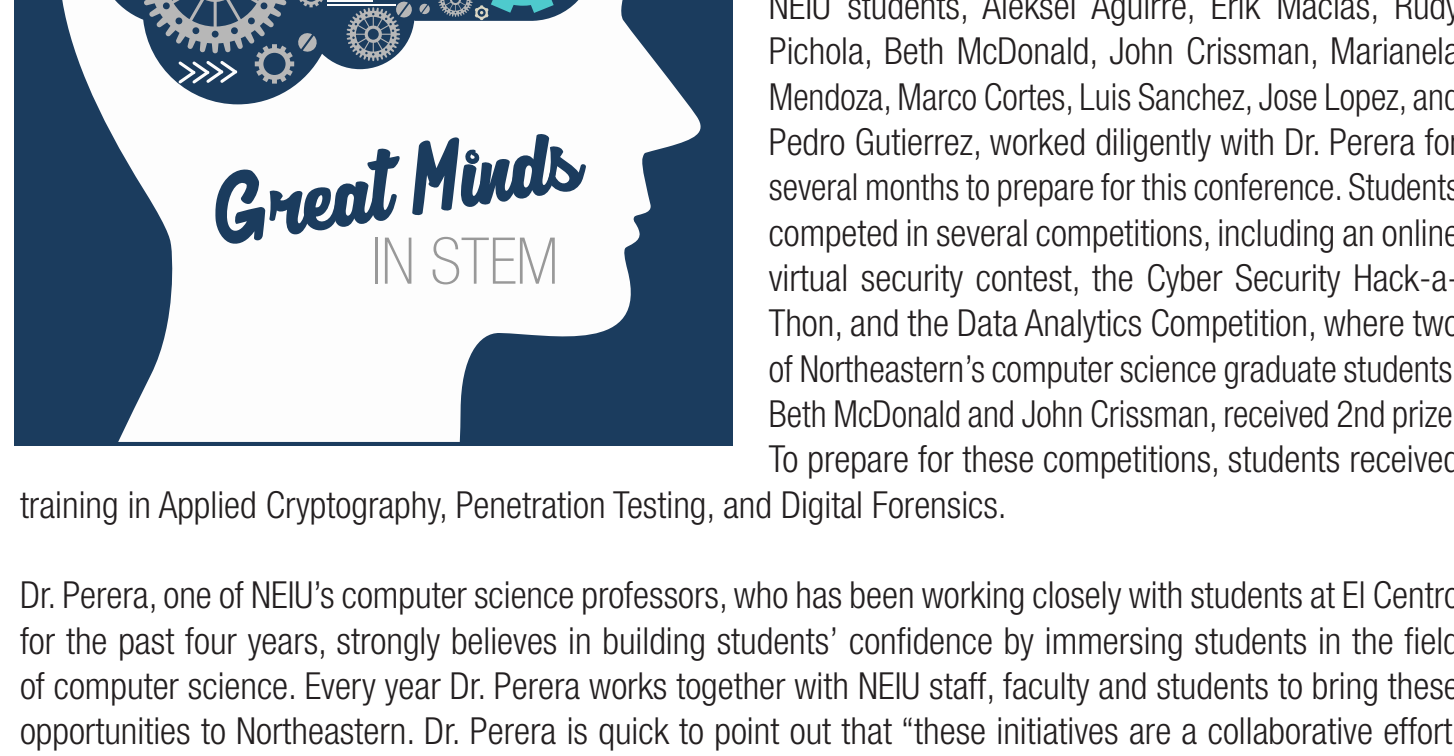
Looking back on all she has accomplished since arriving from Ukraine as a 10-year-old girl -- learning English as a Second Language, navigating a new school system, passing the Constitution test for U.S. citizenship -- Diana never dreamed she would be living in Chicago studying accounting at Northeastern. As she so astutely observes, "Life happens and you have to make the most of it."

NEIU El Centro's New Recruiter Denise Roman

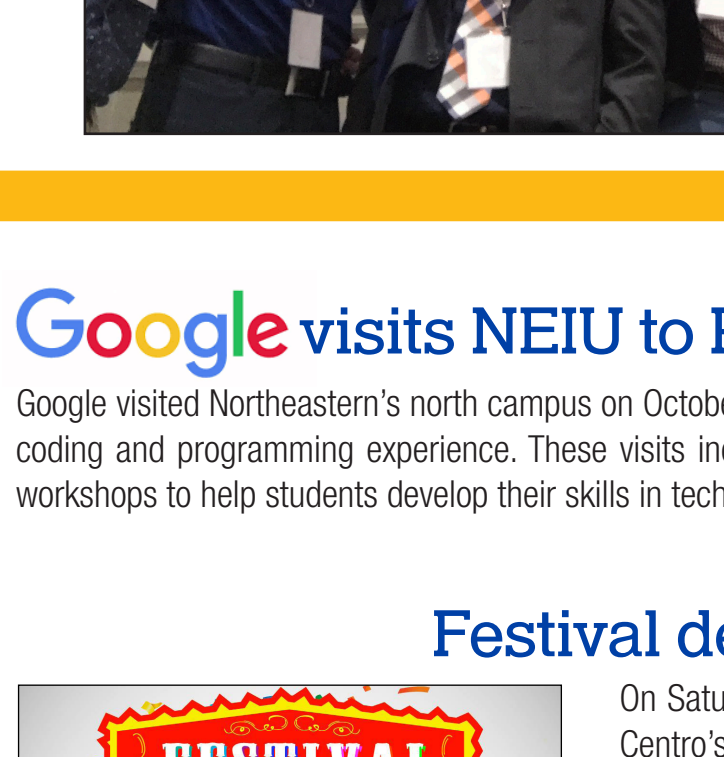
Our new recruiter, **Denise Roman**, has extensive experience working with students at Northeastern. For ten years, she served as an adviser and recruiter for Northeastern's Proyecto Pa'Lante program. As an alum, having earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology and currently pursuing a master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Denise is proud to represent Northeastern, visiting high schools, and community colleges and agencies, promoting all the wonderful opportunities NEIU has to offer.



El Centro @ HACU



On October 8, El Centro team members, **Rebeca Lamadrid-Quevedo**, assistant director, and **Mimi Crespo**, coordinator of the Learning Resource Center, presented at the 2018 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) national conference in Atlanta, GA. The presentation, "El Centro Scholars Program: An Engaging and Successful Cohort System," described how El Centro helps students succeed in college. NEIU President Gloria Gibson (pictured above), also attended the presentation to lend her support.



With **Dr. Graciela Perera's** leadership and support, ten NEIU students attended HENAAC (Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Awards Conference) in Pasadena, CA on October 17-21. Each year, the conference brings together thousands of students from STEM education and workforce sectors.

NEIU students, Aleksei Aguirre, Erik Macias, Rudy Pichola, Beth McDonald, John Crissman, Marianela Mendoza, Marco Cortes, Luis Sanchez, Jose Lopez, and Pedro Gutierrez, worked diligently with Dr. Perera for several months to prepare for this conference. Students competed in several competitions, including an online virtual security contest, the Cyber Security Hack-a-Thon, and the Data Analytics Competition, where two of Northeastern's computer science graduate students, Beth McDonald and John Crissman, received 2nd prize. To prepare for these competitions, students received training in Applied Cryptography, Penetration Testing, and Digital Forensics.

Dr. Perera, one of NEIU's computer science professors, who has been working closely with students at El Centro for the past four years, strongly believes in building students' confidence by immersing students in the field of computer science. Every year Dr. Perera works together with NEIU staff, faculty and students to bring these opportunities to Northeastern. Dr. Perera is quick to point out that "these initiatives are a collaborative effort. We work together as a community to support our students."

Because of her expertise in advising students and event planning, El Centro's own Financial Aid Coordinator, Karim Escobar-Franklin, was invited to attend the conference, organizing students and assisting with registration. This trip was also made possible because of a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant and our partnership with the Computing Alliance for Hispanic Serving Institutions (CAHSI), in which NEIU has been an active member since 2013.



Google visits NEIU to Recruit Our Students!

Google visited Northeastern's north campus on October 3 and El Centro on October 4 to recruit students with coding and programming experience. These visits included sessions on Google's culture, resume tips, and workshops to help students develop their skills in technology and engineering.

Festival de la FAFSA



On Saturday, October 6, during this year's FAFSA workshop, El Centro's Financial Aid Coordinator, Karim Escobar-Franklin, in collaboration with the Office of Financial Aid and the El Centro team, assisted 55 eligible students and their families in completing their FAFSA for the 2019-20 academic year. Step-by-step, students were guided through the online process at El Centro's computer lab. Information about scholarships was also provided.

HACEMOS 20th Annual International High Technology Day



On October 18, El Centro welcomed over 100 high school students from Chicago Public Schools for SOMOS technology, HACEMOS 20th Annual International High Technology Day. HACEMOS, AT&T's Latino employee resource group, exposes Latino youth to educational and career opportunities in STEM. This year's theme, "SOMOS Tecnología" or "We Are Technology," centers around increasing Latino representation in STEM from an early age and getting students involved in the industry.



Welcoming Reception for New Latinx Faculty and Staff

The Angelina Pedrosos Center, in collaboration with El Centro, welcomed new Latinx members to the NEIU familia. On Thursday, November 1, new Latinx faculty and staff enjoyed a lively reception in El Centro's community room.

Halloween Activities @ El Centro

El Centro partnered with the Northeastern Programming Board and Student leadership Development to organize many Halloween activities for students to enjoy, including a Pumpkin Carving Contest, a Day of the Dead Sugar Skulls Workshop, and a Horror Fest.

Secret Santa Gift Exchange with Cohort Students

El Centro's cohort students and staff enjoyed a secret santa gift exchange for our last success workshop of the fall semester on Thursday, December 6.

Toy Drive

Thank you to all of the NEIU students, faculty and staff and Vive Healthy Sports and Nutrition who donated toys for our Annual Toy Drive that benefited the En Las Tablas Performing Arts organization.

El Centro wants to hear from YOU!

Do you have a story you'd like to share? Email your suggestions to m-crespo1@neiu.edu. The El Centro Newsletter is written and edited by Mimi Crespo, and designed by Fausto P. Ortiz.