

## NDP (BOG) Grad on Alumni Board

NEIU Alumni Board member **Eric Rojas** graduated summa cum laude from NEIU in 2005, earning Nontraditional Degree Programs' Board of Governors BA (now the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies). One of Chicago's most prominent realtors, Mr. Rojas was awarded the Chicago Association of Realtors' Top Producer Award for seven consecutive years. He excels at using social media to make meaningful connections, and authors the award-winning blog *Chicago Real Estate Local*.



Mr. Rojas is the father of three children (6, 4 and 18 months) and was elected Parent Representative to Chappel Elementary Local School Council. He is also an active volunteer and fundraiser at St. Matthias School.

In a recent interview, he discussed how his wife's accomplishments as the top student in her college nursing major inspired his decision to return to college and complete his baccalaureate degree. He chose NEIU and Nontraditional Degree Programs because of the opportunities available to adults with life and work experience. He emphasized the importance of taking advantage of the programs and scholarships available to students. Making commitments to programs, to coursework, and especially to relationships is crucial to success in college and beyond. "Adult learners must change," Mr. Rojas advises. "They cannot have the same attitude and habits as they enter a degree program. I remember distinctly changing my routines and habits to be successful."

Find the full text of this interview on the NDP web site at [www.neiu.edu~ndp](http://www.neiu.edu~ndp).

## Nontraditional Student Recognition Week Nov. 4—8

To recognize the contribution of the nontraditional student to campuses nationwide, National Nontraditional Student Week was established. Nontraditional Students are a large part of the higher education community. There are over 40 colleges and universities in the Chicago, and nearly all of them have academic or social programs to support nontraditional students.

Here at NEIU, both the University Without Walls (UWW) and Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies degree programs were designed especially for nontraditional students.

However, even students who are not enrolled in NDP fit some or all of the following characteristics

## High Achieving UWW Student

University Without Walls (UWW) student **Dayani Pieri** began her program here at NEIU in Fall 2011 with the depth area of botany. Her interest in plant science began with a research course at Oakton Community College where she worked on invasive plant species. She received several National Science Foundation grants to do internships at institutions including Wright State University, the Chicago Botanic Garden and Northwestern University's Collaborative Research Program. Ms. Pieri earned awards for her research and received a 18 months Fellowship from the American Ecological Society (ESA)'s SEEDS program to conduct research at the Argonne National Laboratory and worked on a perennial grass biofuel field at Fermi National Laboratory. She has received travel awards from the ESA SEEDS Program to attend conferences, leadership meetings and ecological field trips. She visited Harvard University's Harvard Forest in Petersham, MA and University of Virginia's Mountain Lake Biological Station to conduct short term research and meet world renowned ecologists. She has also received scholarships to help finance her education: the Guistwhite Scholarship; the Coca Cola Scholarship; and the NEIU Phi Theta Kappa Honors Program Scholarship.

Her advice to UWW students who are starting out: "Record your learning experiences as they occur. This will make your UWW experience so much easier."

Ms. Pieri is grateful for the flexibility of UWW and says, "it gives me freedom to choose my courses and pursue my interest in plant biology. Working daily in a Montessori elementary classroom, I would never have been able to achieve what I have if not for the UWW. It gave me an opportunity to pursue my interests while balancing work, research, and family."

After graduation, she will pursue a graduate degree in ecology, continue to teach, and do her part to contribute to local and global communities.

that define the nontraditional student according to the National Center for Educational Statistics:

- Financial independence
- Full-time employment
- Part-time college enrollment
- Has dependents
- Is a single parent
- Delayed enrollment in post-secondary education
- Did not obtain a high school diploma.

Stop by our table in Village Hall Monday, November 4 as we kick off Nontraditional Student Week.

## BAIS Concentrations

The Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (BAIS) Program offers a variety of options for students to tailor their degree to meet their specific career and academic goals. Many BAIS students enter the program with a large number of credits which may not configure in a way that makes declaring a second major or minor a realistic choice. Instead, many BAIS students choose to complete one or more of the seven BAIS Concentrations available.

Each Concentration demonstrates a focus in a particular area and appears on the academic transcript. Having a particular Concentration listed on the transcript can be helpful when applying for jobs or graduate programs.

Four BAIS Concentrations are classified as **General Concentrations**:

- Fine Arts
- Humanities
- Social Sciences
- Natural Sciences

To achieve any of these, a student completes six three credit hour upper division courses in any of the Fine Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences or Natural Sciences. As long as the student earns a “C” grade or better in all six of the selected classes, a Concentration will be added to the transcript.

Three **Specific Concentrations** were developed in these areas:

- Leadership
- Professional Studies
- Community Development & Multicultural Studies

For these Concentrations students select six courses from a list of 12-14 determined by NDP staff. Courses may be substituted in consultation with a BAIS advisor. These Concentrations also require a grade of “C” or higher in each of the courses associated.

Students interested in completing a BAIS Concentration should make an appointment with a BAIS advisor by calling the NDP office at 773-442-6030.

## Prospective Student Meetings

Applicants to Nontraditional Degree Programs attend a Prospective Student Meeting. Upcoming meetings for both programs:

### Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (BAIS)

January 14, 2014	6-8 pm	SU 214
January 27, 2014	6-8 pm	SU 003
February 13, 2014	2-4 pm	SU 014
February 26, 2014	6-8 pm	SU 003
March 14, 2014	10 am-12 pm	SU 215
March 24, 2014	6-8 pm	SU 003

**University Without Walls (UWW)**  
TBA—Check NDP Website

## NDP Scholarships

Nontraditional Degree Programs offers these scholarships for students who major in Interdisciplinary Studies or the University Without Walls:

- NDP Merit Tuition Scholarship
- Brommel-Mendelson-Hennington Scholarship

Competitions for the Merit Tuition Scholarship are held in the summer for Fall semester awards and the Fall for Spring semester awards. Minimum eligibility is a 3.00 grade point average, six semester hours of enrollment for the term of the award. The application requires a letter of recommendation from a faculty member, completion of the scholarship application, and an essay that describes goals after graduating and how participation in BAIS or UWW will support the attainment of those goals.

Sixteen students in Nontraditional Degree Programs were awarded NDP Merit Tuition Scholarships for the Fall 2013 semester. The Brommel-Mendelson-Hennington Scholarship is awarded to one student annually.

Watch for emailed announcements of these scholarships and application deadlines, or stop by the NDP office, B 147, to inquire.

## Prior Learning Portfolio

Fall 2013 marks the beginning of a renewed focus on the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (BAIS) Prior Learning Portfolio (PLP). The Portfolio is a very affordable option for adult learners in the BAIS program to earn credit for life experiences and learning. Students choose college classes that match or reflect their learning, then develop documentation that demonstrates the prior learning.

Students write a personal narrative, called the Course Equivalency Statement, to describe what was learned and how it was learned. Each Course Equivalency Statement:

- Is written in the first-person: “I went,” “I saw,” “I discovered,” “I initiated,” etc.
- Uses the syllabus for the course as a guideline for ensuring that fundamental theoretical concepts are included in the narrative
- Is written step-by-step and guided by a revamped (and free) workshop process.

There are now three workshops available for BAIS students interested in completing a Prior Learning Portfolio, including the new “Introduction to Portfolio” which is a structured writing workshop where students can ask questions, share writing in a supportive environment, and get a jump-start on the Portfolio process

The BAIS Prior Learning Portfolio is a cost effective way to accelerate time to degree. Make an appointment with a BAIS advisor to discuss PLP today! Call 773-442-6030 or email [ndp@neu.edu](mailto:ndp@neu.edu).