

### A Message from the Director



In this issue of the Fall 2019 Newsletter, El Centro celebrates the many achievements of our students, faculty and staff.

First, we honor Jeanette Delgado, one of our cohort students, who is well on her way to achieving her dream of being the first in her family to graduate from college.

Second, one of our greatest achievements this summer was the Google Computer Science Summer Institute Extension Program (CSSI-Extension). Our Computer Science faculty, Dr. Graciela Perera and Akkady Tchaba, and our student leaders, Marianela Crissman and Kevin Nunez, and the El Centro team partnered with Google to teach our students key industry concepts and computer languages. Fourteen Northeastern first-year students and transfer students successfully completed this three-week intensive workshops, where they learned HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python, AppEngine and Datastore. NEIU is looking forward to future partnerships with Google, so that we can continue to offer computer science opportunities to our students.

In addition to the Google CSSI-Extension Program, we were excited to receive a new group of cohort freshmen to our Summer Transition Program. Students dedicated six weeks of their summer in order to get a headstart on the fall semester. This year, 70 percent of our students significantly improved their English and math skills, jumping two or three levels from developmental courses to English 101 and college-level math.

El Centro is also happy to welcome its new team of librarians, who enthusiastically help students navigate our library resources. Our Library and Resource Center space is a great place for students to hang out, relax and get work done. We have a textbook collection, private meeting rooms, awesome programming and tutors!

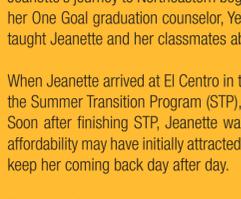
Of course, it's not all work here at El Centro. We also try to have fun as we support our students. In July, we once again partnered with Proyecto Pa'Lante for our Third Annual Beer and Bites fundraiser. With a tasty buffet, thirst-quenching beers, and a lively DJ, we raised thousands of dollars to help Northeastern students with emergency scholarships. To celebrate the fall semester, we cheered students at our Golden Eagle Welcome Day and, later that week, served ice cream!

Congratulations to our team of students, faculty and staff. It's a pleasure to look back on our achievements as we embrace a new fall semester full of possibilities.

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



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# STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

Jeanette Delgado is fortunate to have a strong support system that cares about her future. Throughout her life, she has had some pretty amazing mentors advising her every step of the way. It's no wonder Jeanette is one of El Centro's Student Success Stories.

Jeanette's journey to Northeastern began during her junior year at Rickover Naval Academy High School, when her One Goal graduation counselor, Yesenia Lawrence, advised Jeanette to apply to NEIU. Ms. Lawrence also taught Jeanette and her classmates about FAFSA, student loans and time management.

When Jeanette arrived at El Centro in the summer of 2018, she already had the tools necessary to succeed in the Summer Transition Program (STP), which allowed her to significantly improve her English and math skills. Soon after finishing STP, Jeanette wanted to transition from the Main Campus to El Centro. Northeastern's affordability may have initially attracted Jeanette, but it would be El Centro's community environment that would keep her coming back day after day.

"I am grateful for my experience in the cohort program," Jeanette said of her time at El Centro. "It has helped me make new friends, and the support I have received from advisors and staff has made transitioning to college a lot easier."

Last year, feeling confident, Jeanette asked if El Centro would hire her as one of its student workers. Realizing how motivated she was, Dr. Maria Luna-Duarte, El Centro's director, immediately hired her, and for the past two years, Jeanette has been an essential part of the El Centro team, assisting with tours and special projects and welcoming guests.

Jeanette's family has also played a big part in her success. Her parents and older sister, Vanessa, with whom she has a very close relationship, have guided Jeanette throughout her life. Jeanette and Vanessa are constantly supporting and sharing their achievements with one another while Jeanette's parents are the glue that holds the family together.

Embodying the true meaning of the American Dream, Jeanette's parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico to provide their children with a better life. Though they were not able to finish their own schooling in Mexico, now in the U.S., Jeanette's parents work long hours to support their daughters' dreams.

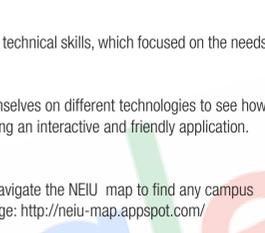
With her family and the El Centro community at her side, Jeanette will realize her dream of graduating from college. Learning about psychology, how the mind works and how she can use her skills to help others, is Jeanette's first priority, and when times get tough, all she has to do is remember her parent's words -- ¡Echale ganas! -- a Spanish phrase that means Give it your all!



## Google Summer Program

The Google Computer Science Summer Institute Extension Program (Google CSSI-Extension) at El Centro was a huge success! From July 22 to Aug. 9, fourteen NEIU students dedicated themselves all day to this three-week intensive and interactive program, learning HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python, AppEngine and Datastore.

CSSI-Extension programs are inspired by Google and independently run by faculty on each host campus in partnership with Google, exposing students to key computer science (CS) concepts. The goal of CSSI-Extension is to increase the number of women, underrepresented ethnic minority students, first-generation, and low-income college students in the field of computer science. Northeastern is the only school in the Midwest—and one of only nine in the United States—to offer Google's CSSI-Extension program to incoming freshmen and transfer students. Over three weeks, they were given the knowledge and tools necessary to tackle challenging CS problems, culminating in the presentation of team projects that they present to their cohort, to the University community and their family members.



On Aug. 9, students presented four final projects showcasing their technical skills, which focused on the needs of the NEIU community:

- Code Runners** is an app that will help CS students test themselves on different technologies to see how much they've learned and allow them to polish their skills, using an interactive and friendly application. Page: <http://coderrunner-248921.appspot.com/>
- Lion Tech** is a web application that allows anyone to easily navigate the NEIU map to find any campus location, as well as to share a link to the selected building. Page: <http://neiu-map.appspot.com/>
- CSSI HUB** is a web application that allows CS students to review the rules of certain technologies. Page: <http://burnished-ray-248514.appspot.com/>
- First Class Developers** is a web application that provides NEIU students with a variety of internship opportunities, along with a description and a link to the company's webpage. Page: <http://cssi-neiu-fcd.appspot.com/>

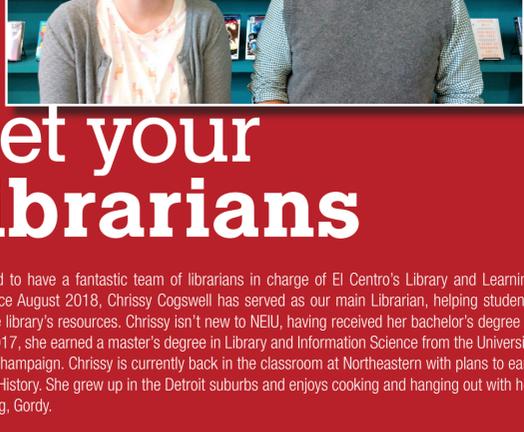
Running the Google CSSI-Extension program was definitely a team effort. Google provided the lectures and practice materials while the following NEIU Computer Science faculty and graduate students facilitated the curriculum: Dr. Graciela Perera, associate professor; Akkady Tchaba, instructor; and CS majors Marianela Crissman and Kevin Nunez. Perera helped bring Google's program to Northeastern in collaboration with El Centro Director Maria Luna-Duarte. As the Director of El Centro, Luna-Duarte recruited students, managed the program, and provided our students, faculty, and Google guests with the classrooms, technology, and hearty meals needed to fuel the minds of future computer scientists.



"Being that it was the first time we ran the program, I considered it a huge success," Marianela C. said. "The students not only were able to learn some pretty impressive technologies, but they were also able to connect with other students and faculty, presenting their work with confidence using terminology that developers use in the industry."

As an NEIU graduate student studying web applications development, Marianela is looking forward to applying the technical skills she's learned at Northeastern to a career as a software engineer/full stack developer in a company that values its employees. She also sees herself as a resource for students, sharing what she has learned in order to help students in their computer science careers.

Congratulations to Marianela who plans to graduate with a master's degree in Computer Science in May 2020, and to everyone who participated in the program. We are definitely looking forward to Google CSSI-Extension 2020!



## meet your Librarians

El Centro is delighted to have a fantastic team of librarians in charge of El Centro's Library and Learning Resource Center. Since August 2018, Chrissy Cogswell has served as our main Librarian, helping students and staff navigate the library's resources. Chrissy isn't new to NEIU, having received her bachelor's degree in History in 2015. In 2017, she earned a master's degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Chrissy is currently back in the classroom at Northeastern with plans to earn a master's degree in History. She grew up in the Detroit suburbs and enjoys cooking and hanging out with her husband and their dog, Gordy.

At the library desk, you'll also see Joel Rangel, El Centro's Library Specialist. Joel serves as a valuable resource to our students, assisting them through their educational journey one question at a time. A native to Chicago's northwest suburbs, Joel earned a bachelor's degree in Resource Conservation from the University of Montana. For the past three years, Joel supported the public libraries of Fox Lake and Palatine. He's very motivated and talented, eager to support the NEIU community. Joel would like to share a few words of wisdom from retired astronaut Chris Hadfield: "There's nothing more important than what you're doing right now."

Along with our team, there's a lot going on at the El Centro Library and Learning Resource Center. As our students know, the library is a great place to hang out, relax and get work done. But, did you know we are also a pickup location for Interlibrary Loan books? In addition, we have a textbook collection, private study rooms, awesome programming, and tutors! In addition to those resources, our reference desk is staffed by full-time employees and graduate students who are available to answer all of your questions. Stop by and say hello to our team. They would love to help you with your assignments and show you how to use the library's exciting electronic resources.

## Summer Transition Program



Congratulations to our students who participated in the Summer Transition Program. We are very pleased to announce that 70 percent of our students significantly improved their English and math skills in just six weeks. A few of them jumped two or three levels from developmental courses to English 101 and college level math. In this picture, students are standing proud on the last day of the program, sharing how much they enjoyed the food options, the outdoor patio, meeting new friends, and most of all, improving their test scores.

## Golden Eagle Welcome Day



El Centro participated in this year's Golden Eagle Welcome Day on Saturday, Aug. 24. Faculty and staff cheered as new students passed through the welcome ganlet. Festivities continued in the Auditorium with a welcome ceremony, followed by lunch, Playfair activities, and an outdoor resource fair.

## BEER AND Bites

Thank you all for supporting El Centro and Proyecto Pa'Lante during our Third Annual Beer and Bites fundraiser which took place on Tuesday, July 30. Over 100 tickets were sold and guests enjoyed a tasty buffet and a variety of thirst-quenching beers. DJ AI rocked the house with his lively emcee skills as he invited President Gloria J. Gibson and friends to join in the fun on the dance floor. Proceeds from the evening will help our students with emergency scholarships.



## Inside Scoop Welcome Event

The El Centro team, in collaboration with the Student Leadership Development Office, welcomed students to the fall semester with a free ice cream bar on Tuesday, Aug. 27. As students passed through El Centro's lobby they stopped to enjoy a variety of ice cream flavors and toppings.



## Counseling & Health Services during Fall Semester

### Counseling Services

During the fall semester, Counseling Services will be offered at El Centro on Thursdays from 1-7 p.m. in the Welcome Center. Students are encouraged to make an appointment or just stop by between 3-4 p.m. Students can use counseling for a variety of reasons, including issues with anxiety, depression and relationships. Counseling Services are free and confidential.



Dr. Michael McPartland will be providing counseling services for students at El Centro. Dr. McPartland received his master's degree in Counseling Psychology and his doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Adler University. He has worked in university counseling centers throughout Chicago and the Midwest and, for the past three years, has been working with students, faculty and staff at Northeastern.

### Health Services

Health Services will also be offered at El Centro during the fall semester. Students can stop by El Centro's main lobby from 2-5 p.m. on Wednesdays to meet with Jenny Lasko, one of NEIU's registered nurses. Services include health consultations, immunization reviews, first aid and much more. Jenny will be happy to answer all your health-related questions. Just stop by and ask!



*El Centro* 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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](mailto:m-crespo1@neiu.edu).

The El Centro Newsletter is written and edited by Mimi Crespo and designed by Fausto P. Ortiz.