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Lenny Ocasio

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INDEPENDENT

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Member of the Associated Collegiate Press

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Vol. 24, Issue 30

Budget cut for next year

by Cesar Sanchez
Staff Writer

Northeastern Illinois University will have to cut \$1.1 million in spending in the fiscal year of 2009, which will cut back on certain programs, as well as facilities and equipment for NEIU.

According to Vice President of Finance and Administration Mark Wilcockson, and the president's report to the Board of Trustees, all public state universities have been notified by the Illinois Board of Higher Education that the Governor's Office of Management and Budget was implementing a 2.5 percent

Although the university was told at the beginning of the fiscal year to expect this reserve, the school is going to have to implement some cutbacks across many programs that could potentially delay a student's graduation or time to degree.

This cutback will not only affect NEIU students, but it has the ability to cut back on faculty to provide the needed course sections for students. Many of the cutbacks will be on part-time staff, but they will also hinder addressing deferred maintenance projects and improving student services operations, such as the Financial Aid Office.

Most of the cutbacks from the budget will be from funds that replace outdated academic equipment, which has some students, as well as teachers, complaining already about the lack of modern equipment.

"The cut in spending is not done with a malicious or unfair purpose," said Eduardo Arabu Jr., NEIU's

Student Trustee. "It is done with the sole purpose of not hindering further setbacks in the future, and complying with state and IBHE budget."

Arabu reconfirmed that the goal of the school is not to cut back on spending for the selfish advancement of a particular new departmental program, much less for any bonuses for any staff members, but for the long term consequences the university could adhere to if the school were not to stay within the budget.

"I feel totally confident and optimistic of the decisions made by both President Hahs and the Board of Trustees in this matter," said Arabu.

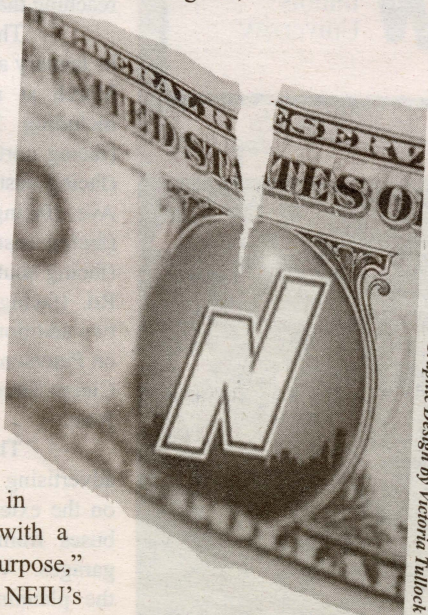
Arabu added that although there will be a cutback due to the economic recession and state budget, it will be to establish a consistency in spending in order to avoid tuition increases down the line.

Wilcockson said that the Board of Trustees is a business serving students' education and that it plans on staying that way. He also said that NEIU wants to avoid increasing tuition as a result of the budget cutbacks.

"In these matters NEIU tries to make cuts in sources and maintenance issues that would hardly impact students in the long run," said Wilcockson.

"The cut in spending is not done with a malicious or unfair purpose."

-Eduardo Arabu Jr.,
Student Trustee



2009 NEIU House Representatives Delegation

by Al Cordero
Special Contributor

The Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) Model Illinois Government (MIG) Club had another impressive performance at the 31st annual Model Illinois Government simulation convention, which was held on February 27 in Springfield, Illinois.

Among the many members of the NEIU delegation, a few stood out amongst their peers. Third year MIG veteran Paul Harris was elected by his peers in the Democrat Caucus to serve as the Majority Leader in the House of Representatives. His job entailed the organizing

of the entire Democrat Party in the House, as well as setting the agenda for the weekend with the other leaders of the House. Along with that honor, Harris also took home the award for "Outstanding House Member". Harris will go down in the MIG history books as one of the most decorated members of the House of Representatives.

In his second year going to MIG, Miguel Loeza was elected to serve as a whip in the House. His job was to assist the leadership by identifying speakers to be put on a list from which the Majority Leader can then choose.

First year delegates to MIG Stephan McCullom, Angel Valez, Tony Ellis, Trisha

Conley, Josh Cruz, and Jose Fulgencio continued the four year tradition of sending outstanding students to represent NEIU. Their contributions to the MIG-NEIU club were too numerous to mention in this article, but if their performance at the simulation is any indication, NEIU will be bringing home another "Outstanding Large Delegation" this time next year.

Alainya Bandy served the Model Illinois Government simulation as the Assistant Editor of the MIG Journal, a daily newspaper that covers the goings-on of the simulation.

SEE MIG, PAGE 4

Students face problems with Financial Aid Department

by Ryan Storck
Staff Writer

A growing trend within the student body of Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) seems to be having a negative outlook on the Financial Aid Office and its protocols.

Out of 25 students asked, 12 had negative things to say, seven of them did not go through financial aid to pay for their education and six students remained happy with their experiences. Out of the twelve students that had complaints about financial aid, 11 of them asked to remain anonymous.

The financial aid Web site on the newly introduced NEIUport states their mission: "To provide services and programs to all NEIU students in support of their education. Through the services provided, it is the department's intent to assist students in identifying funding suitable for their educational objectives."

A female sophomore,

21, who wished to remain anonymous, disagrees with that mission statement. She was a transfer student from Richard Daley College and said that once she arrived at NEIU to pursue her education, her financial aid problems started. She said that she checked in the office to see if "the money she was promised" had gone through on her account. She said that two weeks before classes started, the front desk person told her that her loan was denied and she would have to pay out of pocket.

"I had to borrow money from my family, something that I didn't want to do," she said. She was then told that she would receive a letter stating the reason for her loan denial, a letter, she said, that never came.

Mike Hendzel, a NEIU senior, said of his Fall 2008 semester, "I was dropped from all my classes because I didn't confirm my registration with a payment. I didn't think I had to since I applied for financial

aid and was approved". There was a miscommunication between the financial aid department and the cashiers in his situation.

"There is no reason financial aid can't send a simple list of applicants to the cashier's office. Because of them I had to pick all new classes, don't they have email?" Hendzel asked.

J. Marshall Jennings, the Financial Aid Director at NEIU, said that most of the problems students face in regards to getting their money on time is because they are filing late. "I would say that would be the primary thing - not leaving long enough time for the process to take care of itself," said Jennings.

Another student, 24, who is now pursuing her second BA at NEIU, said that in her experience with financial aid, time was not on her side. She said, "I went to see if my money was in yet, and they told me that there was a hold on my account, but I didn't fail any classes."

SEE FINANCIAL AID, PAGE 4

Independent wins second place in national competition



Photo supplied by Michelle Jacobson

From left to right: Frank Nieto, David Mosher, Victoria Tullock, Cheryl Lyman, Lenny Ocasio, Michelle Jacobson, Victoria Donates, Whitney Behr, David Mitchell

From February 26 through March 1, nine staff members of the *Independent* attended the Associated Collegiate Press National Journalism Convention in San Diego. Student newspapers from throughout the U. S. entered in the convention's Best of Show contest within their appropriate categories. In the category of non-weekly four-year university newspaper, the

Independent won second place. The staff would like to thank the student body of Northeastern Illinois University for their readership and their feedback. Without you, there would be no *Independent*.

New advertising for NEIU

by Theresa Celmer
Staff Writer

Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) has a new advertising campaign that

includes billboards and advertisements as a way to increase student enrollment.

The NEIU logo is still the same, but the new tagline is "Learn in the city. Lead in the world." The logo was designed by Matt

Byerly, and the final design was chosen with help from focus groups of students, faculty and staff.

Director of marketing, Julie Wight said that the goal in the development of the

tagline was to keep in mind some of the themes that emerged from strategic planning, including the university's mission and vision.

NEIU has been advertised in newspapers and online in the past. "However, one of the university strategic goals that developed from the planning process specifically called for the development of branding, as well as implementing enhanced marketing and public relations communications," said Wight. "This was the first step in reaching that goal."

The billboards were put up in January and can be found through March at a number of locations, including 3606 S. Ashland Ave. (facing north), 3679 W. Grand Ave. (facing east), 2924 N. Central Park Ave. (facing south), 2945 E 87th St. (facing east), 1740 S. Damen Ave. (facing south), and 1322 N. Pulaski Rd. (facing south). There are also two additional bridge billboards, one on Peterson Avenue and the other on Cicero Street, which will be up until June.

The CTA will also be advertising for four weeks in April on the exterior and interior of their buses from two of the CTA bus garages. Wight, who served on the planning committee, said that from the positive responses that the committee has received so far, she feels that the ads were successful.

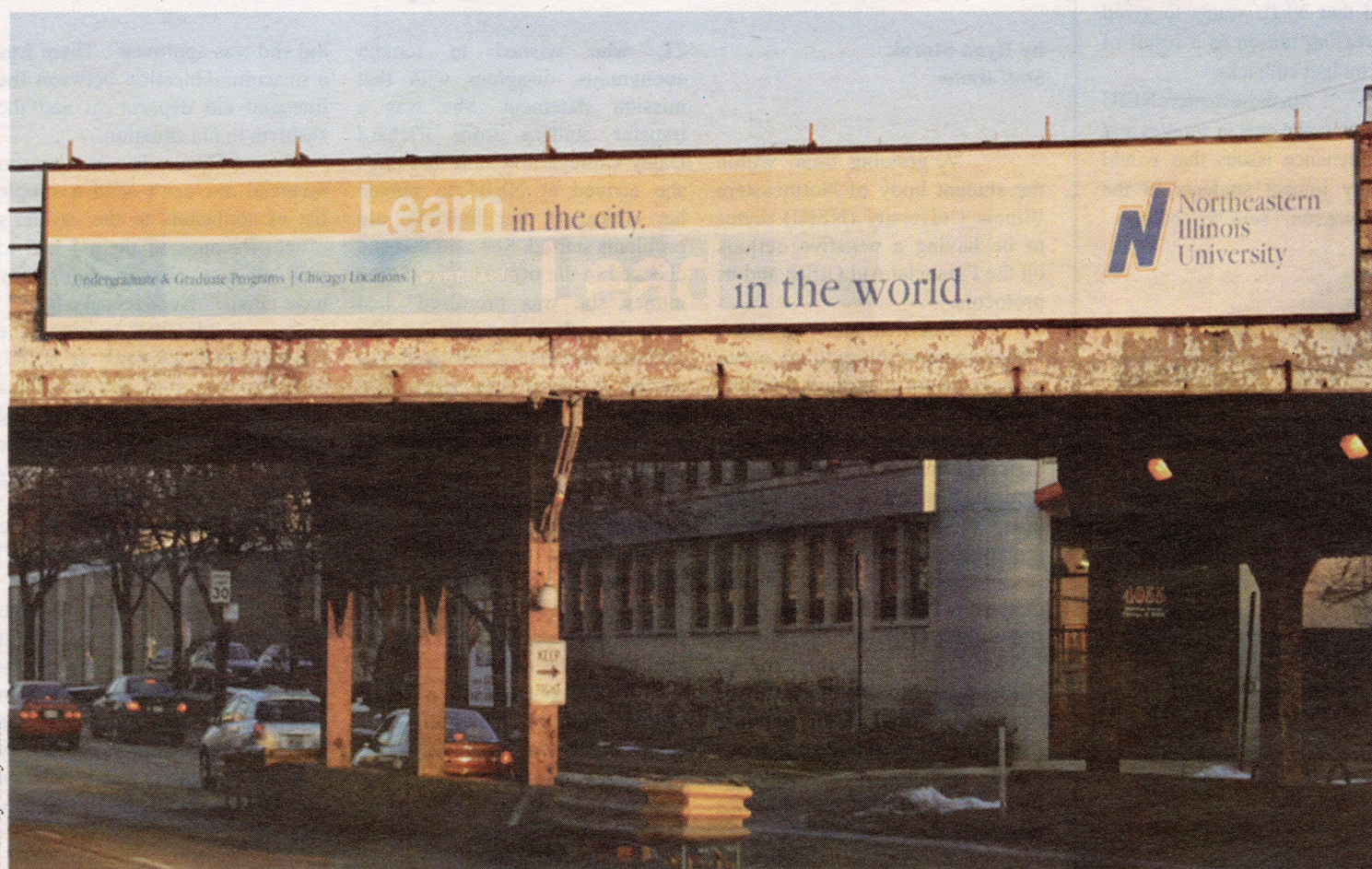


Photo by Tracy Ellen

by Cheryl Lyman
Associate Editor

CAMPUS BRIEFS

Creative Writing

The English department is offering a new course for the summer semester. An intensive creative writing class offering workshops, discussions and presentations of poetry and short fiction will be led by three faculty members: Brad Greenburg, Olivia Cronk and Debra Bruce. This course will meet Mon. - Fri. for two weeks from July 6-17 from 9:30 a.m. -3:15 p.m., with an hour and fifteen minute lunch break. Mornings will be dedicated to intensive writing and thinking, with the afternoon as a large group workshop. Some of the topics covered will include Chicago poetry, publishing your work, teaching creative writing and the overall profession of writing. This is a three credit hour course for undergraduates or

graduates. The course is 398-1 and the reference number is 31743. If you have any further questions on this class offering, please phone the English Department at (773) 442-5810 or e-mail d-bruce-kinnebrew@neiu.edu, b-greenburg@neiu.edu or o-cronk@neiu.edu.

Computer Science Panel

The Computer Science Department, along with Alumni Affairs and the Career Placement Office, are holding their eighteenth annual computer science career panel on Friday, April 3 at 1:00 p.m. in room SU-215. This will include a panel discussion with Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) alumni on their background and professional experience. Any student who is interested in the computer science

field should find this information valuable. For more information, please contact Sue Snyder at (773)442-4722 or sm-snyder@neiu.edu.

Have you heard?

The Mathematics Department will continue to offer the online courses Pre-Calculus, Math 185 and Calculus I, Math187. There is a benefit to the online classes. Pre-Calculus is offered in Summer 1A and Calculus I is offered during the Summer II sessions. These online courses have been well received by students. The math department encourages students to take advantage of the flexibility online courses offer.

~NEIU Mathematics Department



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UPCOMING EVENTS AT NEIU

March 9-12 The Past and Future(s) of Revolutions: A Global Exploration Please see website for list of conference times and locations http://www.neiu.edu/~acdebelo/revolutions.html for more info contact Academic Development at (773) 442-5441	Castillo Q&A session 1:40 p.m. Lecture at 8:00 p.m. NEIU Recital Hall	Falla, and Prokofiev 7:30 p.m. Fine Arts Center Recital Hall	March 19 An International Socialist Org. Forum for Women's History Month 7:00 p.m. Student Union see web site for more information http://www.neiu.edu/Academics/College%20of%20Arts_Sciences/Departments_Programs/Women%2527s%20Studies/Events/Events.html
March 11 Financial Management Association CFA Lecture 5:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m. Golden Eagles room	March 12-14 The Illusion 7:00 p.m. Stage Center Theater F	March 14 Down For the Crown Mr. G PHI O presented by Gamma Phi Omega 6:30 p.m. Student Union Alumni Hall	
March 12 Guest Artists Waller and Maxwell Guitar Duo 7:30 p.m. Fine Arts Center Recital Hall	March 12 Deadline for Student Leadership awards nominations more info at http://www.neiu.edu/~lead	March 17 Student Recital 1:45 p.m. Fine Arts Center Recital Hall	March 21 American Brass Quintet 8:00 p.m. Fine Arts Center Recital Hall
GLBTA Health Fair 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Village Square	March 13 Faculty Recital: Nazar Dzhuryn, cello with Ivana Bukvic, piano Music of G. Valentini, Schubert, Kodaly,	March 18 Blue and Gold workshop Values Auction: What are your values worth? 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. and at 4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. SU 214	April 1, 3, 4 Into the Woods by Stephen Sondheim 7:30 p.m. University Auditorium
Marketing Club Networking Night 8:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m. CLS 3020		Caribe Mayo Tiana, director 7:30 p.m. University Auditorium	
Poet, Novelist, Essayist, and Author of he Guardian Ana			

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Tuesday, March 31st 1:40 p.m.

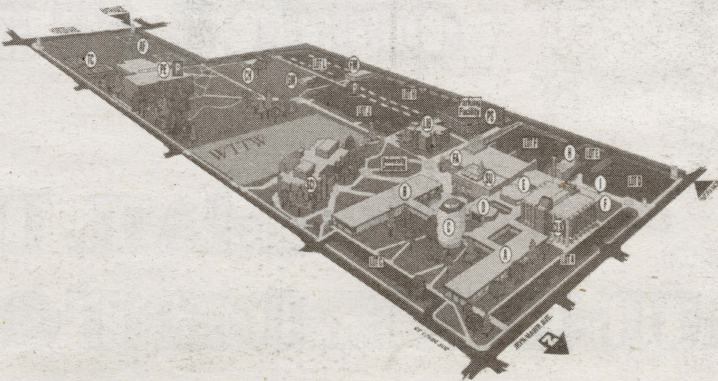
Studen Union, 1st Floor Golden Eagles Room

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POLICE BLOTTER

- On Feb. 22 at 4:56 p.m.** on Access road, I.V.C traffic violator found to be driving without a valid license and no insurance. Car was towed and a courts date is pending.
- On Feb. 24 at 3:17 p.m.** on Bryn Mawr and Drake after a foot chase subject was arrested for trespassing. Court date pending.
- On Feb. 27 at 2:29 p.m.** at NEIU an offender may have presented a forged NEIU paycheck during employment verification. The case is under investigation.



The Independent is a public forum for the community and university around Northeastern Illinois University.

The Independent is completely student run and receives no prior review of its content by anyone other than its student editors.

The Independent is published every other week except during summer and semester breaks. Deadlines are nine (9) days prior to the issue in which a contribution is to appear. Views expressed in letters are those of the university community and not those of the Editorial Board.

The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for the content of the Independent, and views presented do not necessarily represent those of the administration, faculty or students.

The Independent is a member of the Illinois College Press Association and Associated Collegiate Press.

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A News Perspective

Michelle Jacobson Features Editor, Co-News Editor

School's out forever at private broadcasting school

It happens at least once a semester. On your way to your class, you are stopped by a piece of paper on the door that says class is cancelled. Although you may be frustrated if you drove to NEIU just for that one class or you stayed up late doing the assignment that was due for that class, you probably feel some satisfaction in a class cancellation.

Now imagine finding a similar piece of paper at the school's entrance, but instead of notifying you that your class has been cancelled, the form is notifying you that your school has gone out of business and will be permanently closed.

At the Chicago campus of the Connecticut School of Broadcasting (CSB), this is exactly what happened, according to a news broadcast on CBS. On March 5,

students who made their way to classes at CSB's campus at 203 N. LaSalle St. were greeted by locked doors and a notice on a window that said the school was closed until further notice.

According to the press release from CSB, the private broadcasting school has ceased operations on its 26 campuses after its lender, National City/PNC Bank froze the school's accounts. The school is now seeking bankruptcy protection.

According to Associated Press, students of CSB pay as much as \$12,000 for the school's 16 week courses. Now that the school has closed, students are concerned about whether or not their money will be refunded. They are also upset that they will lose the job placement opportunities and studio access that they were promised as students of the school.

On the Facebook group, "Bring Back CSB," student Shannon Boucher expresses this concern. "All of us thought that we would always be able to have access to any of the studios across the U.S. That's what we paid for."

Although the students of CSB will undoubtedly work hard to correct the financial issues such as reimbursement, there is nothing they can do to make up for the time wasted in classes that were never finished and the opportunities they will miss in career placement following graduation.

Considering the cost of the CSB courses and the small size of the school (according to CSB's Web site the student to faculty ratio is 5:1), it is not entirely surprising that the school has become a victim of the slumping economy.

However small the amount of

students, though, these are still people who are now left with financial problems and no school to call their own.

At a state university like NEIU, we'll hopefully never have to experience a closure like CSB's. However, this doesn't mean we have nothing to worry about. As this issue's front page reports, our budget has been cut. Student workers' hours get slashed. Scholarships get downsized. We're all feeling this recession in one way or another.

So next time you're on your way to class and praying for it to be cancelled because you didn't do your homework or you have something better you'd rather be doing, and you get to class and find that is in session as usual, be glad. At least you have a class to go to, where you can see your tuition money at work.

MIG, continued

Kimberly Murphy in her last year as a MIG participant served as the organization's comptroller and put on a banquet for all 20 schools that were in attendance. Their contributions to the organization and to the club have cemented their place within the history books of Model Illinois Government.

NEIU has a great future ahead of them in Model Illinois Government. The foundation has been set for yet another run at bringing home the "Outstanding Large Delegation" award just as they did in 2008.

FINANCIAL AID, continued

Confused about why a hold was placed on her account, she was told by the front desk representative in financial aid to talk to her advisor. Her advisor looked up her file and said that she didn't see any hold on her account.

"I was ping-ponged around for about three weeks, just to find out that it was a computer error," she said. That three-week game of "ping-ponging" put her past the deadline to confirm her classes, and she too was dropped.

"I had to wait until the next semester to try again," she said, "and that wasn't the only bad experience I had." While telling her story of horror, she suddenly became quiet. She didn't want to talk any longer.

"We have to keep it down," she said while looking over her shoulder, "she works in the office." A lady that was approaching

was one that sits behind the front desk in the financial aid department. Once the lady had passed the student felt comfortable again to tell her story.

When asked why students seemed to be in fear of the financial aid department, not only because of the aforementioned situation, but also because so many students didn't want to give their names. Mr. Jennings said, "I don't know why, we're here to help people. We even have a suggestion box, and it doesn't require people to put down their names. We have that so we can get feedback about our services and can then take action accordingly."

Jennings said that for students to avoid problems they should "file early, give us enough time and then enough time to figure out what they're going to get, and to pursue alternative options."

In response to getting the wrong information from certain people, he said that students should see a financial advisor.

"Normally the people that we have at the front counter, they can give general information, they know how the processes run in the office. They can provide students with forms and take in forms that students bring into the office and check the accuracy of those forms," said Jennings.

A senior at NEIU, Dan Dziedzic, 26, who is hoping to graduate in May is staying optimistic about his financial aid. "I was approved for a Stafford loan at the end of last year. The office said my loan is supposed to go through on March 17, 2009," he said.

If a problem occurs, Dan plans on putting the payment on his credit card. Let's hope he doesn't have to.

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Did you know?Transfer student orientations

by Michael McNelly
Photographer

Experiences on the first day of arriving to a new campus can cause confusion, a loss of direction and frustration. Most campuses can be laid out in a completely different manner and have various systems to organize buildings. There are different terminologies for various sites to talk to about tuition, parking and transferring credits. However, some schools provide booths for information about the campus and the resources it provides. In addition, they have orientations for new students. They make sure students feel they know where they are going. Most students have trouble on the first day of class, whether new or old. At Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), the school provides a transfer student orientation, but many students do not know that it exists.

NEIU's transfer student orientation has been offered for the past three to four

years. It is programmed by a joint effort between the Dean of Students and the financial aid committee. There are 26 people in the committee and 15 peer leaders. The committee lays out what needs to be done to provide a beneficial orientation for students.

The peer leaders regulate group activities, tours and issuing IDs and provide resources for the three departments of the academic schools on campus. They also aid in registration, partake in FYI presentations, and give information about student support services and student activities. They are trained for 60 hours, attend mandatory monthly meetings and participate in a mandatory shared reading experience. They are paid, but need to complete a screening before becoming a peer leader.

Assistant Dean of Students Robert Bedford, said that the school wishes to make the orientation mandatory, since it helps students feel welcome, make friends, and have necessary information they need to find their way around NEIU. He explained

that they do try to notify students about the orientation by mailing first class letters after being matriculated into NEIU, e-mailing the same content from the letters to students and even calling all new transfer students.

"We made about 500 calls and over 400 students responded," Bedford said. Of course, there will be problems in dealing with wrong numbers, voicemails or disconnections; however, they work hard in trying to notify students.

For the orientations, students get to participate in group activities, are provided with light refreshments and a NEIU book bag. There is time to ask many questions about the functionalities about NEIU. In addition, a student resource guide is provided, including information about everything you need to know, a listing of locations, phone numbers, services available, a terminology guide for collegiate experiences and policies and procedures regarding NEIU.

It appears to be a wonderful program and the team would like to promote

and list their orientations on NEIUport in the future. They are also considering charging a low nominal fee for \$30 to \$35 to fund future orientations. Bedford adds, "We want to lessen the anxiety in students, make sure they are informed, and have all unanswered questions answered."

"We want them to be confident, feel welcome at NEIU, and prepared to start the collegiate life," said Bedford.

Future orientations are provided on June 18, July 15 (Wednesday) and Aug. 13 (Thursday) at the Golden Eagles Room in the Student Union from 1:00p.m.-4:00p.m. The committee is also trying to add one or two more dates, since there was a 30 percent increase of transfer students than last year. For more information, go to the Dean of Students in the B Building across from the computer lab in B-158. Ask for Robert Bedford regarding transfer student orientations. There is also information on the bulletin board past Descartes Café.

Do you feel they should make transfer student orientation more "out there"?

Photos by Michael McNelly



"Yes, I do. I was very confused when I came to school, mainly because I have transferred many times before. It can be a challenge to get a hold of teachers and departments to speak with regarding transfer credits and other important information like class schedules and knowing what's going on with the programs here."

Abby Heinz
Senior



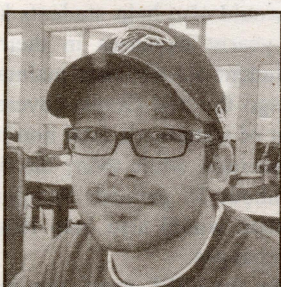
"Yes, I do, because I am a transfer student and I enrolled in Spring 2007 and I never got an orientation. I believe it would have helped me a lot to find my way around school, know where offices are located, and where different departments are located. I learned all that info later on, which was difficult for me to adjust to this school."

Kiran Siddiqi
Senior



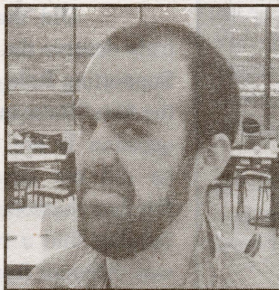
"I do believe that there should be a transfer student orientation because aside from location, it also helps the student understand where they are in regards to academic level. Also, to help them establish what they need in regards to graduation from this school."

Verónica Molina
Senior



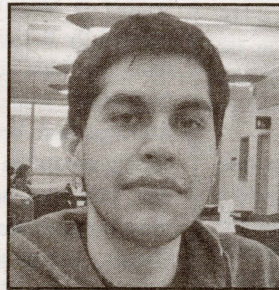
"I don't really think it's necessary because I came to the orientation. It had a lot of information that was useful as far as financial aid goes and how the school functions, as well as the orientation of the school grounds. I don't really think it helped too much in that area (school grounds)."

Ferhan Syed
Junior



"I don't feel there should be a transfer student orientation because if you're not smart enough to figure it out on your own, then you shouldn't be in college."

Kevin Byers
Senior



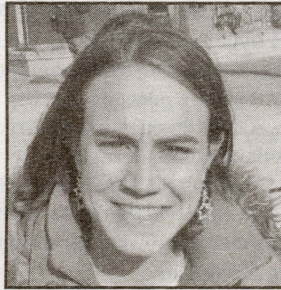
"Since there already is a transfer student orientation, I feel they should continue the program. Because it helps that are not knowledgeable about NEIU's building structures to get around school."

Sergio Guzmán
Junior



"Absolutely, because they're not going to know where to go. If they come from a different school, they're not going to know anything about this school. They should definitely keep the orientations running."

Fayth Wilson
Freshman



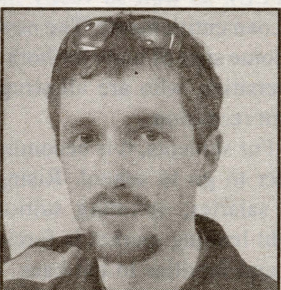
"I would think it would be a good idea to learn the layout of the school and how it runs because NEIU is a commuter school, and it runs differently than going away to college. I think that the orientations would be beneficial."

Megan Orlando
Freshman



"I believe they should have orientation for transfer students so they won't become lost on the first day of class. It also gives students confidence, which leads to better performances."

Yolanda Saér Pagón
Foreign Exchange Student
(Puerto Rico), Junior



"It should be up to the student if they want to take it. I think that some program like that is not a bad idea."

Aaron Kanfer
Senior

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Commentary

VOICE OF THE CAMPUS



We are not in high school anymore

by Lenny Ocasio
Editor-in-Chief

Anyone who went to a public high school knows what a nightmare group projects are. Those projects tended to show exactly what kind of person you were. The perfectionist was the one who had to have everything go exactly right, and would invariably take over the entire project. The slacker was the one who would do the minimal amount of work and let the other people in the group pick up his slack. The others were the followers, who took the parts that the perfectionist assigned.

Working in a university organization or a real job is the same kind of scenario. The only difference is that in student organizations, people are not being forced to work together, and at a job people are given a choice of working there. Anyone can join a student club or organization. When you have a large group of people trying to work together for a common purpose, things are bound to go wrong. Personalities clash, tempers flare and this causes problems. Egos are punctured or they crowd out the other people in the room. A large amount of the everyday stress we all experience is just a result of a difficult and tense work environment.

Working together is such a big part of what we do. Being constantly at each other's throats distracts us from our purpose as a student organization. There are several steps to improve your bond with your co-workers.

The first step is to get rid of the cliques. This is not high school. Back there it was fine to create a tight group and so establish your comfort zone. Now it excludes people and creates friction within your club. A clique generally nurtures the attitude of "us vs. them." This is not an attitude that says "teamwork and cooperation."

The next step is to have group outings that have nothing to do with the organization. Getting away from the causes of the stress helps melt some of the friction that exists between individuals who tend to work at cross-purposes. Meeting at a neutral location to relax and have fun actually gets people to open up, and so the transfer of ideas becomes a lot smoother.

Another step is to have meetings regularly with everyone in the organization. Micro-management is one way of fixing an organization that has been slacking and stalling. Having regular meetings gets everyone familiar with the other people in the organization and with what they do. Knowing where to go for help with any aspect of the organization ultimately helps the organization as a whole.

Organizations are like the group projects of our grammar school experience. We might moan and groan about participating, but there's one thing to remember. An organization is completely voluntary. No one is being forced to join. Attitudes and egos need to be put aside to create a fully functional, smoothly run organization.

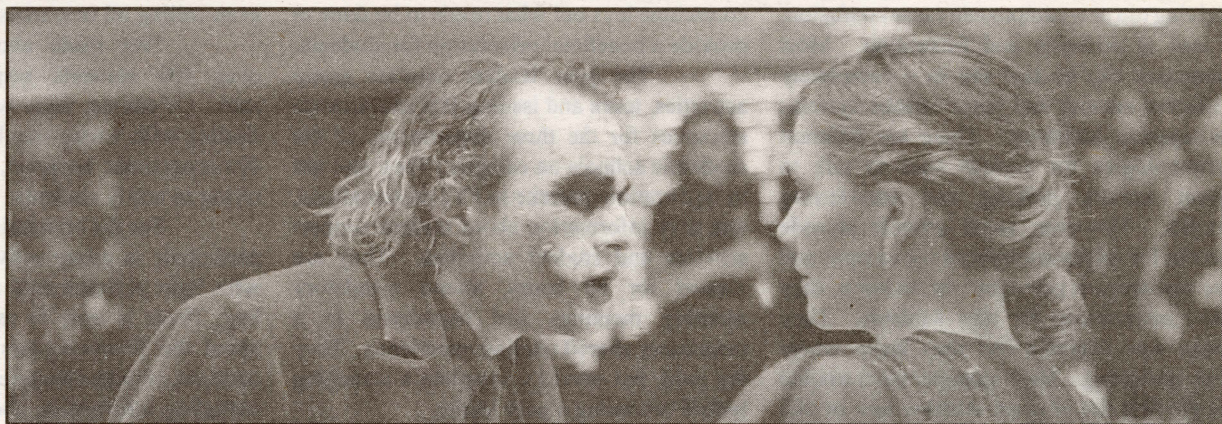


Photo courtesy of allmoviephoto.com

What earns an Oscar?

by Nick Vracar
Staff writer

Did the late Heath Ledger truly deserve the Oscar for Best Male Supporting Role as the iconic Joker in the film "Batman: Dark Knight?" The question is not brought up because he did not deserve it. He took a familiar character and transformed the familiar into a twisted variation that was different from both the usual fun house version of the Joker and from the usual Heath Ledger role. Rather, the question is brought up because I've been hearing a lot of people wonder whether he received the Oscar simply because he died.

The Academy Awards has had it's share of controversy over the years, although it might be fair to say that most of it has been dealt into two categories:

The first being that the winner is seemingly only loved and praised by the critics or people other than you. Last year, "No Country For Old Men" won best picture, yet the film was both boring and pretentious, rolling around in a pile of feces by the end. That said, boring and pretentious must be two beloved adjectives to the Oscars, due to the fact that the film "Titanic" won 11 awards.

The second category is where the winner has received the award not because they deserved it, but because they deserved it for an earlier film for which they did not win. For example, Russell Crowe took the Best Actor award for his work in "Gladiator," even though he really deserved it for "A Beautiful Mind." Another example would be Sean Penn, nominated for several awards including Best Actor for his role in "Dead Man Walking," yet somehow Nicholas Cage won it that year. Penn would eventually go on to win Best Actor for his roles in "Mystic River" and "Milk."

For a moment, it seemed as if Heath Ledger would fit into the second category, that nominated actor who deserved the award, but has been passed up. He was nominated for his role in the movie "Brokeback Mountain," instead that one went to Forest Whitaker for his work in "The Last King of Scotland." So now, two years later, Heath Ledger is nominated again for a new role and this time he wins, making up for his previous loss in 2006.

I wonder for a moment what it actually takes to earn an Oscar. Sometimes it seems as if the actor that wins truly was the best that year, whereas sometimes it seems as if the

actor did his best on a movie three years ago, while that other guy did better this year. Personally, I don't think there's a way to figure out the exact equation, as in what kind of performance deserves an Oscar, but I think that it is possible to make a couple of guesses.

My guess is that the Motion Picture Academy likes it when actors appear in a role that breaks away from the traditional. A lot of actors get stereotyped for specific roles, or find themselves playing roles that are incredibly similar to each other. When the actor suddenly shows up in a role that completely flips expectations, then the possibility for receiving an Oscar goes up.

Just look at Forest Whitaker. His role in "The Last King of Scotland" was dramatically different from anything he had done before. Phillip Seymour Hoffman seemed like an entirely different person as Truman Capote, not to mention Jamie Foxx's depiction of Ray Charles. And now we have Heath Ledger as the Joker, a completely different role from anything else I've seen him in.

Not everyone deserved his or her Oscar. Nor has everyone who deserved an Oscar received one, either. Heath Ledger deserved his.

Students, the economy and Obama: The cavalry to the rescue?

by Gregg Christie
Opinions Editor

On Friday, Feb. 27, President Obama announced the most extensive changes to the Federal Student Aid system since the Higher Education Act was first passed in 1965. Could this be seen as the cavalry charge that saves the day? Proposed changes include raising the Pell Grant awards and indexing them to inflation, dumping the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL), as well as vastly increasing Perkins Loan entitlements. The news would be a welcome sign of hope for both students and universities, who are all struggling in the current recession.

For students, it is becoming harder and harder to go to school. Rising prices, stagnant salaries, spiraling tuitions costs and a tight lending market is forcing many students and families to cut back, delay or even cancel college plans altogether. Many students are also forced to stay at home and attend whatever local options are available to them. This is hurting small, rural and private schools the most, who are worried that they might soon be facing serious budget crises due to sharp decreases in new enrollment.

Indeed, community colleges and second tier public universities all over the country are seeing an increase in applications

as students shy away from the higher priced institutions. Online courses are also quickly increasing in popularity, due to the high price of gas and student housing. The chaos in the lending market also means that banks are being very choosy in whom they loan money to, which especially impacts students who desire to attend the better schools.

Meanwhile, the universities, both public and private, are also feeling the economic pinch. They are ending contracts with faculty, laying off staff, cutting departmental budgets and in some cases even financial aid programs. Confronted by ever increasing budget shortfalls, they are faced with the dual challenge of keeping their colleges affordable for an increasingly impoverished student body while at the same time keeping their doors open for business. Many schools have compensated by increasing financial aid incentives while they cut everything else in sight. This is because for many of them, the only way to bring in enough funding is to keep their enrollment numbers as high as possible.

Enter the Obama administration, which on Friday announced the details of their extensive proposals. What amounts to a complete overhaul of the Federal Financial Aid system starts with Pell Grant funding. To summarize the White House's Web site information, extending funding from the federal general fund which would allow

the Federal government to increase yearly Pell Grant awards and erase the ongoing shortfall within the Pell system budget.

Tying the yearly allotment into inflation would also help students keep up with the yearly increases in their costs. Indeed, student aid activists maintain that 30 years ago the Pell Grants covered over 75 percent of a student's total non-housing costs on average, while today the figure is down to about 35 percent. Scrapping the FFEL system would also help fund these proposed changes.

As for FFEL itself, this privately backed, federally regulated system dwarfs the Direct Loan program by four to one, in terms of both money lent and students serviced; according to the New York Times, \$56 billion loaned out to about 6 million student families last year. With the private banks quickly running out of capitol, they are tied into the system with the debt they currently hold, yet unable to handle new loans without a government bailout. To the Obama administration, it is seen as a "dead weight." Their plan is to shed the system altogether and allow transfer of future federal funds directly into the Pell and Perkins programs.

The administration also announced a plan to increase Perkins Loan entitlements by six fold, eliminate the preferential system of distribution currently in place

and remove the program's current in-school interest subsidies. They also proposed vast increases in university research funding, as well as a new \$2.5 billion "Access and Completion Incentive Fund," which would give aid to states that demonstrate successful plans for improving college graduation rates among low-income students.

All of these plans, as well as other proposed changes, would fall in line with the promise that President Obama gave during his recent State of the Union Address. That is, by 2020 America would, "[once] again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world." When presenting the budget on the previous Thursday, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan emphasized that aid and access for students are one of the administration's key policy concerns. As he said, "There are too many students who are unprepared for college and too many who cannot afford it."

Truly we are talking about a large amount of money, but isn't the education of our young people important? How do you place a dollar value on a door to a better life? It also seems to me that if America has any hope of staying competitive in the 21st century, then the president is right. This is money that will be very well spent in the long run, and I'm pretty sure that all the federal grant recipients reading this article could use the extra cash!

NEIU Grads have advantage over Ivy Leaguers

by Whitney Behr
Staff writer

We've all heard the horror stories. An excited 20 something graduates from her fancy, private university only to be thrust into the cruel world where there are no jobs and her student loans are knocking at the door. She reluctantly moves back in with Mom and Dad, returns to her job at Denny's and tries to make regular payments on her seemingly impossible \$85,000 loan balance. It's a common scenario, but one that Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) students might not have to deal with.

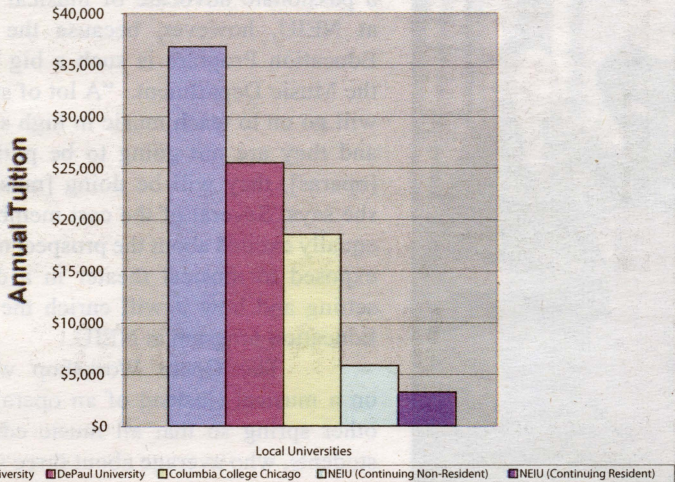
Granted, the economy isn't at its best right now and many folks are having trouble finding work. Recent college grads, however, are also dealing with strong feelings of disillusionment. Many young college students grew up during an economic boom. We were raised on the American Dream. We were raised to believe that in order to get that white picket fence, we first had to get a bachelor's degree.

Unfortunately, basic supply-and-demand dictates that the more common something is, the less valuable it becomes. It would follow, that since a whole generation of people were convinced that a degree was the key to success, having a degree has become ordinary and commonplace, therefore less valuable.

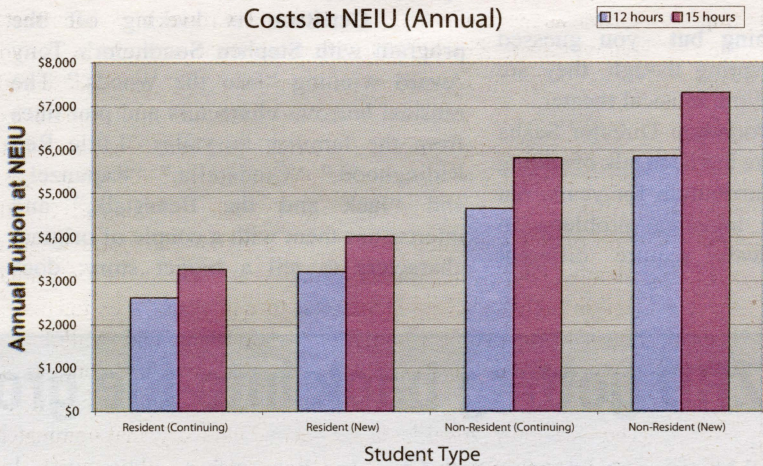
It doesn't take more than a couple minutes of browsing university Web sites to get a rough idea of the kind of debt in which a student could find him or herself. Northwestern University's annual undergraduate tuition, for example, is over \$35,000. Include the cost of on-campus living and that number could easily double. True, there are families that can fork over that much money without batting an eye. However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median family income for a family of four in Illinois is \$72,368 per year. It doesn't take a calculator to figure out how many Illinois residents are in debt because of their bachelor's degree.

With NEIU's tuition rates ranging from six to

Comparative Annual Tuition



Costs at NEIU (Annual)



fourteen grand per year, depending on residency status and date of enrollment, it looks pretty rosy in comparison to some of the other local schools. In turn, regardless of the economic situation, NEIU alumni will have the relative luxury of being able to enter the workforce (or lack thereof) with little or no student loan debt.

So, when your friends at those big, fancy universities are complaining about the mound of debt they've incurred for a diploma, which is printed on the same kind of paper as yours no less, feel free to pat yourself on the back for an educational decision well made.

Where do we get the right?

by Jonathan Gronli
Entertainment Editor

America has proclaimed for itself a moral and social standard that allows it to police the globe. However, aside from the progress we've made, we really have no right to hold ourselves to the bastion of hope that politicians claim we uphold. There are just too many problems here to be able to legitimately make these claims abroad.

Our healthcare system is a joke. We can't rightfully say that we've got it right when a supposed developing country like Cuba and heavily socialistic Norway, both have better healthcare systems than we do. Health insurance companies, some of which let customers die because treatment is too costly, hold our collective well-beings hostage. You don't need to watch "Sicko" to find out about problems like this, you see it on the news every day. And we think we have the right to tell the rest of the world how to care for their people.

Universal healthcare systems like the ones in Cuba, Great Britain, France, Norway and other countries might cause higher taxes, but if you

examine it more closely, it wouldn't be that much of a change anyway. Health insurance coverage gets better with the more you pay. In the American healthcare system, you're putting money into a private company that sees you as little more than a walking dollar.

Then, we also are trying to stop conflicts abroad. However, for some reason we can't take care of our own conflicts first. We have groups trying to incite violence, as in gang violence. We've got so many problems going on, in terms of domestic conflict, despite how much we've improved over the past years, yet we seem to have the right to tell other countries to shape up? Where's the sense of that? Sure, we might not always have the same types of conflict as others, such as the mass slaughter in Burma or Darfur, but it is no less volatile or damaging to our country than it is to others. Some people might say that we don't have civil wars or child soldiers, like in Uganda for example, but here's a question for you. What do you consider kids that join gangs here at home? The difference between children recruited into an army in a country like Uganda, and kids who join a gang here, is little

more than a couple of years.

We've also claimed ourselves a pinnacle for education, when our education system is mediocre at best, as compared to the rest of the world. Part of it is that teachers, on all levels, are underpaid. It makes it harder for them to take pride in their valuable work of shaping the minds of the people who are our country's future. There are also students who don't care enough, partially because some teachers are burnt out and have stopped caring. If the teachers don't care, then why should the students? The quality of education you get in school depends on your teachers, so if they aren't challenging you, your gained knowledge is a crapshoot. You might gain some knowledge accidentally. You might stay the same. Or you might actually lose something.

There are even more problems that we challenge outside the country, in fact too many to list here. Meanwhile, we let them run mostly unchecked here, like with corruption or the economy. On the domestic front, we contradict the standards we try to impose on other countries so often that it is amazing our foreign policies hold any weight whatsoever.

Letter to the Editor

A Jewish Voice Against Zionism

You recently published a number of so-called "Jewish Voices" regarding Israel's actions in Gaza. They hardly covered the spectrum of Jewish voices at NEIU and elsewhere and really should have been characterized as Zionist voices.

Since my mother was a Jew, since I was raised a Jew and teach at NEIU, I qualify as a Jewish voice at NEIU and would add this to the very limited viewpoints previously expressed:

Joshua and Abraham claim that Israeli Defense Forces "are given rigorous training in protecting the lives of civilians during combat." If that's the case, such training clearly isn't working, given the number of civilians who have been killed over the decades by Israeli forces. The number of civilian non-combatants killed by Israel and its enemies has always favored Israel by ratios of as much as 10 to 1. Damage to property is beyond compare, given the fact that Israel regularly avoids combat with the enemy and instead sends its warplanes to bomb civilian targets like schools and apartment buildings.

Even if it is the case that organizations like Hamas launch "rockets from a school compound," such actions do not, as Abraham claims, "leave the government with[out] much choice." A government can always choose not to bomb a school or decide to send in troops to ferret out enemy combatants. Admittedly the latter would place Israeli soldiers in harms way, but it is a choice that superior military powers like Israel choose not to make; and when these bombings occur with the kind of regularity and consistency that we have witnessed in recent decades, we cannot speak of mistakes and collateral damage, but of deliberate military decisions to hit civilian targets in the hope that enemy combatants might be somewhere among them. So-called terrorist organizations can hardly compare with military powers like Israel or the United States in the number of civilian, non-combatant deaths they have produced.

Nor is it the case that Israel's "primary focus is to protect [it's] citizens." If that were true then Israel would not have moved its citizens into enemy territory in the first place by establishing settlements there. Israel's primary focus has been, in violation of the Geneva accords to which it is a signatory, to colonize neighboring territory. To speak of "Jewish settlers" on the "West Bank" as occupying sovereign "Israeli territory" misrepresents as Israeli territory land that is clearly outside the state's legitimate borders. Zionist propaganda insisting that Arab peoples want and will push Israel into the sea, overlooks the fact that the Zionists from Europe and elsewhere first occupied Arab lands and then established the state of Israel, which for over 50 years, has managed to expand its borders into Arab territory.

To speak, as Joshua does, of the "holiest sites" of the "Jewish people," of their having "deep spiritual ties to the land, which includes those sacred sites in the West Bank," or as Abraham does, of Jerusalem being "the spiritual capitol of the Israeli people" is to overlook the fact that, throughout Judaism, land has never been holy. People may be righteous and scripture is holy, but not land. Jews for thousands of years were known as "the people of the book" because holiness for them was to be found in adherence to Hebrew scripture, not in land grabbing. And what the holy book tells us is that it would be legitimate to take an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth, but not to cut someone's head off when he pokes out your eye. To destroy the lives of hundreds upon hundreds of people and do millions upon millions of dollars in damage in Gaza in retaliation for the death of six Israelis violates what the holy book commands; so don't talk about spiritual and holy when defending Israel's numerous rampages against its neighbors.

Such overwhelming retaliation has never proved effective in bringing either peace or security to Israel; so one can seriously question whether Israel does want peace. It clearly does want more land regardless of the cost to the peace and wellbeing of its citizens and the occupants of the land it seeks to take over and colonize.

There were two major mistakes in the middle of the last century. One was letting the Soviets into Eastern Europe. The other was the creation of the State of Israel. The Russians have withdrawn to their legitimate borders. Israel must to do the same: withdraw to its legitimate borders. Peace throughout the world depends very much on what Israel does and does not do, and whether the United States will continue to give its unqualified support to a rogue state, which continues to be a major liability in this country's efforts to win respect and friendship throughout the world.

Harry White
Jewish Professor of English

P.S. Remember this also: for Chicago Jews, the holiest site is not Jerusalem, but Manny's Delicatessen. Potato latkes you could die for and don't have to kill anyone else to get them.

ENTERTAINMENT

"Into the Woods" to Conquer the Musical Theater Giant



Some of the cast members of "Into the Woods"

by **Sabrina Gasulla**
Staff Writer

At NEIU, music students have the opportunity to participate in different kinds of ensembles for academic credit, including opera, choir and orchestra. For 35 years, the Opera Workshop Program

has put on nothing but —you guessed it— operas. This spring though, they are offering a new option: musical theater.

Opera Workshop Director Sasha Gerritson says there has been talk of adding musicals to the curriculum for years, but there were many logistical problems to overcome. Musicals require different

tech equipment than operas, a different orchestra, and certainly a very different kind of performance. Gerritson has been a passionate advocate of musical theater at NEIU, however, because the Music Education Program is such a big part of the Music Department. "A lot of students will go on to teach music in high schools, and they are not going to be putting on [operas], they will be doing [musicals]," she says. Several of the cast members are equally excited about the prospect of being exposed to musical theater in a didactic setting and how it will enrich the Music Education program at NEIU.

The Opera Workshop will put on a musical (instead of an opera) every other spring so that all music education students, who average about three years in the program, will be able to audition for a musical or two while at NEIU, or stick to operas if they so choose.

Gerritson is kicking off the program with Stephen Sondheim's Tony Award winning "Into the Woods." The musical borrows characters and plot lines from the familiar fairytales "Little Red Ridinghood," "Cinderella," "Rapunzel," and "Jack and the Beanstalk," and intertwines them with a couple of original characters to tell a bigger story: does

getting everything you wish for truly lead to "happily ever after?" Sondheim takes the fairytales beyond the end and explores the question with a sense of humor that can be both innocent and dark at times.

"Into the Woods" is a particularly good choice because there are twenty three parts and no chorus in it. This means that every cast member can get a full experience and bring their individual strengths to the stage, since each character is unique and calls for different talents. Gerritson says it was important during casting to form a varied group of actors and singers from different performance backgrounds and academic departments. Students in the Music as well as the Communications, Media and Theater majors were recruited for the show, which Gerritson adds is also a "great way to bridge departments".

This is a great, big step for the Music Department and students and faculty seem thrilled about the possibilities it could open up.

"Into the Woods" will open Apr. 1. There will be additional performances Apr. 3-4 at 7:30 p.m. in the NEIU Auditorium. Admission is free for NEIU students, faculty and staff and \$10 otherwise. Call the box office at (773) 442-4636 for reservations.

Entertainment News Brief: WZRD getting back into the groove

by **Jonathan Gronli**
Entertainment Editor

Recently I found out from our media adviser and the station manager of a pretty interesting event coming up. They let us know

that they will be airing an interview with Les Claypool. This will be one of the main big name artist interviews that will be aired soon.

Why should you care? Being that it is your college radio station, why not support your fellow students by tuning in. WZRD

has been airing quality, though occasionally bizarre, material for decades and they do it for you.

Tune in for more news on the interview with WZRD by setting that radio dial to 88.3. Enjoy.



Graffiti Grace

by **Michael McNelly**
Photographer

Constructions made of fabric and wires were strewn together in harmonic prose. Words flowed in stylized letterings with integration of life from the past. The lighting under the sculptures conjured a sense of light peering over gray clouds of tears. A painting portrayed a sense of longing and acceptance between life and death with a maternal portraiture. It was a display of beauty in physicality, emotionality, and individuality.

On Feb. 16 – 20, students were able to admire sculptures in the Fine Arts Building at NEIU. The exhibit was called "Sculptural Graffiti" created by Jesus "Azteca" Sanchez. Jesus's senior exhibit displayed vibrant colors and idiosyncratic efficacy while incorporating his soul.

Jesus grew up in a neighborhood of gangs in a constant war between skin colors. The war between the gangs consisted of violence and harassment. In order for Jesus to tolerate the environment and distance himself away from gangs, he began to utilize his creativity in rapping, break dancing, and graffiti. By his positive actions, he earned respect from the gang population for his talents and views. "Gang members would stop me on the street to mug or attack me," stated Jesus. However, by displaying his artistic talents, members encouraged him to promote his skills.

Eventually, Jesus was matriculated into NEIU and found a great interest in sculpture with Professor Xu and painting with Professor Vaca. Professor Xu influenced and pushed him to promote his graffiti background, which led Sanchez to

create words from wood. Both professors exposed him to new materials, methodology and wondrous influence for his artistry. From there, he began to associate 2-D and 3-D with his past, leading to "Sculptural Graffiti".

Sanchez and Professor Xu actually had an argument over the title of his exhibit. Professor Xu wanted to title it, "Sculptural Calligraphy" to help him open more doors to the art world, but Sanchez decided to title it "Sculptural Graffiti." "Graffiti is in my heart so I couldn't betray myself," Sanchez denotes.

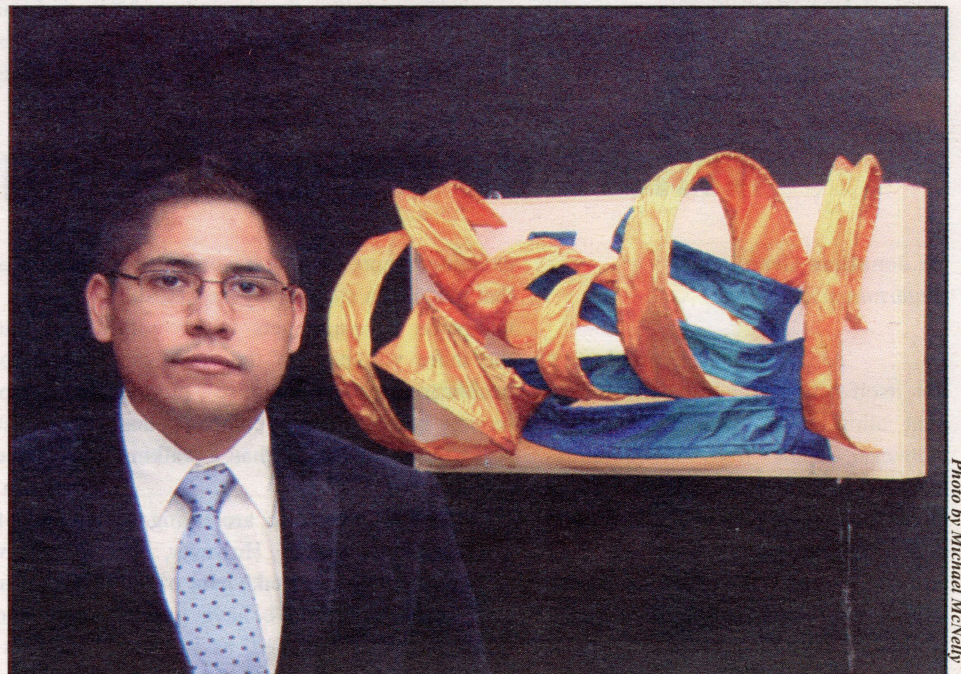
One of his pieces, "Boom Box," was influenced by his musicianship. "Boom" and "Box" were placed as speakers and a stereo was placed underneath. It seemed as if the music in the background was coming from the speakers itself.

His symbol as an artist was displayed in the middle of the room as a sculpture in the round. Basically, it could be admired from any angle.

"Azteca" in red fabric presented his artistic name in a graceful manner in front of blue and white trapezoidal shapes.

His nickname "Azteca" derived from his past interactions with his cousin. He would call his cousin an indigenous title, as his cousin would play basketball with sandals. Eventually, his cousin started to call him "Azteca". Also, it was a unique name that no one could make as their own. Sanchez is proud of his indigenous culture. "Indigenous people are still here, living and just as intelligent as our colonial counterparts," Sanchez comments.

Another great influence was his mother. Unfortunately, his mother died of cancer in 2006. However, it greatly affected his meaning in his art. "Live" was a powerful



Jesus "Azteca" Sanchez promotes his exhibit called "Structural Graffiti" in the Fine Arts Building on Feb. 20. The title of this piece is called "Boom Box", influenced by his life as a B-Boy (breakdancer.)

piece in yellow and white fabrics behind a direct lighted background. "People tend to get stuck with death. I've gone through the mourning process, but by the end of the day I've learned to live," explains Sanchez. Jesus had used his mother's sewing machine to sew his fabrics for his exhibit. He had to teach himself to use the machine. He dealt with learning how to use the machine despite the difficulty that came with it because, "By using my mother's sewing machine, I felt as though it was a collaboration project," Sanchez responded. It was a telling to keep on living and to fulfill his passion for art.

"Structural Graffiti" took three

years to complete. Sanchez exclaims, "Each sculpture took three months to finish".

Aside from being an artist, Sanchez also works as an Academic Coordinator for Chicago Public Schools. Sanchez commented saying, "It's a great feeling to influence the youth in a positive way." He went on to add, "However, it's difficult to balance between professional life and artistic life."

Despite the difficulties Jesus "Azteca" Sanchez has faced, his positive views on life and in people has brought him to a brighter future. May he bring his positive influence to the people to create outlets of positive change.



by Cheryl Lyman
Associate Editor
cheryl.l.lyman@gmail.com

Diversional Discourse

From dungeon to sun

In case you didn't hear the scream that nine Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) students let out on Sunday morning, Mar. 1, or didn't read it elsewhere in this paper, the *Independent* won second place at the 25th annual Associated Collegiate Press National College Journalism Convention (that's a mouthful!), which was held in San Diego, Cal. this year. Every year, staff members of the paper attend this convention: to learn, to network and yes, to have fun. Last year, a group of us went to the convention in San Francisco. We didn't win any awards last year, but I think that some of the things we learned helped us to make the paper better, which enabled us to win an award this year.

We had a great time in San Francisco, and we had a great time in San Diego. The sun was wonderful. The scenery was great.

I even went to the beach, and I am not a water/sand type of person. The sunset was fantastic. The food was good. As a cook, I'm really picky, but the food was good. Unfortunately, I was also in a partial cast for my ankle and foot. This did hinder my exploration some, but my fellow travelers were kind enough to procure a wheelchair for me on Saturday, so that evening's diversions became much easier. I'm sure that there were several people who enjoyed the opportunity to push me around for once! Probably my favorite part of the trip was the sun, warmth and the hot tub!

The seminars that people attended were very diverse, with topics such as: managing a paper, sports writing, writing headlines, blogging, Web design and advertising. Some of the seminars could have had better descriptions in the brochure. I attended one

session that probably should have been listed for advisors or teachers, but I still learned something from it. Talking with other newspaper people from around the country, seeing how they deal with problems, as well as hearing about their victories were inspiring.

It is a huge thrill for me that the paper won this award. It verifies all the time that I spend down in "the dungeon" helping it to be. Anyone who knows me, knows that if it is a weekday and I'm not in class or rehearsal, I can be found in the *Independent* office. In fact, there are many times that you can find me there even on the weekend. Sometimes, I'm in the office on Sundays for over eight hours, trying to make sure that things are spelled correctly, or that there is enough white space between articles. Sometimes, there isn't anything that I can do about things that go wrong, but I

can sure try to make it better than the issue before. Everyone who works for this paper works very hard and is very serious about the work they do. After all, our names go on the finished product, and believe me, we hear when things go wrong.

How is this diversional, in any way? Well, when there are things that you find yourself doing, despite what other people tell you that you should be doing, you are doing something diversional. If I'm writing a column when I should be doing, say my geology homework, I'm being diverted from what I should be doing. I know that I'll get my homework done, but I would rather be working on the paper. I think everyone on staff can agree that there are times that we really need to be somewhere else, doing something else, but we stay in the office, or out on assignment because we

enjoy working together to make a product that we can be proud of. We don't always succeed, but we learn from our mistakes.

This year, hopefully, those of us who went will be able to teach those who didn't what we learned, so that next year we can be even better. Isn't that what life in general is about? Learning from what you do now, so that next time it is better. We are always looking for people to help us, to join our team, to become part of our family. If you are interested in learning more about the diversional things that go on at the paper, please come and visit us in room E-049, or come to one of our meetings; they are held every Tues. during activity hour, 1:40 p.m.-2:40p.m. in room F-203. Who knows, maybe you'll get to join the fun and learning experience on our next trip and be proud to be part of a winning team!

AN NEIU STUDENT'S BIBLE

"THE CHEAP BASTARD'S GUIDE TO CHICAGO"

by Regina M. Torres
Senior Staff Writer

Does the mention of free samples of Chicago-based chocolate confectionaries tickle your tummy? Is your current style screaming out for a free (or nearly free) makeover from a stylish salon apprentice? Are you itching to lay your hands on a cheap retro bicycle for your urban transport needs, without shelling out your entire student aide check?

If you are like many hardworking NEIU community members, then you may be interested in the many golden tips and referrals that await you within the pages of "The Cheap Bastard's Guide to Chicago." Spendthrift aficionado and enthusiastic cheapskate, Nadia Oehlsen, compiled these tips.

Oehlsen writes from the perspective of a cheap thrill-seeker brought up in Chicago. Being a cheap thrill-seeker myself, I was still hesitant when I received a copy over Christmas break from an old friend who highly recommended it. Imagine my hesitation as I acknowledged the cover title. Needless to say, I thumbed through the pages, and found myself pleasantly surprised.

The subtitle reads "Secrets of Living the Good Life for Free." This is the book's stance in its entirety. From free to nearly free offerings divided into neatly organized chapters, there are many listings within this Chicago focused book's 235 pages that will offer something of interest to everyone. For the purposes of this article's limitations, I offer some highlights that are most relevant via proximity to campus, and/or their general coolness factors.

Depending on your zip code, your beloved pooch or kitty may be eligible for free spaying or neutering. Just call Chicago Animal Care and Control at (312) 747-1406 to see if your zip code qualifies and to schedule a surgical appointment.

Step inside Blommer Chocolate Store on 600 W. Kinzie Street for lots of free samples of their freshly made chocolates,

offered year around. www.blommerstore.com

For the biggest selection of used bikes, head over to Working Bikes Cooperative, located at 1125 S. Western Avenue. For under \$100, you can ride out into the sunshine while feeling good about knowing that proceeds go towards sending refurbished bicycles to developing countries. Call (312) 421-5048, or visit www.workingbikes.org for more details.

Graduates from beauty schools that are finishing up their training can offer you a free haircut at Red 7 Salon, located at 210 N. Kinzie Street. Their training usually occurs on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. until about 12:30 p.m. at the latest. If you want a color or perm/relaxer treatment, then you pay a mere \$10. Call (312) 644-RED7, or visit www.red7salon.com to check them out and make an appointment.

If you're looking for something more substantial than chocolate to dine on, and the idea of sharing a drink with friends interests you, then there is just the place for you...For the best Sunday afternoon buffet, stop by Big Chicks on 5024 N. Sheridan Road. For the cost of a mere drink, you can play free pool and darts while munching on the likes of mixed green salads, Italian beef sandwiches, pasta salads, and desserts such as raspberry brownies and cobblers. Note: this is a busy mixed environment, where straight and gay clientele hang out happily together. Check out their Web site at www.bigchicks.com

If I have tickled your fancy thus far with this short list of local wonders to be taken advantage of, then I have done my job. I highly recommend looking past this crude sounding book's title, and taking a look at the countless goodies that await in the spend-thrifty reader to explore. "The Cheap Bastard's Guide to Chicago" seems to get an update every year. The information for this article was taken from the 2007 edition. The book costs \$14.95 and is printed by Globe Pequot Press, www.GlobePequotPress.com

Happy Bargain Hunting!

Fighting its way to money

best spent elsewhere

by Nick Vracar
Staff Writer

"Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li" is a significant improvement over the last attempt at turning the video game franchise into a film. Instead of being extremely bad, this version is only really bad.

In all seriousness, the movie suffers in everything from character motivation to fight choreography. All of that culminates to the worst scene in the movie. In a nightclub, Chun Li fights her assailants while a singer raps, "Street fighter! Street fighter!" Didn't we learn anything from Vanilla Ice's cameo in the second "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?"

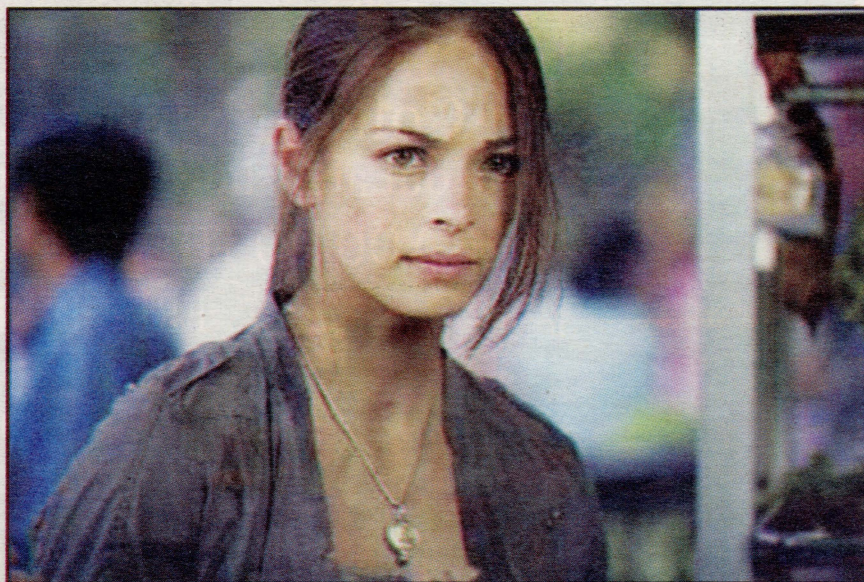
This new version was written by relative newcomer Justin Marks and is directed by Andrzej Bartowiak ("Doom," "Cradle 2 the Grave"). It also has a decent cast attached to it. There's Kristin Kreuk ("Smallville") as Chun Li. There's Neal McDonough ("Band of Brothers") as M. Bison and Michael Clark Duncan ("The Green Mile") as Balrog. There's even Robin Shou ("Mortal Kombat," "Beverly Hills Ninja") as Chun Li's trainer in martial arts.

The problems in this movie begin with the story. It seems to start out as a nice, simple revenge plot. Chun Li witnesses mob

boss M. Bison snag her dad and take him off to a most perilous fate. And then she doesn't do anything about it for another ten years or so. Suddenly a mysterious scroll appears and tells her that she has to give up her former way of life and live on the street. So, she does that, all the while providing corny narration, explaining the ins and outs of her journey through poverty that would eventually lead her to a secret order that exists to fight evil.

To be fair, most martial arts movies focus less on providing an entertaining story and more on providing really cool fighting scenes. In this respect, "Street Fighter" again screws up. It seems as if someone who saw other action movies and tried to do things that might look cool choreographed all of the fights in the movie. There's lots of spinning and flipping and every so often, someone does a special move that comes in the form of a really big flip or spin that is often accompanied with a blurry camera.

"Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li" is not just a bad movie. It's also a bad action movie, and bad martial arts movie and a bad movie based on a video game. "Street Fighter 4" came out recently to the X-Box 360 and PS3, so if you were planning on seeing the movie with friends, why not use your ticket money to chip in towards a copy of the game instead?



Kristen Kreuk stars in the "Street Fighter" movie as well as some other familiar faces.



by Jonathan Gronli
Entertainment Editor

Beyond the veil of madness

Something old, something new, something bloody and something bruised

OK. This is going to be a bit of a stretch because of the lack of space, but I'm going to be covering two completely unconnected things. The first topic is the remake of "Friday the 13th". The other topic will be "Last Watch," the most recent edition to Sergei Lukyanenko's internationally bestselling "World of Watches" series. For more in-depth reviews of these two releases, visit *Independent* on-line at www.neiaindependent.com.

"Friday the 13th"

To get right down to the point, I was taken completely by surprise with the remake of "Friday the 13th". It looked like it was going to be pretty bad because it looked like it was trying to mix the first three movies, which were solid movies, into one film. It also looked like it would generally be a shot that hit the wrong target entirely, and would make Jason Vorhees look more farcical than he did in the most recent films he was featured in. Boy, was I wrong. Much like Rob Zombie's remake of "Halloween," this might have just revitalized its respective dying franchise in a darker, more brutal light.

This movie has Jason as a quicker force of nature than he was in the previous films. Before, Jason just trudged along like a downtrodden worker, who popped up where he needed to and killed all things in his way, and quite a few things that weren't. Now he moves with speed, elegance and deadly precision. It's like a ballet with machetes.

Lighting and camera work is spot on, so as to be familiar with, but not the same as, the original product(s). It heightens emotion and tension beautifully. The biggest complaint I have about the movie is the soundtrack, which is largely manufactured club music, and the drivel that rock music is passed off as. It's just a poor attempt at backing up the story with music.

The bottom line is that the remake was a big surprise. It's given a lot of credit to the original three films, and is a powerful addition to the series.

"Last Watch"

The "Night Watch" series is a good example of good, contemporary, dark fantasy. Even though it is good, and delivers its punches in almost lyrical ways, the series is an acquired taste which is, pretty much, indefensible. If you like it, you know there's a reason why. You just can't put a finger on what it is that catches and keeps your attention.

"Final Watch" is good, but it's pretty rough. They may have had a new translation editor working on the book. Don't

get me wrong, the book is good, but the translation makes this edition of the continuing one of the least accessible. It would probably be easier reading in its original Russian.

The series took your standard dark fantasy, horror stories and then mixed them all together in a recklessly ambitious epic tale (that is currently up to four books). There are Light and Dark Others. They are your normal fantasy beings, like shapeshifters, mages, seers, vampires, ghouls, etc. After a war that nearly wiped out Others, they set up a truce and three organizations to keep Light and Dark in balance. These organizations are the Night Watch (Light), Day Watch (Dark) and The Inquisition (impartial judge, jury and executioners).

The entire series follows Anton Gordetsky as he rises in the ranks of the Others, while learning about his newly harnessed stronger powers. He's also struggling to find that one, illusive thing that some people never get throughout life: love. Mind you, this is not a romance story. It is a dramatic story that a love story works with. Where the earlier books had to do with searches for magical artifacts (The Chalk of Fate for example) or rare magical beings (Mirrors), this book really stays consistent. "Final Watch" covers the search for an artifact made by Merlin. Yes, like the one from Arthurian legend, known as The Crown of All Things.

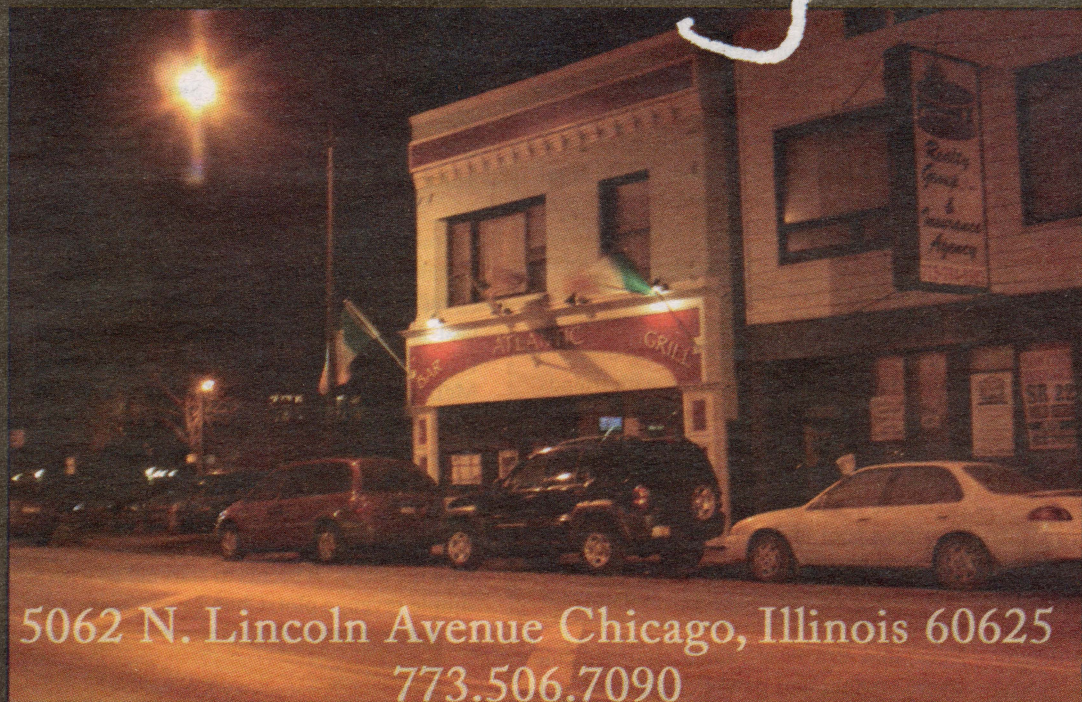
If you're going to read this book, don't buy it unless you're a diehard fan of the series. If you aren't a diehard fan, borrowing it from a library will suffice.

So February had some good horror and dark fantasy releases under its belt. Sure, one of them is an acquired taste, but still. If there's any questions or you want something in particular covered let me know.

Jonathan Gronli will let you know what goes on during the watches of the night if you contact him at jon.gronli@gmail.com.

Picture courtesy of flicksandpopcornpopcorn.co.uk

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"Choke"d on the big one

by Jonathan Gronli
Entertainment Editor

SEX!!!! Now that I have your attention, the topic at hand is Chuck Palahniuk. More precisely, it is on his book titled "Choke" and the film adaptation of the same name.

The one word opening sentence does tie into the article. The book and film follow some of the more interesting addicts in our global society, sex addicts. Much in the same vein as Palahniuk's hit novel "Fight Club," "Choke" casts an inquisitive eye on our addict-riddled world. Where "Fight Club" focused on some of the darker, more brutal and anarchic aspects of society's misfits, "Choke" takes a more satiric approach to some of the more perverse misfits in the world.

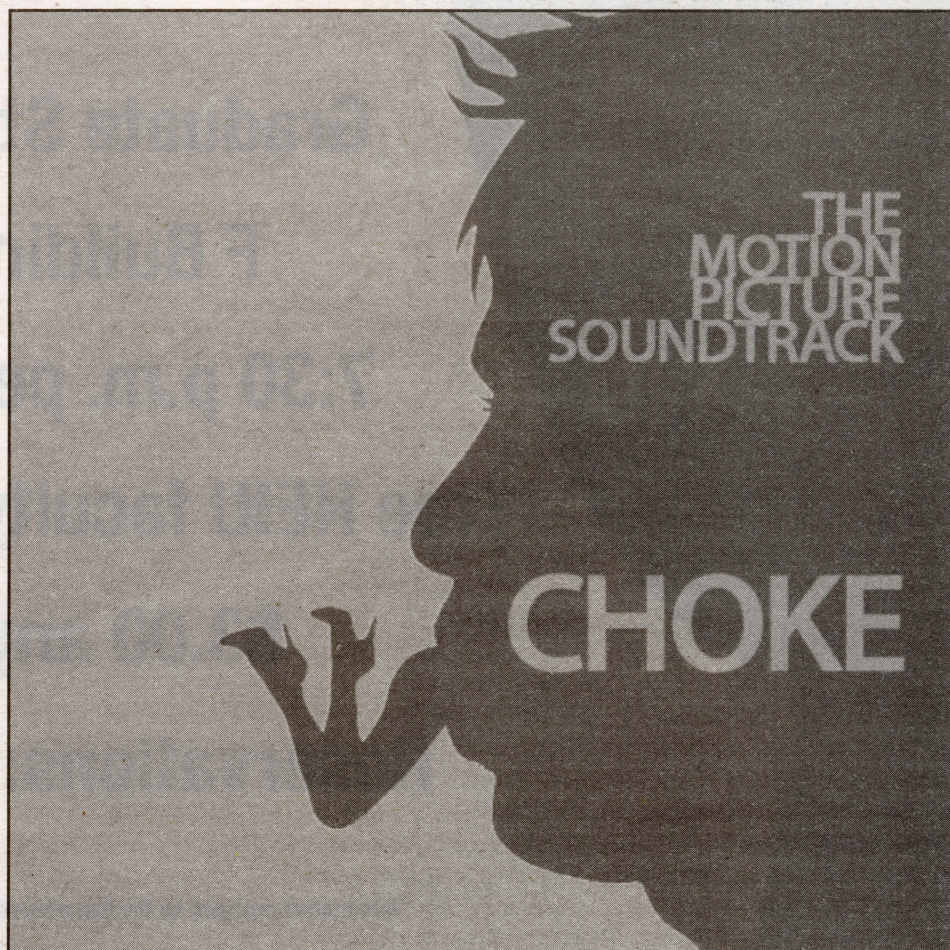
That being said, Palahniuk's work lends itself perfectly to film, so long as the circumstances of good film making come together. "Fight Club" is an example of Palahniuk going to the movies effectively. Sadly, despite the fact that the circumstances were met to make "Choke" a great movie, it just fell flat. Don't get me wrong; it isn't a bad movie. It's just one that could've been so much better. There's so much promise in

the perversity of the novel that just didn't translate to film, possibly because things were lessened for the sake of the censors.

Honestly, this film would've made a better art-house film because that form does lower any and all censorship standards. Art-house films with topics like this make you tend to think of pornography more often than not and, to be blunt, that's what this Palahniuk work is. It's porn with an actual story. Sure, Palahniuk does go a bit far in his description, but for those who are used to his writing style, it's forgivable. Where "Fight Club" was unleashing our angry side, "Choke" is unleashing the perverted side of, well, everyone with a pulse.

One of the biggest saving graces of "Choke" on DVD is the special features. They give a lot of insight on the general topic of the story. They're also a bit touch-and-go on the "making of" process, but what is given is worthwhile.

It is a worthwhile buy, if only for the blunt humor directed toward sexuality that the movie and its special features contains; however, if you are wary of jumping in and buying or renting the film, you can find the book in a bookstore or a library.



Picture courtesy of aorecord.com

Lights set on dim

by Lenny Ocasio
Editor-in-Chief

Valerie Poxleitner has been a very busy girl. The 21-year-old Canadian singer, who goes by the stage name Lights, is popular amongst synth-pop listeners and is busily gathering more fans.

Synth-pop is being heard more and more often by radio listeners especially from the new influx of female singers like Katy Perry. Those who do not know her by name at least know her music. In 2008, Old Navy featured numerous commercials, mostly in spring, which used her music.

That same year Lights released an EP of six of her most

popular songs. Her self-titled EP includes songs like "Drive My Soul," "February Air," and "The Last Thing on Your Mind." Her breathy, helium infused voice is almost drowned out by the thin, dissonant beat.

The beat drowns out all thought processes by the incessant chaos that is synth-pop. Her voice is so high pitched that it causes headaches if you are trying to hear the lyrics of her songs. It sounds like she is perpetually sucking on helium. Her voice never lowers to give the listener a respite. She uses synthetic sounds and forgets about adding in more bass. The result is "muzak," music that might be good playing in an elevator and not in a

dance club.

Her lyrics are unoriginal and bland. Her lyrics are memorable, just not in a good way. They burrow in the brain because they are endlessly repeated throughout the song. "February Air" is a prime example of this. The phrase "My arms get cold/In February air" is repeated at least five times. Her music does not grab people's attention like the music of peers like Katy Perry. But she does have a group of loyal fans.

While her music leaves a lot to be desired, her dedication to her fans is commendable. In addition to her Web site, which is garishly designed in pink and purple, she has a

MySpace page that she regularly updates with information on performances. She also has a YouTube account that has numerous video diary entries that keep the fans in touch with Lights. The weird thing about her YouTube account is that she does not have any music videos on it. She actually looks at fan videos of her songs and picks her favorite ones to put on her site.

This year she started on a tour of the U.S., Canada and Great Britain. She was here in Chicago during Valentine's Day. Lights is also working on releasing a full album this year. With any luck, the album will not be a total disappointment and pleasing to the ears.

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Graduate Student

Play Title

Playwright

Lisa Cantwell	"How He Lied to Her Husband"	George Bernard Shaw
Jeremy Babcock	"The Open Door"	Alfred Sutro
Lori Mages	"The Witch of Coos"	Robert Frost
Shelby Jennings	"Prom Queen"	Stephanie Kornick
Alicia McNeal	"Why Cupid Came To Earl's Court"	Cosmo Hamilton
Andrew Simon	"Overruled"	George Bernard Shaw

Performing Wednesday, March 18 and Thursday March 19

Kristel Flynn	"A Wife for Life"	Eugene O'Neill
Ellen Crabill	"A Bad Week for Therapy"	Janet Milestein
Kirsten Manthei	"Enigma"	Floyd Dell
Joanne Cartalino	"A Matter of Husbands"	Ferenc Molnar
Donna Goering	"Logo Enthusiast"	Jenny Hagel
Javier Delgado	"Sweet and Twenty"	Floyd Dell
Ron Ben-Joseph	"Cocaine"	Pendleton King
Tom Camacho	"He Said and She Said"	Alice Gerstinberg



by David Mosher
Online Editor

While this column has focused on many technological aspects in the lives of college students, it has rarely focused on the medium in which it is presented. That is, the newspaper here at the *Independent*.

As with many things, times are changing. Newspapers are no longer content to be a print edition that comes out periodically. Subscriptions are falling as consumers are becoming accustomed to free content online. And newspapers will have to follow suit.

If I was able to take anything home from the

newspaper convention we here at the *Independent* attended over the weekend, it is that a Web site is not enough. For a newspaper to be complete, for it to reach out to its user base, it must integrate itself into a variety of services.

YouTube.

Wordpress.
Twitter.
Facebook.
MySpace. Most university students here are intimately familiar with these Web sites, if a glance at computer screens in the computer labs is any indication. In the upcoming weeks and months, the

Independent will seek to integrate itself into these social networking Web sites.

This is a challenge. Many newspapers around the country will freely admit that what they are doing right now is experimenting, experimenting to see how they can use technology to their benefit as well as their readers. Here are some of the ways in which we will be seeking to implement ourselves.

Increased media on our Web site,

NEIUIndependent.com. Currently, we are limited to posting our own articles every two weeks along with any photos from our

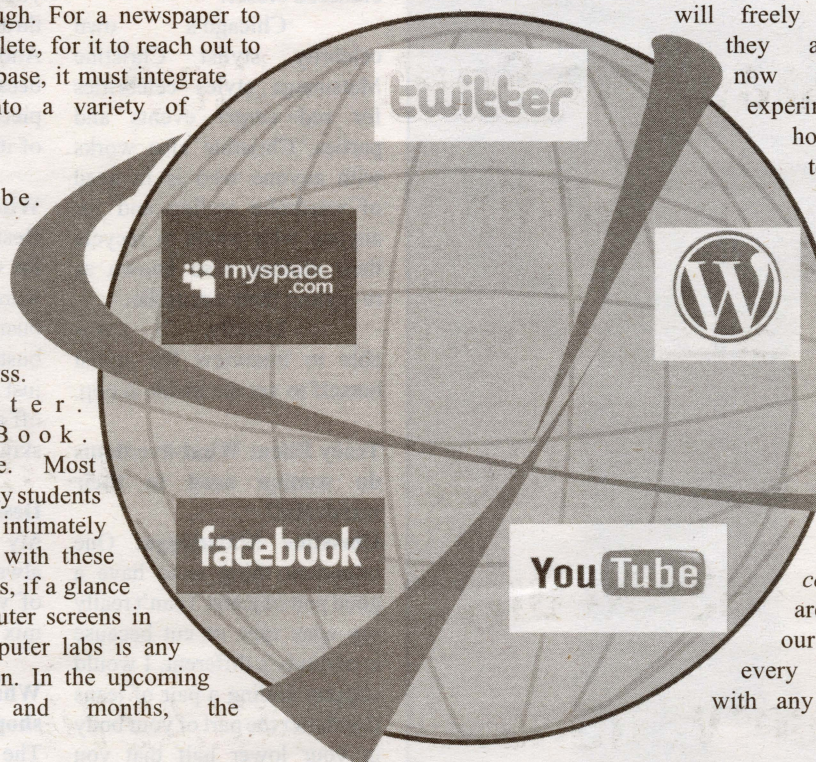
photographers. Using a variety of services but keeping the same domain name, we will update graphics, have higher quality slideshows, and embed YouTube videos.

Our own YouTube channel. This channel will go live once we are able to streamline the process of bringing news videos online.

Blogs on Wordpress. I'd imagine that Tech Talk and other columns might post smaller, less significant articles on our blog.

Among others, we will be listening closely to your thoughts and opinions. And as always, our Web site is open to online comments and discussions on our articles.

Keep your eyes open. It should be an interesting rest of the semester for the *Independent*. David Mosher can be reached at d-mosher@neu.edu for any questions or comments.



Graphic by Michael Nguyen

Go behind the scenes at Chicago's museums

by Nicki Timian
Staff Writer

If you have ever wanted to work in a museum, now may be the best chance to get your foot through the door. Like many other businesses across the nation, museums around Chicagoland are being forced to lay off employees in order to stay open. This means that most museums are relying more and more on volunteers and interns to help keep operations running. While most of these institutions cannot pay students for their internship experiences, they can offer you the opportunity to get first-hand experience in working in a museum. Many departments at NEIU also offer academic credit for students who have internships and, of course, any internship or volunteer experience always looks great on a resume.

The Chicago History Museum is offering a wide range of internship opportunities, from cataloguing incoming collections to marketing, and public relations to assisting with volunteers. While an interest in history is a plus, it's diverse focus on everything Chicago should make any internship enjoyable for locals and newcomers to the city. To find out more and download applications, visit their Web site at www.chicagohistory.org/aboutus/jobsvolunteering/internships.

The Field Museum, one of the largest and best known museums in Chicago, is also offering internships, mostly with a focus on anthropology. Their volunteer opportunities range from assisting in the new Crown Family Play Lab to fielding questions about the Field's most famous resident, Sue the T. Rex.

Visit www.bfound.net/list.aspx?Cold=45 to get a complete listing of opportunities and to fill out applications.

Also on the museum campus, the Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum are accepting volunteers and interns. Their volunteer positions range from assisting with

including helping the astronomy department launch a near-space research balloon to translating Arabic texts. To find out more, visit www.adlerplanetarium.org/volunteer/index.shtml.

The Shedd Aquarium also has very interesting internship opportunities available,

opportunities available for those who are not involved with a science degree. Some of the volunteer programs allow volunteers to get first hand experience with the living residents of the aquarium, including a volunteer position as the Caribbean Reef scuba diver. To find out more and to get applications, please visit www.sheddaquarium.org/internship_listings.html.

Lovers of art would greatly enjoy a volunteering experience at the Art Institute of Chicago. Volunteer opportunities include interpreting artworks and offering gallery tours to visitors, as well as helping with different family-oriented projects. For volunteer opportunities visit www.artic.edu/aic/aboutus/volunteer.html. The Art Institute also boasts internship opportunities behind the scenes, including one as a curator. There are also opportunities to explore other aspects of running a museum, such as public relations and library internships. Visit www.artic.edu/aic/jobs/interninfo.html to learn more about these exciting opportunities.

These are only a sampling of some of the internship and volunteer positions available at some of the most well known institutions in Chicago. Just about every museum in

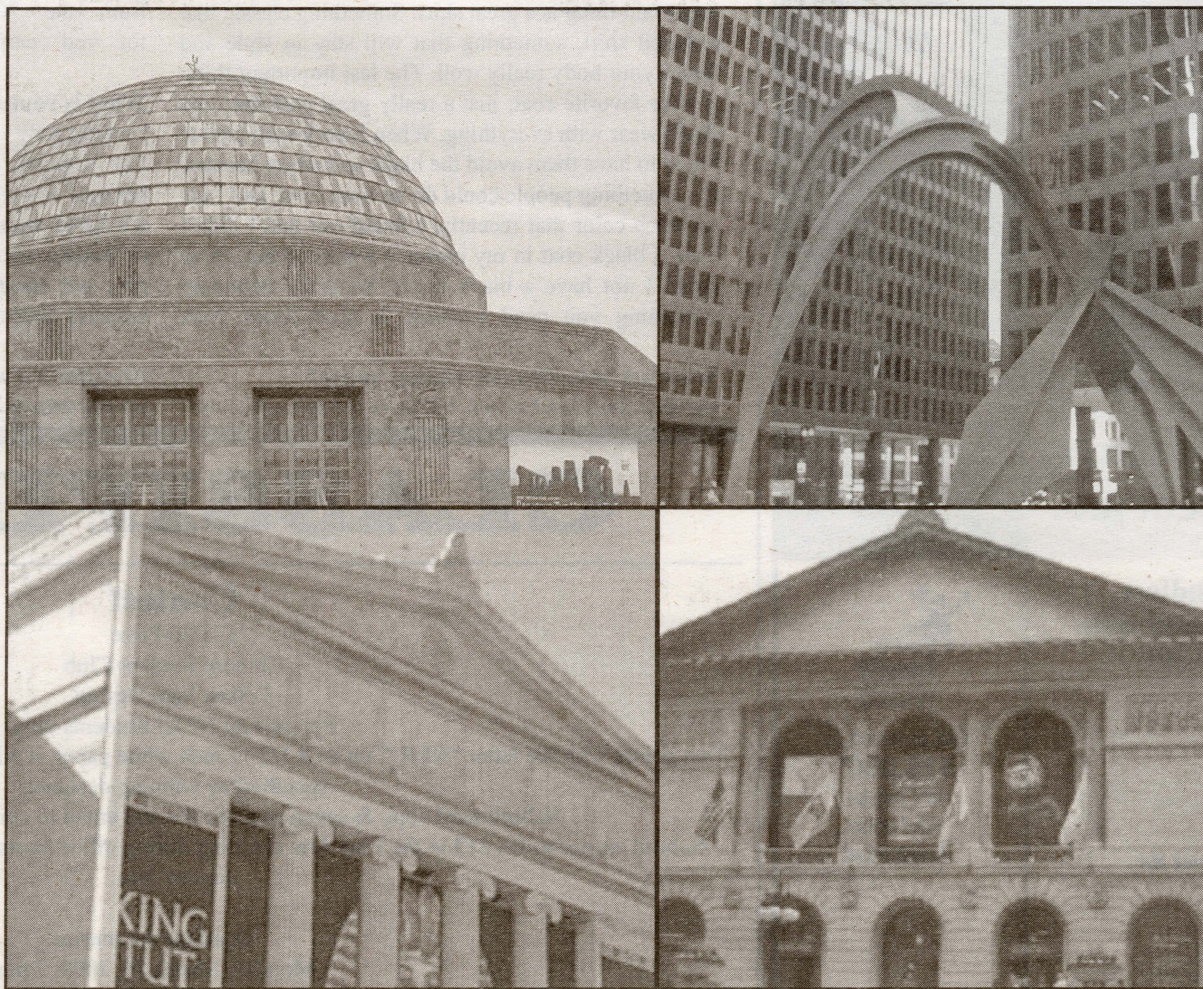


Photo layout by Tracy Eileen

telescope viewing to guiding visitors through the various galleries. Extensive knowledge of astronomy is not needed, as their helpful staff will help you learn the basics. Behind-the-scenes opportunities are also available,

from working with events and promotions to helping with marine mammals. Many of the animal related internships do require an enrollment in a biology degree program, though there are many other

the city and suburbs will have volunteer or internship positions waiting to be filled. Not only can the rewards be academically helpful, but assisting a great museum that reaches the public is always a wonderful reward.

Wardrobe Styling Isn't Just For Celebrities Anymore

by Tracy Ellen
Photographer

Remember that feeling of having nothing to wear, and then going to the mall to buy a new outfit, then when you come home you find a cluttered closet?

Chicago's own celebrity stylist Christine Matsunaga styles celebrities for red carpet events and parties. Christine also works with anyone who is in need of wardrobe styling and for anyone who wants to recycle their clothes, also known as re-styling their wardrobe.

Luckily, I was able to interview the stylist herself to get the inside scoop.

Tracy Ellen: What five items do women need in their wardrobe?

Christine Matsunaga: One important thing is to have a good pair of jeans; I can't really say what type of cut because everybody's different. I would suggest finding a pair of jeans that flatter the part of your body in your lower half that you want to show, and hide the part of your body that is your least favorite. The second important thing would actually be a set; a good suit because whether or not you work at an industry that requires a suit, there will be a time when you'll need it and you want to have tailored too. The third important thing is another set, which is the classic white button down, same with the suit and have it fitted as well. With anything in your wardrobe, it is good to have your clothes fitted. When you buy something really cheap and have it tailored

to your body, it could look designer. The fourth important thing is a great skirt. Something classic like a pencil skirt, something that will stay in style and flatter your body really well. The last important thing is your favorite coat; just a really great coat that you could wear with everything. When I work with clients I tend to have them avoid the black and white because it's something people could do on their own, and I get so much color that recently, I found out that I didn't have a black coat in my closet. I was thinking, 'how could I not have a black coat?' So that's definitely something you need to have, a good black coat.

What are your favorite vintage stores?

I love second hand stores, but there are so many stores

that I go to so it's really hard to say. Vintage wise, I find that although vintage stores have great pieces they tend to be overpriced, so I'm a big Goodwill, Salvation Army rack hunter. I really like the stuff you can find there. The only thing I find with thrift shopping is that you need to put aside a lot of time, like you have to go through each rack and really look through the stuff. Another store that I like is Crossroads Trading Company because they're really great with finding designer pieces and being able to give it to you for the fraction of its price, because it has already been gently worn.

Who is your biggest inspiration, fashion wise?

Designer wise, my favorite designer is Nanette Laporte for women because she really knows how to flatter a woman's body type. I know that she doesn't design for busty women, which could be tough for women who are busty but I just love her cuts, her styles, and her line is just really feminine, and she really knows how to show off a woman's body without having to show too much skin, too much cleavage, so she really keeps it classy.

Describe your personal style.

My style tends to change with the seasons but always seems to include a vintage piece or a number of vintage pieces. It's really hard to say; maybe a mix of modern trend with vintage is how I'd put it.

What is the biggest mistake women make when shopping or getting dressed?

The biggest mistake that I found with women is making a purchase for something just because it's cheap. I think that when people go shopping, if you find something that you like you really need to think about how much is this piece, even if it's forty dollars, think about how many hours did I have to work to buy this forty dollar piece or is this worth two or four hours of work; and come to think of it, you are really spending money on clothes. So, basically, the biggest mistake people make is that they buy things that don't look fabulous on them, and I think that people only need to make purchases on things that make them say, "OMG! I'm going to wear this forever!" So, basically, I think impulse buys and multiple purchases of certain items just because they're all on sale, is the worst purchase you can make.

What was your big break in styling?

My big break was my first client, Keiko Agena from the "Gilmore Girls". I got her ready for red carpet events, and premiere parties.

What is your favorite city and why?

I would now say it's Chicago. It used to be all about Los Angeles, but now I have to say it's Chicago because it's filled with great food and surprisingly, it's filled with a lot of great fashion as well. A lot of people don't think Chicago much of a fashion city, but from living here I actually found, to my surprise, that it is and it's definitely developing, too.

Christine's work can be viewed online at: www.tristinstyling.com

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Photo by Tracy Ellen



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NEIU'S ETHICS BOWL TEAM CHAMPIONS GO ON TO THE NATIONALS



Photo by Ryan Storck

From left to right: Kris Henry, Rosendo Intengan, Dr. Dan Milsky, Brian Kruchten, Jessica LaPiana, Charise Barlow, Phil Mayo, Dr. John Casey, Jack Colt

by Ryan Storck
Staff Writer

It was Wednesday morning, around 10:15a.m., and I was walking down the hall on the third floor in the Classroom Building when I heard a man's voice. He was asking, what seemed at the time, a terrible question. I heard the question of "because it would save the five people that are tied to the tracks already, is it not our moral imperative to throw the fat man in front of the train?"

I could not believe that in the university I attend there was actually a group that was planning to murder a fat man. Who tied those other people up in the first place? I grabbed my cell phone out of my coat pocket to call the police immediately. These crazed lunatics had to be stopped! I was not about to stand there and be complacent in.... but wait....oh.... as I looked further into the room I saw Dr. Daniel Milsky, a philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU.)

He was talking to his Ethics Bowl team. They were not actually going to kill a man by throwing him in front of a train; they were just discussing the merits of a philosophical doctrine that says the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people should be the aim of all social decisions.

What would you do with the fat man? Does this kind of thought experiment give you a headache? That kind of situation doesn't even faze the team of philosophers that competed in the National Ethics Bowl on March 5. Two professors coached eight of their finest students at NEIU to compete in the National Ethics Bowl.

In the Ethics Bowl, teams are given 15 applied ethics cases to discuss and evaluate ahead of the competition. During each round of competition each team is given a case and must prepare an analysis that addresses a question pre-selected by the Ethics Bowl administrators, Milsky explained.

The eight students who went to the national competition were Jessica LaPiana, Brian Kruchten, Jack Colt, Kris Henry, Phil Mayo, Charise Barlow, Rosendo Intengan, and Kendra Wilson. The two co-coaches were Dr. John Casey and Dr. Daniel Milsky, both professors and advisers in NEIU's Philosophy Department.

"Our team is comprised of eight individuals with very different backgrounds and beliefs which lead to some very interesting arguments, thoughts, and some really great quotes that will live on forever," Brian Kruchten said.

NEIU has competed in the Upper Midwest Regional Ethics Bowl for the last four years, and this year they went

undefeated against nine other universities from Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan, making NEIU's team one of the top 10 teams in the nation.

So what does this accomplishment mean for NEIU?

"Our participation in the Ethics Bowl over the last several years has raised the profile of NEIU's philosophy program, and therefore NEIU," Casey said. "Word of mouth is a big deal in academia, so as word gets around that we have prepared, engaged and interesting students, this can only be good for us."

Now you might be sitting in the cafeteria thinking, "I'm in NEIU going for an education degree, philosophy just doesn't pertain to my interests. When I look at my delicious cheeseburger I see a cheeseburger, not a tortured cow that lives his short life confined in a cage." Our winning team of philosophers would have a rebuttal ready for you.

"Philosophy has taught me ignorance is bliss, but it's also morally repugnant. We have a duty to know, even if knowing prevents us from the happiness of not knowing any better," LaPiana said.

Kruchten would agree with LaPiana. "The studying of this field never allows me to become complacent with the world. I feel too many times we become comfortable with our own lives, thus never

wanting to become involved in things that affect our status quo," said Kruchten.

"The Ethics Bowl is a great way to illustrate the value of philosophy in our everyday lives. The cases we examine are real, and therefore so are the problems," said Casey.

When it comes to our everyday lives, problems are everywhere. So is studying philosophy the answer?

"Philosophy has helped me crystallize thoughts that I have been pondering my whole life, that people have made fun of me for," Barlow said. "I think that part of what I love about philosophy is that it seeks to deconstruct larger questions so that others can pick a bit here or there and really take a look at it; shake the gristle off, see how it feels and tastes in their mind, share it with others flavored with their own perceptions and extra bits of their own intuitions."

"Every choice a person makes has an impact on an individual, social, and even global level," LaPiana said, "I think that philosophy has more of a chance to change the world than any other aspect of society."

Casey added, "Philosophy teaches us to be responsible thinkers- i.e. careful, honest, rigorous, fair, and open-minded thinkers. This is what the Ethics Bowl is all about."

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Student Spotlight: Al Cordero

by: Victoria Tullock

Photo Editor/Co-News Editor

VT: What clubs or orgs are you apart of?

AC: I just finished my last year in Model Illinois Government. I also served as a senator in the SGA.

Why are you so active?

I come from a very politically active family, and I was raised to believe that if I see there is something wrong, or if I passionately believe in a cause, I have an obligation to the people to solve the problem or advance the cause.

What's the one thing you like most about NEIU?

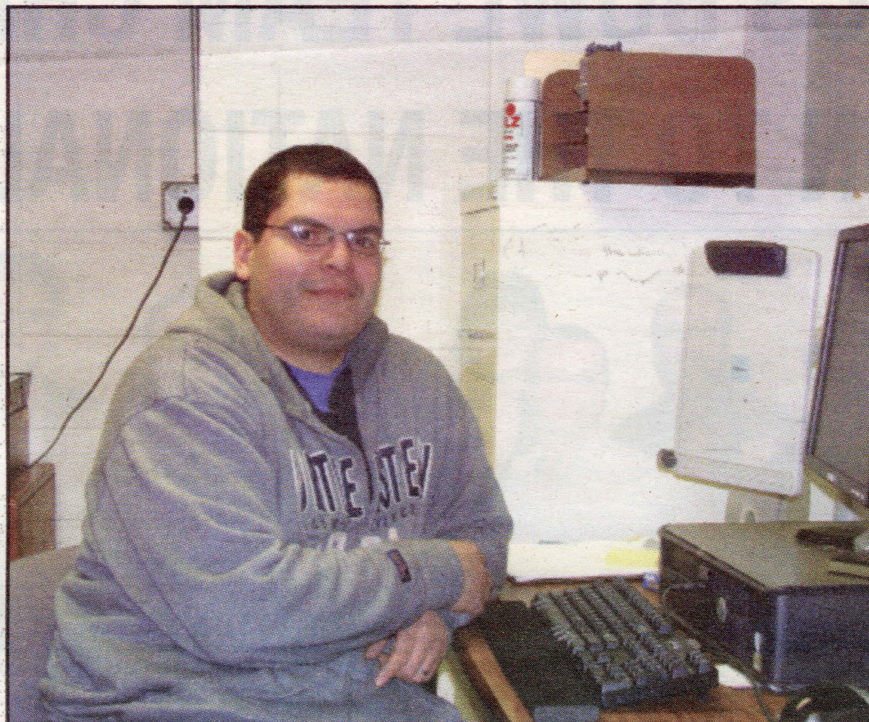
I like the small classes. I also like the proximity of the campus to downtown.

What do you like least about NEIU?

The student apathy. There are many things that affect students, and some students could care less until they see the bill. There are many students who stay informed with what is happening, but very few actually take a chance to help solve our problems.

What is Model Illinois Government about?

Model Illinois Government (or MIG for short), is an



intercollegiate governmental simulation/conference in which 275-300 students from all over Illinois gather to play the roles of the Illinois government and the legislature.

How was the MIG conference this year?

It went very well. We had an outstanding group from NEIU participate this year; among them were first year

delegates who rose to the occasion and represented NEIU with dignity and honor.

Anything interesting happen at the MIG conference?

Yes. Several members of the NEIU group were elected by their peers to serve as leaders at the conference. Paul Harris and I both won awards. Paul won the Outstanding Member of the House Award, and I won Outstanding Contribution to MIG; which is equivalent to a MVP award in sports.

What kind of future do you see for yourself?

As I near the end of my education, I plan on running for public office. I want to be a state representative. From there, we'll just have to see.

Any advice for incoming freshman?

Take the first year to get to know the school. Get involved, but don't get too involved, the first year is the most important because it sets a trend for how you will be as a student. As you move into your sophomore year and beyond, jump in and gain leadership experience by joining clubs, running for student government, or become an ambassador through the Dean of Students office. Also, build up a network of friends, they'll be there when you need them, and the sense of camaraderie will give you confidence.

Spring Break in the City

by Sabrina Gasulla

Staff Writer

In these tough economic times, not everyone can afford to take a week off from work and fly off to some exotic destination for spring break. Fortunately, we happen to live in (or near) one of the most interesting cities in the country. Even though Chicago is not a typical spring break destination, there are plenty of things to keep you from missing your professors. Here are just a few of the things you can do to in the Chicagoland area from March 20 through the 29.

Go Mad

"March Madness" is here! Whether you are hosting viewing parties of your own or hitting the bars to trash-talk a wider audience, it's all about college basketball this week. **Full Shilling** in Wrigleyville is throwing a two-day kick-off extravaganza with prizes and \$7 Miller Lite Pitchers on March 19 and 20. **Stretch Run Sporting Club & Grille** on LaSalle Street features 240 TVs and a private party room.

Go Green

St. Patrick's Day is March 17, but in Chicago we celebrate all month long. Head to **Mystic Celt** on Southport Avenue for a great (and inexpensive) Irish-American buffet and killer Irish coffees every Sunday. **Ginger's Ale House**, not too far away on Ashland Avenue, features an extensive draft beer selection, \$4.50 Harp pints all month and an English/Irish/American menu. Both pubs have huge plasma screens in every corner, so why not kill two birds with one stone and get with the madness, Irish-style?

Go Late

The Art Institute is letting you stay a little later at their "After Dark" event on March 27. "Take a peek at the museum's "Becoming Edvard Munch" exhibit after the doors close to the public. Includes a cash bar, complimentary appetizers, a DJ and performances by theater ensemble "Collaboration." (from www.Metromix.com). \$15 for students, \$20 otherwise.

Go Shopping

You may not be able to wear your shorts and flip-flops in Chi-town yet, but it sure feels awesome to update your closet in preparation for that glorious day, when the thermostat will pass 70 degrees. **Chicago premium outlets** in Aurora are having huge sales (think 50-60 percent off on average) all throughout March. Can't get to Aurora? Hit the **Mag Mile**. Michigan Avenue will be teeming with tourists and locals alike enjoying somewhat milder temperatures and fantastic prices.

Go Outside (Inside)

Outdoor Café on Bryn Mawr Avenue has found a solution to outside seating in the winter. They have brought the patio furniture inside. Essentially, this is a Korean teahouse with fabulous desserts and a quirky decor. Go for the delicious (and huge) fruit bing soo, stay for the awesome board games and friendly atmosphere.

Go with Kids

Whether the kiddies have the same spring break as you or not, they will demand to be entertained during their week off. **Brookfield Zoo** and the **Children's Museum** in Navy Pier are always good options. Make sure to hit up your local library for free museum passes. For some splashing fun (that is sure to leave them exhausted and you with a relaxing evening) take them to one of Chicago indoor water parks like **CoCo Key Water Resort** in Arlington Heights or **Keylime Cove Water Park Resort** in Gurnee.

Go Explore

Believe it or not, some people actually travel to Chicago during spring break. We have really great diversity in the city so it is possible to experience a lot of cultures without going very far. The temperatures should reach into the 50s that week so go for a walk, get to know a new neighborhood, try some ethnic food, listen to different genres of music and snap silly pictures in front of monuments. Go ahead, play the tourist.

The Stamp

by David Mitchell

Staff Writer

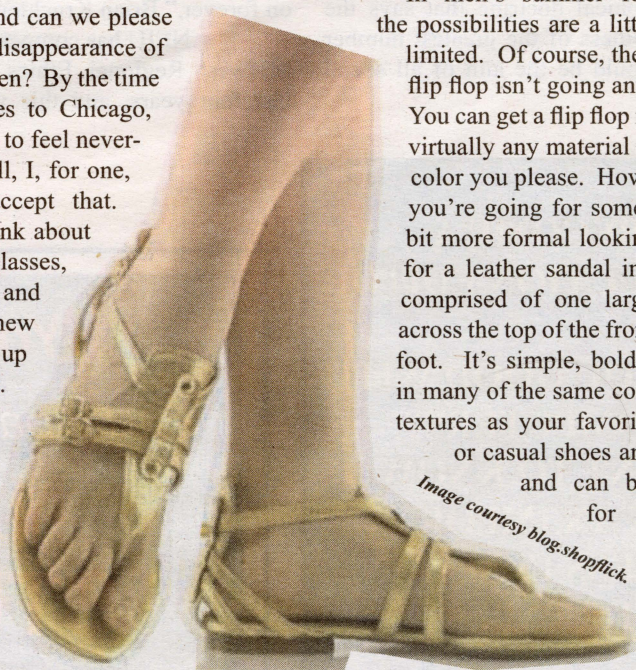
What would you love more than bundling up in all eight of your winter layers, strapping on those huge boots and trudging through the latest foot of snow tomorrow morning? Oh that's right... *anything*. We, as a city are all absolutely, irrevocably *over* winter. I can't think of a person who feels like this is fun anymore. Where is the sun? Where is the warmth? And can we please discuss the disappearance of the color green? By the time March comes to Chicago, winter starts to feel never-ending. Well, I, for one, refuse to accept that. All I can think about are sunglasses, tee shirts, and trendy new ways to roll up your jeans. So maybe I'm in denial- I'm fine with that. In fact, I'm so fine with it that I plan to drag you down with me. Let's talk sandals.

In ladies' footwear these days, there are some exciting developments happening. There is such a thing as the "gladiator" heel. The main idea of this is just more straps than necessary for a dramatic aesthetic effect. The same is being applied to sandals. You'll see a lot more women walking down the street this summer wearing shoes that resemble less of a sandal and more of an open-toed flat, because of all the coverage the foot is receiving from the extra straps around and sometimes up the ankle, woven over and over the top of the foot and streamlining the heel. This, I must

An Open Letter to the Inventor of Winter

mention, has been met with a lot of concern and raised a few eyebrows. The gladiator style is a little extreme, it's true. However, the intensity of the gladiator sandal can be buffered by choosing one with narrower straps. Not only does this look daintier on the foot, but also allows the designer to weave more interesting designs, use more colors on different straps, since there are more to work with, and create a more unique sandal.

In men's summer footwear, the possibilities are a little more limited. Of course, the classic flip flop isn't going anywhere. You can get a flip flop made of virtually any material and any color you please. However, if you're going for something a bit more formal looking, look for a leather sandal in that is comprised of one large strap across the top of the front of the foot. It's simple, bold, comes in many of the same colors and textures as your favorite dress or casual shoes and belts, and can be worn for casual



Fridays, a night out, or when you're just bummin' around the pool or beach.

Wasn't that fun? It's nice to think ahead. All we have to do is stay positive. Through the snow, the clouds, the cold... the... the bitter, unwavering grasp that winter has around your scale of personal happiness... Oh, who am I kidding? I can't deal with this anymore. Don't expect Mother Nature to come around anytime soon. It's every man, woman and child for themselves. Turn up the heat, strip down and break out the sunless tanner- it's gonna be at least another month until we can go outside without risking hypothermia.