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## Independent - Apr. 21, 2023

Monty Stites

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# NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY'S INDEPENDENT

FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2023

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## UPI Authorizes Strike As Early As Tuesday

What You Need to Know

By Scott Andrews, Writer & Dan Maurer, News Editor

The University Professionals of Illinois (UPI), the union representing faculty, librarians, and advisors at NEIU, has voted to authorize a strike. A mediator will work with the union and the administration to attempt to reach an agreement according to Nancy Matthews, the president of the UPI chapter at NEIU. UPI has announced that the earliest they will strike is Tuesday, April 25, 2023.

If mediation is unsuccessful the faculty will go on strike. Depending on how long the strike lasts, coursework, final exams, and projects may be disrupted. Professors will make individual policies for class work in the event of a strike. Union spokespeople have stressed that students will get their grades and be able to graduate.

In a press release from UPI-NEIU, issued on April 13th, "the last two days, NEIU faculty and staff who are members of NEIU's University Professionals of Illinois (NEIU UPI, IFT Local 4100) overwhelmingly voted to strike, with 95% of voting members asserting their willingness to do so if an agreement can't be reached at the table."

The current contract with UPI expired in 2019. Due to the pandemic, the contract has been extended temporarily by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). In July 2022, a formal bargaining team at NEIU began negotiations with the administration. In March 2022, UPI requested mediation of the bargaining process. This request was denied by the administration, prompting the strike authorization vote. UPI has previously demonstrated on campus and held events in Village Square.

UPI is demanding a 6% increase in compensation within one year for all members, over a 4% increase in 2-4 years, an increased overload rate, and an increase in parental leave to six weeks. The administration has turned down all proposals except for a 2% increase in compensation with increased workloads and responsibilities for faculty and staff for the next year and no increase for 2 years from now.

A strike could significantly impact stu-

dents. During a strike, faculty represented by the union will not attend class, grade coursework, or communicate with students on school-related matters. Nor will they receive pay during the strike. However, it is customary to receive back pay as arranged in negotiations.

NEIU's president Dr. Gloria Gibson and Jose Rico, chairman of the NEIU Board of Trustees (BoT), have issued a statement, "With the welfare of students in mind, we are fully committed to continue bargaining in good faith. We deeply appreciate our faculty and staff, who are all committed to our mission of preparing a diverse community of students for leadership and service in our region and in a dynamic multicultural world. While the university manages its financial concerns, we remain committed to our mission to serve our students, many of whom are young professionals and first-generation college students."

At an information session hosted by UPI, union spokespeople addressed how a strike might affect students. Speaking for the union, professor Nikolas Hoel said there would be disruption, as strikes are disruptive by their very nature. During a strike, faculty will not teach, communicate with students about coursework, or grade papers. UPI did say that students would get their grades and be able to graduate.

Using a 2004 strike at NEIU by UPI as an example, the Union said the semester may be extended by a number of days.

While answering the concerns of students graduating this semester, UPI representatives said that grades routinely take a number of weeks to be finalized even after the graduation ceremony, and that they did not anticipate a strike lasting long enough to impact students who are moving on to graduate school.

Another concern of students was what to do with their coursework while a strike is in progress. Ashley Elrod, a professor of history, said that her class would not have to do additional work and that the final project she assigns might be shortened, depending

on how long the strike lasts.

Elrod spoke only for her own class as her subject allows for some flexibility. She said that other subjects, such as sciences, or classes that are in a series, might need to be handled differently. UPI advised students to speak with their professors before April 24, 2023, as each instructor may have different class policies.

UPI also addressed a rumor that university administrators may shut down the D2L system. Nancy Matthews said that that was unlikely and that NEIU's current administration would not be capable of doing so.

The union also said that students working internships could still work, and that doing so would not be considered crossing the picket line, or working in defiance of the union strike. Student teachers should also stay in their placements, as they are not members of UPI.

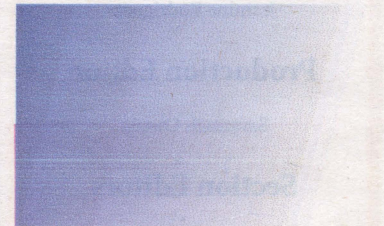
One student brought up that some leases at The Nest expire on May 13, 2023, and asked how an extended semester might affect residents. Union representatives said they did not have an answer to the question, and directed students to speak to the Office of Student Affairs, as that office deals with The Nest.

Students can support UPI, in the event of a strike, by demonstrating with professors on the picket line outside of the university. UPI also urges students to contact Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker's office, as well as the NEIU's Board of Trustees and NEIU's President, Gloria J. Gibson.

The union previously released an FAQ to students earlier in the semester.

UPI will be making announcements on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, and advises students to only get their information about the union from union sources.

According to a recent press release, UPI will be holding off the first day of a potential strike until Tuesday, April 25. The union will be rallying at noon on Monday, April 24, on the main campus. UPI claims that it has "seen notable progress" as a direct result of its rally ahead of the BoT meeting on April 13, 2023.



UPI protestors at El Centro. Photos by Scott Andrews

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**Mission Statement:**

The Independent's mission is to gather and report on important and relevant information to the university and its surrounding communities, as well as to be a creative and critical outlet for community members to express their views and concerns and to offer examples of potential solutions to ongoing problems.

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## Faculty Senate Demands Communication, Action from Board of Trustees

Written by: Dan Maurer, News Editor

The NEIU Faculty Senate passed a resolution on April 11, 2023, demanding a better working relationship with the Board of Trustees (BoT) in its new make up, after five new members were added in recent months after four dismissals and one resignation earlier this year. In their resolution, the senate cited the Dec. 5, 2022 vote of no-confidence in the BoT in which 92% of the faculty assembly expressed their lack of confidence in the Board's leadership.

In their resolution, the senate went on to demand that the board members respect the knowledge and expertise of faculty members, and that they "Get to know us, the culture and data of the NEIU community as a whole. The senate also demanded that the board address concerns the faculty have with "harmful Administrative decision making," and that board members are available for "consistent, transparent dialogue with the University community."

The senate also passed a resolution regarding a proposed reorganization of the university's different colleges.

"The reorg is not the mandate that it used to be." Denise Cloonan said, a faculty senator from the College of Arts and Science (CAS), of the reorganization that had previously been proposed by the administration. She said the CAS alone had been asked to cut their budget by between \$1.3 million and \$1.9 million. That is a much larger amount than the roughly \$600,000 that the original reorganization proposed at the Feb. 7, 2023 Budget Town Hall would have saved for the entire university.

The resolution cited a lack of communication from President Gloria J. Gibson and Interim Provost Andrea Evans, as well as the rapidly

approaching Fall 2023 semester and "imminent departures" in administration. The Faculty Senate demanded that the administration "immediately send a written communication" directly to faculty members explaining recent changes to the proposed reorganization.

Two other resolutions were not passed. A proposed statement detailing "Senate Expectations for Future Leadership" at NEIU was withdrawn as the senate asked Chair Nancy Wrinkle to seek the endorsement of other shared governance bodies of the university before it would be considered again.

Another resolution asking the University to restructure the NEIU For You scholarship was also withdrawn, pending further research. Nancy Wrinkle had discovered that the scholarship only applied to up to 12 credit hours per semester, but that many science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students routinely take on 15 to 19 credit hours in a semester because many of their required courses are worth four or five credit hours.

This has left some students who are eligible for the NEIU For You scholarship to pay the difference out of pocket. According to Wrinkle, the scholarship was intended as a "top-off" for eligible students to cover remaining costs that other grants and scholarships do not cover.

After discussion among senators, and as there is time before the NEIU For You scholarship is up for renewal, the resolution was withdrawn so that more research could be done to find out how many students are affected by the gap in funding, and if students in other disciplines other than STEM are also affected.

## Letter to the Editor

To the editorial board:

I am a senior in English, graduating in a few weeks, after which I will begin as a graduate student. I am also a Teamster, Local 743. In the past few weeks, some students have formed an organization called NEIU SOL (Students On Labor). We are organizing to support the Union.

On April 11th our Student Government Association sent us a letter that, in my opinion, did not go far enough in support of our NEIU staff and faculty, who have been made to languish during the pandemic and the financial crisis without a fair contract.

My concern upon reading SGA's statement was this: it lacks clarity about the power dynamic at play. They say they call on the Administration and the Union to take action. I want that, too. But as students of Northeastern Illinois University, we would be remiss to ignore the significant power dynamics of the well-paid administrators, who have undervalued the under-paid staff at our school for far too long.

The SGA's petition suggests the union and the administration should negotiate, and they absolutely should. But a statement that stops there reveals a lack of awareness about the repeated attempts the

Union has made towards negotiations. The burden here and now is on this failed administration to do what they ought to have already done.

I shared these thoughts with SGA and they never replied to me. I attended the Board of Trustees meeting on April 13th, alongside many NEIU SOL members and NEIU UPI members. I had signed up to give a public comment, but I was number 26 on the list, and they accepted only 10 speakers. Our staff and faculty in NEIU UPI are dedicated to going above and beyond for us students, and we ought to support them in their struggle. Many of the speakers spoke in support of NEIU UPI.

In a university, working conditions are learning conditions. When the workers here are not supported and valued, our education is not supported and valued. I stand unquestioningly on the side of workers. Any statement lacking this clarity doesn't represent my views.

Instead of the weak sauce offered by the SGA, I would like to offer a much shorter statement that people can sign:

LET THEM STRIKE,  
AND WE WILL STRIKE  
WITH THEM.

Sincerely,  
Timothy Garrison

# POLICE BLOTTER

These incidents occurred on NEIU campus property between the dates of 03/30/2023 and 04/10/2023

03/30/2023 - Lot J

Student reports damage to his vehicle's car door while parked in lot. Offender is unknown at this time.

03/31/2023 - Cafeteria

Report of subjects drinking beer in cafeteria. The matter was referred to student due process. All subjects were asked to leave campus for the day, and complied.

04/01/2023 - The Nest

Student reports fraudulent charges on his credit card after using it at a vending machine at the NEST & realizing he lost card.

04/03/2023 - Bernard Brommel Hall

Student reports unknown male wearing black hoodie & black pants grabbed her backside while walking down the stairs, then took off running. Officers canvased the area with negative results.

04/03/2023 - Access Road

Individual matching description from earlier incident seen walking away from campus. Stopped & questioned by officers. Released at this time.

04/03/2023 - The Nest

Student reports threatening /harassing messages received thru social media by non NEIU student. Matter is under investigation.

04/03/2023 - Library

Bystander notified victim that an unknown male subject wearing black hoodie & black pants had taken pictures of her backside as she walked to Library. Incident is under investigation.

03/03/2023 - WTTW Studios

Police responded to reports of homeless person needing medical assistance. Subject claimed he was hearing voices. He was transported to hospital for observation.

04/04/2023 - Property Control

Facilities management reports floor cleaner machine used to shine floors is missing from storage area.

04/04/2023 - Lech Walesa Hall

While taking a vandalism report after faculty reported phone cable cut & posters on floor, it was determined squirrels came in thru open window & chewed cable & left pawprints on chair

04/03/2023 - Library

Bystander notified victim that an unknown male subject wearing black hoodie & black pants had taken pictures of her backside as she walked to Library.

Incident is under investigation.

04/05/2023 - The Nest

Resident reports on going dispute between online clothing store, her bank and Amazon regarding purchases she claims were never delivered.

04/05/2023 - The Nest

Unknown offender stole resident's online purchases that were delivered to the NEST.

04/06/2023 - The Nest

Officers were dispatched to the NEST to escort individual off premises after a domestic dispute. Individual complied

04/10/2023 - Access Road

According to witness, an unknown female driver backed into a roadway sign, bent it and knock it to the ground before driving away. No injuries reported.

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The NEIU police blotter is requested from our campus police for every issue of NEIU Independent because this publication exercises its right to do so, courtesy of the Clery Act. The Clery Act is a federal statute requiring all higher education establishments that participate in federal financial aid programs to maintain

records of campus crime and campus security information. Any case that is considered ongoing may not be listed in the blotter. For this reason, there may be updated reports published retroactively once those cases are closed. For more information about the Clery Act, visit the NEIU police department's webpage.

# Student Journalist Files Ethics Complaint Against NEIU Administrator

By Monty Stites, Editor-in-Chief, and Dan Maurer, News Editor

A NEIU student journalist filed an ethics complaint against Manish Kumar, Vice President of Finance and Administration, at NEIU on April 17, 2023.

The complainant alleges that he felt pressured by Kumar to provide favorable news coverage of the administration and the university. The student said "he was trying to...influence me into saying good things about him".

The process after an ethics complaint has been filed consists of four steps, though those steps are only taken if during the first step - the initial review - it has been determined that enough information exists to initiate an inquiry.

In a statement to the Independent, the student said that during their second call, "Manish offered to get me an internship next year, when I am ready, at the Chicago Tribune or elsewhere. He said he would make some phone calls in my favor." He went on, "He wanted me to think of him as a mentor who could help me advance my career and academic endeavors."

In an interview with the Independent Kumar denied any wrongdoing saying, "No! Fuck no!" about having pressured the student. He went on to say, "I don't need positive coverage, my work speaks for itself." Kumar also said that he has no connection to the Chicago Tribune.

## Letter to the Editor

When the Student Government Association stated publicly that our education is not the faculty's bargaining chip, I was so disappointed and strongly disagreed as someone who has served the roles of SGA senator, secretary, chief of staff, and an SGA representative for UPBC. If the administration cared about students, they would care about faculty having equal opportunity benefits comparable to other industries and universities.

For example the lack of maternity and paternity leave, and working to negotiate a fair contract. By not being willing to negotiate a fair contract, that's well overdue mind you, they would care about students getting the correct support and guidance from faculty. The mistreatment and lack of support for faculty is that same mistreatment students are given. No free snack, domino's, pizza, or false promise will reflect the actions the administration has taken to fail the university. In my honest opinion it's outrageous that administrators feel comfortable letting students lose the quality of education working with those who directly provide the education.

As a student who is still stuck in the aftermath of unexpectedly losing a father, the lack of support from Northeastern Illinois University has been greatly impacted by overworked, underpaid, and under-represented staff. Finding out there was no protection for students expecting bereavement felt like a noose around my neck from the beginning, before ever returning to campus.

It all started out with an

upcoming trip to San Juan, Puerto Rico, for the SACNAS conference with the SCSE (Student Center for Science Engagement) and finding the entire last day on campus wondering why I had not gotten a phone call or text back from my father. After class I could not shake an uncomfortable image of him laying on the ground in a white room, so I did what any panicking daughter would do with their parents being out of state for work for months. I called in a wellness check that I did not expect to transform my life as it did. My father was found on a white-tiled floor in horrifying conditions, a short phone call that broke me into a million pieces at once.

In complete shock and confusion I found myself walking into the Pedrosa Center just in time to get a series of phone calls that I nearly could not understand as each phone call was worse in such a short amount of time. I could not even comprehend the first call asking if my father had wishes on life saving measures. I found myself confused, responding he was supposed to be home for Christmas while the Interim Assistant Director said "Just say yes", I repeated "Yes" and the phone call ended abruptly with a follow up minutes later to confirm he was successfully revived after only arriving at the hospital 15 minutes prior. I thought it was the worst hour of my life with each call, feeling unprepared to be making these decisions before I found the next more difficult hour. A student worker was looking at a flight that found me a flight out, before I left to figure the rest out

on my own and make some hard calls.

At the time I did not expect it would be the most support and guidance I'd get at Northeastern to this day, outside of weekly visits with Student Counseling Service to get back to a state of "functionable" from all of the trauma I experience from loss and returning to pursue my education.

Returning I only experienced the same medical issues that led to the death of my father, the shell of myself found no guidance in how to navigate basic daily functions let alone how to finish out incompletes with professors who are overwhelmed with the leadership in administration failing professors and students. The strike is overdue is short, if administration

In 2011 Purdue University adopted a rare academic leave policy for grieving students to student students who lost a loved one during the academic school year to allow bereaved students to focus on their grief rather than contacting multiple instructors to make arrangements for missed coursework and material. Prior it was up to faculty members individually to receive permission.

At Northeastern my experience is a huge lack of support and navigation outside of student consulting services to navigate the loss of a primary parent with major impacts. Northeastern Illinois does not have any policy on bereavement or regarding any level of protection for students, such as myself, whereas Purdue's policy mandates the consistent treatment of such students

Continues on page 5

and provides protection with consistent guidelines and based on the relation of the decades to the student to better support and understand the students needs.

Dr. Heather Servaty-Seib, associate vice provost at Purdue University led grief and loss research aimed at understanding the idiosyncratic experiences of those grieving. Loss that applies to death and the many challenges of life experiences including college graduation and educational transitions. Dr. Heather Servaty-Seib stated the following:

“Bereaved students have significantly lower GPAs during the semester the death took place, and these students are at a higher risk of attrition from college.. in addition to helping students succeed academically, having a policy communicates that the institution is compassionate and respectful toward its students” (Purdue University News Services, 2011).

Students in crisis or experience impacts of loss and grief may not fit into traditional and current NIEU policy. The trauma impact does not stop after returning back from traumatic events if there is no guidance and support, and can be more traumatizing trying to understand how to process grief and missed coursework. First-degree family member, followed by a second-degree family member, and non-family member who may be prevalent in the college students experience of loss. Bereavement can greatly affect a student's ability to function with daily tasks and personal hygiene well balancing grief and academics.

Whereas the impacts of grief impact every student differently and depending on the circumstances of the loss. Northeastern Illinois University lacks support

for students experiencing bereavement and protection for students, whereas one semester term may not be adequate for students to balance current academic terms with any incompletes from the prior semester where the death accorded while experiencing grief and disenfranchised grief. Disenfranchised grief may vary and include the following:

Intense feelings of sadness, loneliness, despair, depression, even in some cases self-harm/risk to self or others. Feelings numbness or lack of feeling anything at all from dissociation, feeling nothing at all. Feeling guilt(s), shame for grieving, or the circumstances of the loss. Having difficulty remembering, making decisions, concentrating, and basic caring for one's self are just a few of things students may be overwhelmed to experience outside of academic stress and worries.

With the recent pandemic it is reasonable to connect that students may experience amplified intensity of grief and mental instability in correlation to loss which requires a better understanding of policy, support to navigate through undergraduation, and provide interventions for students experiencing trauma or in crisis from grief. Whereas research reports that 60 percent of college students report having a loss of at least one person close to them before ending their academic career (Cox et al, 2015). It shows a lack of student support and care to have not policy on bereavement or bereavement protection, if Northeastern Illinois University prides themselves in their mission statement on providing an “exceptional environment for learning”, visions success of its students, and values the “access to opportunity” then why does the University lack

support for the students experiencing bereavement.

With programs that may be mentioned but never explained how to apply or where to gain support to students, how do they expect students to have resources if everything is covered up by jumping through hoops and trying to climb unrealistic barriers meant to benefit select individuals that are favored by administrators, including SGA members who have been exclusively benefiting and support a President and other administrators who have no interest in the major of students. It's unfortunate that there are many students who have barely survived the same bureaucracy impacting faculty. It's unacceptable that students find themselves having to be their own advocate because faculty is too overwhelmed to even guide any direction due to time constraints on salaries that can be quite shocking. I often wonder how horrified students would be to see that salaries, limited benefits, and lack of support faculty get, then I have to remind myself it is just a mirroring reflection to why enrollment. Word of mouth works for more than just good news, if administrators and the board of trustees really are willing to refuse reasonable negotiations we as students should be joining faculty in support. Because when a system is this broken, now is the time for students too to make demands for better support from the University.

Thanks in advance,  
Nicole Vangelista, (She/Her)  
Undergraduate Student - Biology  
Vice President - Society of  
Physics Students

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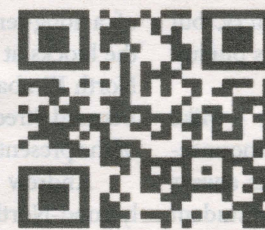
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# What Is Northeastern Doing With Vacant Bryn Mawr Buildings?

By: Gabriel Gurrola, Writer

Northeastern has abandoned all plans to use the vacant buildings located on the block of 3400 West Bryn Mawr Avenue for student housing. Now, NEIU is attempting to find out what the buildings can be used for.

Since 2016, eight properties located on Bryn Mawr Avenue, which Northeastern planned to use for student housing as part of the Decade of Dreams initiative, have remained vacant.

While some owners agreed to sell the buildings, other owners had no intentions to sell.

In response, NEIU invoked eminent domain, which gives governments the right to seize properties, even without the owner's consent.

During a 17-month court battle for ownership of the buildings, NEIU announced plans to build student housing on its existing campus in March 2015, which would eventually become The Nest. The announcement came as a result of public outcry, but NEIU did not back off its pursuit of the buildings.

NEIU spokesperson, Mike Dizon stated after the announcement, "The university has always stated its intention to build student housing on both Bryn Mawr and its own property.

The latest announcement simply represents a switch in order, with on-campus moving from phase two to phase one."

In January 2016, Northeastern was awarded court approval to finalize its acquisition of the buildings. Several businesses were forced to permanently shut their

doors. To this day, the buildings remain vacant.

But the question remains: What exactly are NEIU's plans for the buildings.

Chris Childers, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, told The Independent, "In early 2020, the University contracted with Jones Lang LaSalle, LLC (JLL) to provide comprehensive professional real estate advisory services related to identifying the best use of the real estate located at the intersections of W. Bryn Mawr Ave. and N. Kimball Ave. ("Bryn Mawr Property") and the intersections of N. Avondale Ave., W. Henderson St., and N. Kimball Ave. ("El Centro Property")."

NEIU announced that a public, 60-minute presentation by its real estate broker, Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis (CBRE), would be held via Zoom on January 11, 2023 with the intention to "publicly advertise for the redevelopment of a long-term ground lease for the blocks at Bryn Mawr between North Kimball Avenue and North Bernard Street." A video transcript of the presentation is unavailable.

Andrew Johnson of the Hollywood-North Park Community Association Board told The Independent, "One of our Board members attended that meeting, but it was convened by the University.

The person who advertised it was Chris Childers. We asked repeatedly for them to share a recording of the meeting and the materials they reviewed. However, we never received anything and have never seen a link to anything."

One of the businesses shut down was a favorite among staff at WTTW, Hunan Wok, a Chinese restaurant built in the 1950s.

The owner, Bill Tong, a NEIU alumnus and former adjunct professor of Earth Sciences, firmly refused to sell the restaurant when Northeastern sent him a letter stating they wanted to buy his building and use it for student housing.

Despite Tong's refusal to sell, Northeastern was not going to take no for an answer. Tong said, "We were told that if we didn't sell, they would sue us in court and take it by force."

Then-NEIU President Sharon Hahs said in response to Tong's refusal to sell, "If your question is whether I believe they have the right not to sell, I don't believe they have that right... I recognize that you do not wish to give up your property.

You will be receiving a fair market value for your property. It is my hope that you take that funding and do something appropriate, but this is progress within the law and we are continuing to do this on behalf of our university, on behalf of our students, and on behalf of our future."

Hunan Wok was just one of the many businesses that were forced to shut down after NEIU acquired the entire block of 3400 West Bryn Mawr Avenue.

Manish Kumar, Vice President for Finance and Administration, did not respond for comment.

A once spry neighborhood near Northeastern's main campus is now a deserted one.

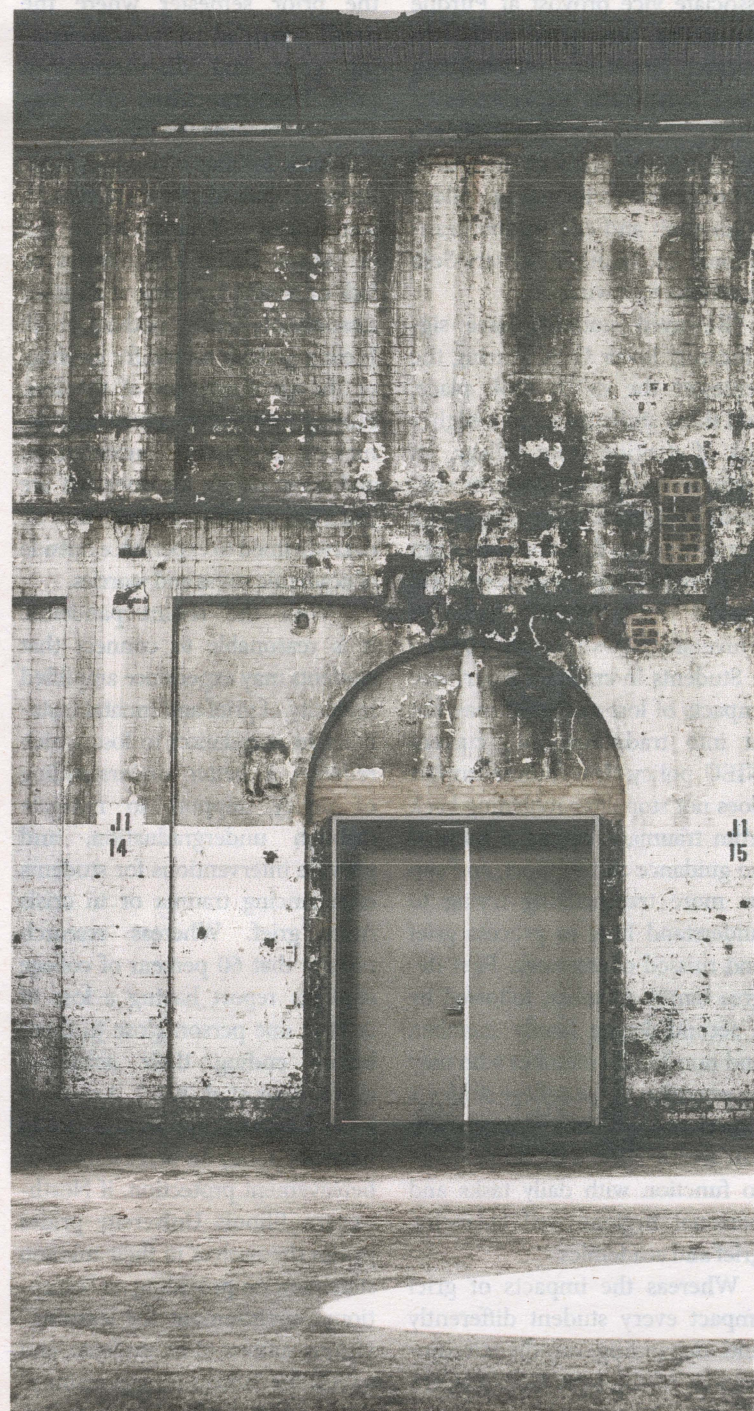


Photo by Rachel Claire from Pexels

# TimelyCare App Provides NEIU Students With Access To Free Mental Health Services

Written by: Scott Andrews, Writer

A green tide of professors marched through the halls of Northeastern Illinois University, chanting “Union power on the rise” and “No more admin tricks and lies.” On March 2, 2023, they marched a circuit from Village Square, past Building C and through the College of Business and Technology, before circling back to the Student Union. University Professionals of Illinois (UPI) Local 4100, the union representing staff and faculty at NEIU, has been in negotiations with the university administration for a new contract. The current five-year contract expired in 2019 and has been rolling over ever since.

In December, UPI held a teach-in in Village Square, where union members spoke with students about the negotiations and what they could mean for students. At the time, the administration had proposed increasing teacher workload without providing additional pay or benefits. That proposal is still on the table.

Dr. Steve Frankel, senior instructor of biology and one of the vice presidents of the union, said the original proposal from NEIU’s administration had not included any kind of mechanism for a raise, meaning newly hired teachers would not be able to receive a raise until a new contract is negotiated in five years. He added that, throughout negotiations, UPI and the administration had yet to exchange financial proposals.

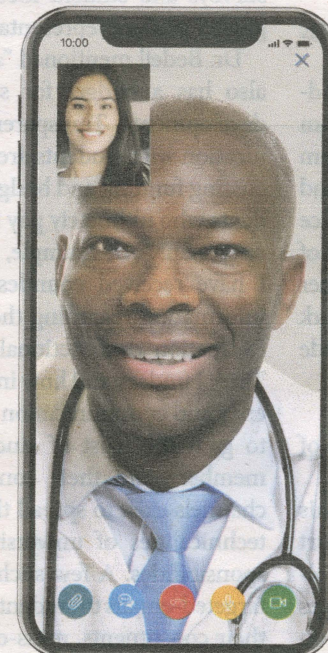
UPI is currently collecting signatures for strike cards, asking members to say that they are willing to go on strike, should the need arise. As of March 2, 2023, less than 100 cards had been signed.

The professor’s march ended on the second floor of the Student Union, where they continued chanting and singing in front of the conference room where negotiations were set to take place. Professors cheered and clapped to calls of “What’s disgusting? Union busting!” and “What’s outrageous? Stagnant wages!” as well as, “What’s appalling? Bosses Stalling!” The chants went on until negotiations began at 2 p.m.

During negotiations, UPI made two proposals: One regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, and another about the disciplinary process. The administration voiced no proposals. Lasting less than an hour, the negotiations were short.



Photo by silviarita from Pixabay



Photos from Timely Care



# The Independent's Editors Response to Student Government Association

By: Monty Stites (Editor-in-Chief), Jasmine Rodriguez (Managing Editor), Dan Maurer (News Editor), Leslie Lozada (Campus Life Editor), Luz Analitis (Arts and Life Editor), Ananth Prabhu (Sports Editor)

**1. How are you including student's in your decision making? What initiatives have you made to ensure you act in the best interest of the students in your college?**

Mike Bedell Ph.D Dean College of Business and Technology:

The students advisory council is exactly that. It's composed of student leaders that we interact with to ensure that we are keeping students front and center in our decisions. We have also appointed a staff professional –funded by differential tuition – to make sure that we are intentionally developing leadership skills of any student interested in participating. That individual also has a budget for student leadership development. Finally, as this is about outcome variables such as student jobs, the Dean maintains an executive council of business leaders that meet seven times per year to talk about the ongoing changing requirements of jobs and to provide information to faculty to keep curriculum up to date.

Tom Phillion Ph.D. Dean Goodwin College of Education:

Right now, I use opportunities like graduation, honor society events, and program meetings with students to get input from students. I also have an open door policy and have had several students stop into my office when they have questions or concerns. All of these interactions feed into a variety of other feedback that I receive from others who work directly with students both inside and outside of classroom settings.

Katrina Bell-Jordan, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences:

There are no formal initiatives on this front, because student success and support are at the forefront of all decisions the College makes. That said, the College leverages student viewpoints in decision making on issues most relevant to students through

ideas/input from CAS student organizations; input from student representatives on the University's shared governance bodies; reports/feedback from the Student Government Association (SGA); and informal comments/feedback at University town halls. The College also asks our program leadership to funnel student-related priorities and issues to the Dean's Office so that we can incorporate student perspectives in our College-level priority setting processes, planning and decision making.

Ananth Prabhu, Sports Section Editor of the Independent:

Dr. Bedell emphasized that the Student Advisory Board (SAB) holds the responsibility for students in the decisions being made to support students' best interest. Currently, NEIU's SAB is composed of five students from various academic backgrounds and collegiate levels. I think Dr. Bedell's response is fair, but more student voices can be heard by including frequent student feedback surveys and student focus groups to have greater student representation.

Dr. Bedell mentioned "a staff professional also has a budget for student leadership development." Transparency and communication with students are crucial when discussing funding and budgets, as it is the students who ultimately pay for the university's operations. For example, as a sports editor, I have received countless inquiries about information regarding the NEIU's Campus Recreation dysfunctional swimming pool. Thus, I understand how important transparency and communication would be in order to gain the trust of students, community members and their constituents. Various channels exist to spread the word about the technicalities of university duties and responsibilities. A few such channels include targeted-emails to students, staff, faculty and their constituents, mass-emails to everyone with an @neiu.edu email address, numerous

social media outlets and the university's official website.

Dr. Phillion accentuated "graduation, honor society events and program meetings" for obtaining student feedback, and I appreciate that he has publicly announced "an open-door policy [for] students [to] stop into [his] office [with] questions or concerns." After hearing his announcement, I commend him, and I hope more students will follow-up on his offer to address their concerns in-person during his office hours by lining up at his door. Dr. Phillion addressed that he is an advocate to the concerns that happen "inside of classroom settings," such as academics and "outside of classroom settings," such as extra-curricular activities that may include Campus Recreation and the disuse of the campus swimming pool. I think if more students take advantage of addressing their common concerns either individually or in focus groups, progress can be made to repair the deficits that may exist on campus, such as the currently shutdown campus swimming pool.

Bell-Jordan mentioned College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) student organizations, Student Government Association (SGA) and feedback at University town halls are the sources of ideas to make relevant decisions to support student success. According to Student Leadership Development (SLD), "the SGA is composed of three distinct agglomerating bodies: the Council of Clubs (16 reps), justices (5) and senate (16 senators)." Thus, it is imperative to have the clear communication channels between each of these segments, which aim to prioritize student success. SGA holds the power to empower individual student voices and elevate those voices to reach the ears of the administration. To reiterate, I think surveys and student focus groups should also be considered to obtain feedback in addition to Bell-Jordan's comment.

This is a very important time to improve the outlook of campus representation at the student level because elections are just around the corner. According to an NEIU Campus Events targeted email, candidate positions for student justices are currently open because "candidate registration application must be completed by March 31st at noon" and "elections will take place online from April 8th - April 14th." Interested students who want to represent the voices of the student body "must attend a Candidate Training which will take place either in-person or via Zoom" during the week of this newspaper issue.

Overall, I think that the following must be improved: transparency of actions and funding, communication between all departments, the administration and board of trustees, increased communication channels to include everybody in the campus community and frequent surveys and focus groups from the individual students. The premise of intelligible decision-making can be vastly improved when teamwork is applied across the entire NEIU campus. The best interest of student success will certainly be obtained when all the cogs of all the departments, the administration and board of trustees mesh with the input from each and every student across campus.

**2. How are you involving students when you have to make decisions in regards to the budget?**

Manish Kumar, Vice President for Finance and Administration:

The Budget Director meets with SGA about fees and the general budget each year and will continue to do so. The actual budget decisions are made by the financial managers once the control numbers are distributed. At the direction of the president, the VPs work with financial managers

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and consider student support and services and student success when making budgetary decisions.

Monty Stites, Editor-in-Chief of the Independent:

This response to the question only mentions who of the student body the Budget Director meets with and what it is they meet about. It does not address the crux of the question, which is how these students are involved in the process by which these decisions are made. Sure, it is good to know that SGA meets with the Budget Director about fees students are required to pay and what changes will be made to the budget. However, this statement still leaves much to be desired. How does SGA communicate the needs of the student body to the Budget Director? How does SGA source these needs from their fellow students?

How do they involve non SGA affiliated students?

This response, while addressing the what and who, – which, in a way, covers a broad and basic “how” – is absent the methodological process by which students are involved in these decisions that were asked.

It would have been nice to receive an answer from SGA as to how they involve students and what exactly they do to contribute to this budget discussion.

And to which degree is SGA's input adhered to.

**3. When was the last time you had open office hours in order to address student concerns?**

Mike Bedell Ph.D Dean College of Business and Technology:

The College of Business and Technology has had several “Coffee with the Dean” events during the fall semester and has two more scheduled for the spring.

Tom Phillion Ph.D. Dean Goodwin College of Education:

Great idea—that is really easy to implement and I'll set something up for March so that I can connect with students either virtually or in person.

Katrina Bell-Jordan, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences:

While there are no specific open office hours, students are welcome to visit the Dean's Office any time during regular business hours, and are welcome to walk-in without an appointment. Depending on their issue or concern, students are directed to the best person to immediately assist them with the matter. Student concerns/issues are also reported at Dean's Office weekly staff meetings, as follow up, and to determine if a student or student matter requires additional outreach, response or support.

Luz Analitis, Arts & Life Section Editor of the Independent:

The question posed here is an important one and seems pretty straight forward. What I found to be interesting however is the fact that the three answers given vary quite greatly.

I felt like Dean Bedell's response seemed the most passive. There is no confirmation of whether or not there even are open office hours for students, and giving the “Coffee with the Dean” as the only outlet for students to discuss their concerns with the dean does not fully sit right with me. Based on testimony I have heard from students who dropped by this event, it does not seem very successful because I have heard that not many students attend them. Whether this is due to lack of awareness of the event or students not being available at the time of the event, it does not appear to be particularly effective; so, perhaps this event needs to be rethought or another solution should be thought up and implemented.

Dean Phillion's response at least brings about some sort of call-to-action for improving upon open communication between students and deans. Although again, the answer is not completely clear and is a little vague. We are now at the end of March, and I am not sure if “something” was ever actually set up. It is also interesting to me that open office hours for students is something that is not already well established if it is a “great idea” and “really easy to implement”.

Dean Bell-Jordan's response in my opinion is the most clear and in-depth answer that demonstrates a genuine care for the question posed here. She acknowledges

that there are no specific open office hours, which directly answers the question, and she gives alternative ways for students to come in and discuss concerns through either walk-ins or scheduling appointments. She even goes on to explain the process that goes into addressing student concerns, which is valuable information that I am glad she included.

**4. Student teaching is a fulltime job that requires students to put all their energy into that activity. Oftentimes it is impossible to take on a part-time job, this especially hard if you're a single parent. How do you plan on financially supporting students in the college of education when they are in their last semester of student teaching?**

Tom Phillion Ph.D. Dean Goodwin College of Education:

Great question! The new Fantastico Teacher Residency Program will enable some student teachers to be paid employees of CPS while they student teach. Also, the GCOE is working with our NEIU Foundation to increase donations and financial support for student teachers; look for more information about this more focused initiative in the near future. Finally, the state of IL is considering a variety of ideas this spring for better supporting and attracting student teachers. We are very involved in advocacy for most if not all of these ideas and hope to have news about new supports after the state budget process concludes in May or June of this year.

Jasmine Rodriguez, Managing Editor of the Independent:

Based on Dean Phillion's response, NEIU seems to offer support to their student teachers majoring in elementary, secondary education, special education and early childhood. But all their support is being offered in the future, and based on the administration we might never know when that might be. As the student rightfully points out, student teaching becomes a non-flexible commitment in NEIU because 1.) student teaching is an unpaid job, 2.) student teaching takes time, 16 weeks to exact, and 3.) student teaching never lists

the required hours — nor the minimum or maximum expected workload — in the NEIU's website. On top of this, student teaching is required in order to receive your Illinois Teaching License. Therefore, it can be financially difficult to manage student teaching, family obligations, and other responsibilities.

While Dean Phillion mentions the Fantastico Teacher Residency Program, as of now NEIU does not offer any teacher residency program, which would allow student teachers to combine apprenticeship and coursework while receiving a stipend salary during the program. In fact, the CPS Teacher Residency Program only has partnerships with National Louis University, Roosevelt University, Loyola University Chicago, and Relay Graduate School of Education (GSE). How can NEIU allow Goodwin College of Education (GCOE) to be behind so many other universities when our foundation was based on providing a degree in “teacher training”?

In regards to Dean Phillion's response, we cannot wait for the future because we need current programs to help our student teachers now in the present.

**5. How is SGA representing student interests and concerns here at NEIU and holding administration accountable for students' daily lived experiences? Specifically with regard to continuing issues at the Nest, admin responsiveness to students, and encouraging student involvement and dialogue with the SGA itself.**

Edwin Medina:

SGA has members actively participating in different university committees such as Green Fee Committee, Affordable Books and Materials Committee, Diversity Council, University Advisory Committee, University Planning and Budgeting Committee, and many others as well, where we are able to bring the student perspective to the decision making table. I have monthly meetings with President Gibson, Provost Evans, and VP of Student Affairs Dr. Mena. During these meetings we discuss issues that students have and devise plans in

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order to resolve issues. Administration has always been open to meeting with SGA. They are also invited to attend our SGA senate meetings where other members can ask questions or bring up any concerns to the administration.

**Dan Maurer, News Editor of the Independent:**

According to Edwin Medina, the SGA president, members of SGA are active on a number of committees on campus, and he regularly meets with administrators regarding student issues. However, even though this question specifically mentions issues at The Nest, Medina says nothing about the student dorms. Medina also fails to mention any method by which students can get in touch with SGA beyond attending the SGA senate meetings. If the bi-weekly meetings are the only method for students to engage with SGA, it calls into question how SGA can represent NEIU's student body with only limited input from their constituents. Is SGA's only outreach to students an invitation to a senate meeting? How can students get in touch with SGA outside of its senate meetings?

**6. Would it be possible to post all scholarships on the Handshake platform so that all students can access them instead of having to search around campus?**

**Liesl Downey:**

That's a great idea as students are so familiar with Handshake. I'll look into this with colleagues in Financial Aid and Career Development.

**Leslie Lozada, Campus Life Editor of the Independent:**

There is a lot that could be said from the last SGA meeting. From one of the questions that were released on Tuesday, March 28, a full month than was promised from the SGA president, a question was asked by an anonymous student "Would it be possible to post all scholarships on the Handshake platform so that all students can access them instead of having to search around campus?"

There was a short response from Liesl Downey, who is the V.P for Institutional Advancement as well as the executive director

for the NEIU Foundation. Her answer being to the effect that she's going to look into it.

In the past, Academic Works was used in order to put in scholarships from other departments at NEIU. One look at this site would show ended deadlines for scholarships, as well as those that have a limited amount of time for said deadlines. There is no way you can find said scholarships unless you are actively hunting for them. As an example, the English department not only uses their platform with the tv monitors that are being blasted across the greater NEIU campus, but also shares their scholarships and other important information through social media, being able to reach a greater number of students who are also on there.

Handshake might be a viable option for students and departments. On the site there are Work-study positions as well as Student Aide positions that are posted on there. That doesn't negate the site that should be updated for students to go and actually apply for scholarships. As noted on their website for financial aid, 85% of students have some financial assistance throughout their time at NEIU. Having one site that is updated when scholarships are released or to just have them there, would be highly beneficial for the student population, as well as those who donate their money in order to start a scholarship fund for students.



Photos by the bygone era of Spring 2021

# Tears, Laughter, and an Alternative Spring Break Trip in Arizona

Life as an Immigrant, Immigration Policies and Hope for Those That Have Sought Life in the U.S Were Some of the Topics That Were Learned in Tucson.

By: Leslie Lozada, Campus Life Editor



Photo of all group members and Josue by Lexis - Wright Ball

Every year, NEIU hosts Alternative Spring Break trips to students, aimed at providing immersive experiences related to the topic of the trip. This year, groups of 10 students, one student leader and a faculty member traveled to different cities, which includes Tucson, Arizona, San Juan, Puerto Rico or Selma, Alabama. This article will focus on the Arizona trip, with BorderLinks, a program in Tucson that “offers experiential learning opportunities that explore the difficulties of migration and life along the U.S./Mexico border”, according to their website.

Throughout the trip, the group had the opportunity to learn about immigration policies, life as a migrant and the resilience of those who cross the border. There were

also interactive activities throughout different locations in Tucson as well as one trip to Nogales, Arizona. In addition to this, there were daily workshops on specific information related to the border and immigration and nightly reflection about both the workshop and the activities.

The members of the trip reflected the average age range of those who attend NEIU. The group consisted of individuals with varying ages and backgrounds. The oldest member of the group was older than the delegation leader, Josue Saldivar who was there for the entire week, while others were in their mid to late 20s and had varying degrees of school completion.

## Locations Galore

Throughout the six-day trip, there were several opportunities to explore Tucson.

Students from the trip visited the historic Fourth Avenue Business District, which is known for its local art, music and well-preserved historic buildings. The street has been preserved and restored since it became known as a commercial district in 1916. Several shops that the group visited on this street reflected the city’s vibrancy. These included retro toy shops, a local co-op grocery store and a local art gallery.

Another location we visited was Gates Pass, one of the areas by the Tucson mountains. Named after Thomas Gates, a local pioneer who helped to maintain the pass for transportation in the late 19th century, it offers stunning views with rough terrain for exploration. However, some of the group members had to turn back after a certain point due to how high the mountains’ elevation was.

The last full day saw a last minute change to the itinerary, with a trip to Las Milpitas de Cottonwood, a community farm in Tucson. The tour of the six-acre land showcased several gardens from different community members, along with plots of land rented out for a small fee. The farm practices various types of recycling, including collecting rainwater, creating aqua farms and cultivating their own compost pile. The farm also serves as a socializing spot, with recycled benches, seats made from adobe clay and picnic tables for community members to congregate.

The group also took a quick trip to Nogales, Arizona, located right by the Mexico-United States border. They witnessed the full picture of how the border looks in person, with a look into Nogales, Mexico. The person who shared their testimony did so while

we had a look at life separating the two cities from becoming whole again. A mother and her child talked to a woman from the other side of the border, while border patrol trucks went up and down the street, and a truck that came down the street with someone that they had caught.

## Emotional Revelations

During this trip, the group explored various aspects of immigration which were explored through workshops, reflection, and personal testimonies from people, from local residents, immigrants and students.

One of the activities was going through somewhat hazardous terrain, in order to simulate how immigrants would cross the border through dangerous conditions in the desert. A workshop later on in the week focused on the challenges faced by those that do cross the border, that would have to endure worsening conditions from border patrol, such as destroying water stashes and deploying helicopters out on patrol with the intention of dusting those attempting to cross. That workshop also highlighted the resilience of those who do cross, with one example of someone making tracks in order to drive a car over the border, with disastrous results.

Later on in the week, there was an enlightening testimony from a worker from Casa Mariposa, a detention visitation program that provides resources for prisoners. She disclosed how she was brought into the country for work under false pretenses by a friend and had to endure years of suffering to stay in the United States in order to get the justice she deserved. Throughout her

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testimony, she described the horrors that she went through in those years with a calm, soft tone in her voice.

After this particular testimony, the group engaged in a lengthy reflection about how hard her situation was for several years, as well as the other aspects of how she arrived in the country. Several group members were in tears that evening.

**Finding Knowledge**

Scenic view from Gates Pass, and of Ismet, photo by Lexis Wright-Ball



People walking the desert walk simulation by Ismet Saric

Going through these personal experiences can change a person, and high-stress situations can reveal one's character, as Lexis Wright-Ball, the chosen photographer from the trip, noted.

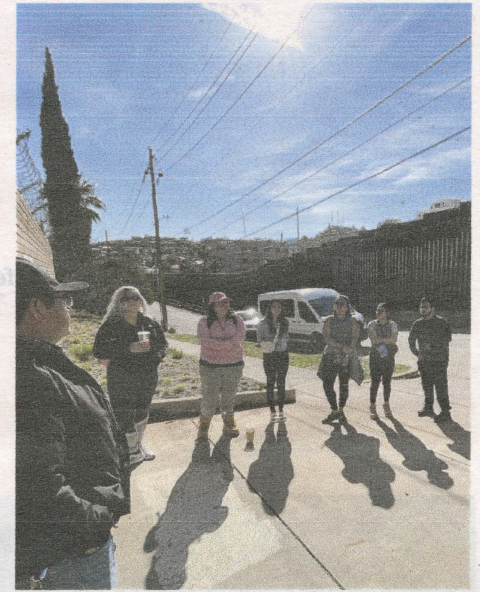
After settling back into everyday life, I must admit that I have been forever changed by those experiences, not only through the planned activities but also through the different interactions with my group members. We made it a point to give "shout-outs" to at least one person each day, and after one reflection, we all cried together. The following reflection had us laughing so hard, that one person ended up on the floor in uncontrollable fits of laughter.

Josue Saldivar, the delegation leader, was a wonderful and accommodating host to all of the group members. Within hours of learning of his birthday, all of the group members

started to plan for a surprise birthday party for him.

I have found family there, and though we have had our different lives, we are planning on having monthly dinners together and celebrating each other's birthdays.

I would like to thank my non-mexican dad, my brother, my non-mexican mom, my twin, Stephanie, Hillary, Lexie, Natalie, Jennifer, Melissa (the awesome group leader), Nati, Josue, Eddie and all the other people I have met in Arizona.



Group at Nogales border, photo by Natividad Martinez



Group at Nogales border, photo by Natividad Martinez

# Exploring Hidden Gems of Chicago's Past

By: Ananth Prabhu, Sports Editor

On Wednesday, March 29, 2023, NEIU'S Pedroso Center helped to host and organize a trip to the Chicago History Museum in Lincoln Park as a part of Diversity Week, and Student Leadership Development (SLD) sponsored the trip to the museum. During Diversity Week, two additional events were conducted for students' enjoyment. One of those events was the Diversity Food Fest.

During the Food Fest, student organizations made assorted foods from around the world for the greater NEIU community to enjoy, and it served as a fundraising opportunity for student organizations. The other event featured student-made bracelets on March 27th, and each bracelet represented the location of each student's ancestry, and it was unique "to see all the colors of [world] flags of where people are from," according to Alexa Perez, Program Assistant for SLD.

Perez shared her motivation behind organizing the outing to the museum. Perez emphasized the importance of providing students from different backgrounds with the opportunity to experience Chicago beyond the university campus. "It's good to get out of the university to really experience Chicago, like living it, and seeing the history behind it, which is the diversity around us, because that is what really makes Chicago, Chicago," Perez said in an interview with *The Independent*.

Perez implied that since Chicago is such a vast city, NEIU students may not have sufficient time to explore Chicago, its museums and all the cultural opportunities nestled within the city. Thus, Perez chose a museum that features culture, diversity and history that represents Chicago in all of its glory.

The outing to the museum allowed students to learn about different cultures and the unique local history that Chicago's people throughout the ages have experienced. "It kind of opens your eyes," Perez

said, "to say that people immigrated to Chicago, like how diverse it is, how it really envelops in all of our lives." She hoped that the outing would help students see people in a different, beautiful light, and connect with the ways in which we come together as a diverse community. She emphasized that SLD is always open to programming suggestions from students, and hopes to continue bringing new experiences to the campus community.

The museum had much to offer, including small-scale models of past and present architecture, infrastructure growth, geography's influence on the city and the city's expansion after the fire. Visitors could appreciate the diverse history of Chicago, from architecture to jazz, sports teams, shopping, food and local corporations. The museum also provided personalized tours with one soft-spoken elderly gentleman helping to give the group of NEIU students knowledgeable insight into significant events that played a pivotal role in molding the city into its current form. The *Independent* interviewed diverse students that attended the museum, and these students gave varied perspectives on their visit to the museum.

Jocelyn Gamboa, an undergraduate student majoring in computer science, shared her experience about touring the museum as a first-time visitor. She learned about the Eastland disaster, a tragic event that happened in 1915 and claimed the lives of more than 800 people. Gamboa plans to revisit the museum with her family and friends. She encourages other NEIU students to visit the museum as it allows them to learn more about the city they live in and how it has changed over time. Gamboa believes that it is important to learn about local history because local history explains the relevance of various significant landmarks throughout the city.

Jocelyn Valencia, an undergraduate student majoring in English, had visited the

museum before, but she found something new during her most recent visit. She particularly enjoyed the new exhibit about the Chicago Fire, which she found informative about the materials and history of the disaster. She plans to visit again to check out any new exhibits, stating that revisiting history is important as it can change, as well as learning about diverse cultures, and the people of the past who helped to rebuild Chicago into its current incarnation. She suggests all students to visit the museum to learn about the diverse cultures, and her specific recommendation is for all students to watch *The Great Chicago Adventure Film* at the permanent exhibit housed in the Robert R. McCormick Theater of the museum.

Samantha Andrade, an undergraduate student majoring in Spanish, found her favorite part of the museum to be the exhibit on businesses, particularly Oscar Mayer and Radio Flyer, which were big parts of her childhood. She also appreciated the photos of people of her own culture dancing and those with disabilities marching with a flag, as they related to her own life. Andrade claims that the museum was adequately accessible with working elevators, accessible doors and ramps. Andrade recommends the museum for its insights into the city's history and its different perspectives, and plans to visit again in the future. Although not her first time at the museum, it was nice for her to re-experience everything and see how some exhibits had stayed the same and some were new.

Perez plans to do similar events with the Northeastern Programming Board (NPB) in the future. The NPB's slogan, "programming for the students, by the students," reflects the department's commitment to creating programming that is tailored to students' interests and needs. The success of this year's Diversity Week outing to the Chicago History Museum perfectly highlighted the value of providing students with

opportunities to explore the city and learn about its diverse history. The initiative was well-received.

While many Chicagoans opt for larger museums like the Museum of Science and Industry, the Field Museum or the Art Institute, the Chicago History Museum in the Lincoln Park neighborhood offers a smaller but equally classy option. The museum showcases the history of Chicago from its earliest days with the native people, through the settlement period, the Chicago Fire, and into the recent past.

The outing to the Chicago History Museum during Diversity Week was a success. NEIU students who attended the outing expressed their desire to revisit the museum and learn more about the history of Chicago. The success of this outing has highlighted the importance of providing students with opportunities to explore their local history and learn about the diverse cultures that make up their communities. The museum showcased the transformation of Chicago through the ages from its early days of settlement to the present days of urban expansion.

The museum offers free admission on certain days throughout the year to Illinois residents. Membership rates and non-member daily admission vary according to a few tiers.



Chicago History Museum sign.

# Unlocking Knowledge: Exploring the Riches of Northeastern Illinois University's Library and Its Abundant Resources

By: Angie Ybarra, Writer

Before we know it the Spring semester of 2023 will be coming to an end. You have to ask yourself one question, "Are you ready?" Have you started pulling your references together for that final paper? When is the last time you got the chance to go over your notes for the semester exam? And what about just a quiet place to catch up on those last-minute rewrites?

I am sure that there are many of us that walk past the library and do not give it a second glance. From my own experience, I have been in the library for a total of 3 times out of two years. I am very sad to admit that. Many times I choose to study by the Cafe Descartes or the cafeteria and even on my couch at home (or in your dorm room for those that live in The Nest), anywhere but the library.

However, after having the opportunity to speak with a wonderful resource for a class that I myself am taking I am convinced that we as students of NEIU should introduce ourselves to the librarians at our main campus as well as other locations we might use so that they are familiar with us and our needs. You should know that the librarians are more than willing to assist you in finding the resources you may need or at the very least they will be able to point you in the right direction. Chrissy Cogswell, Information Services Librarian works at El Centro and she was a wealth of information and provided me with a great deal to work with, ensuring that if I work hard, use my resources wisely, and I write an exceptional paper I will be able to get a good grade on my end of semester paper.

Your first stop at the library doesn't even have to be at the physical library, you can start with the "Chat" option right from the comfort of your own home or dorm. This feature allows you to have a starting point.

You can in essence use the library's resources right where you are at. If you have not visited the library site on our University's website take a minute to really look it over. There are a few changes and of course, all have added to the student's ability to use the library more efficiently.

Some very useful drop down tabs are the following: Database/Articles, Journal Finder and Research Guides, all of these are great resources to use in order to find just the right item to polish that research you are doing. One thing that makes the library even better is that you are not limited to the resources within our library, there is the feature that allows you to share between universities. For an example or how to use this resources please reach out to one of the librarians who will gladly walk you through the process.

Ms. Robin Harris, Interim Associate Dean of Libraries; CCICS Library Coordinator/Information Services Librarian Ronald Williams Library was another member of the library staff I had the pleasure of speaking with a great point she made was "We meet people where they are", and with over 249 search engine resources it may feel overwhelming at times but the librarians are there to assist you on this leg of your academic journey.

There were many resources available to use that Ms. Harris wanted to point out, such as the resources available to disabled students, who perhaps need additional services to assist in hearing or even seeing the resources, there is also available assistance provided to copy materials and even to locate something if need be.

Recently the library started a monthly newsletter that features events that are happening within the library from TRIO

events, to lectures, seminars, and to ensure we all take a moment to enjoy life there are even visits from a puppy on Thursdays from 2 to 4 so we can all get our cuddles in. From taking out a book, printing out a peer reviewed article, borrowing from a resource from a neighboring university or the learning resources center there is something for everyone at the NEIU libraries. So grab your student id and head on over to the library and find out what hidden gems you discover.



Photo by Iñaki del Olmo on Unsplash

# Café Improv: A Night of Laughter, Bonding and Spontaneity at the Stage Center Theater

Written and Photos taken by Ananth Prabhu, Sports Editor

On Thursday, March 30, 2023, the NEIU Theatrics Coordinator, Jeremy Babcock, hosted Café Improv in the Stage Center Theater. The audience was invited to participate on stage to do improvisational activities. The art of improv is all about being in the moment and taking advantage of any and all serendipitous opportunities.

According to Babcock, “[improv] is what you know and what I know, and it is a true discovery between the two of us. That is really what it is about.” Café Improv aimed to create an interactive experience that not only entertained but also strengthened the bond between students, staff and faculty members. The improv activities focused on collaboration, cooperation, trust, communication but most importantly, awareness of one’s surroundings. Each participant must be fully aware of all other team members in order to give a clever and adequate response to their actions.

The various activities inspired participants to step out of their comfort zones and work towards a common goal. Speaking of which, Jordi Banuelos, undergraduate student in computer science, stated that he was “really nervous because the majority of the people there were all staff”. However, improvisation allows participants to escape their comfort zones. Jatziry Ramos Jacobo, undergraduate student in fine arts, affirmed that improv is “a moment for you to really be free” and her sentiment was that in class, students normally have to just go with what others are saying, “but with improv, you are able to do whatever you want, so just really be yourself.”

Other comments among the participants included claims that it felt like a theater class, drama lesson, a trust exercise or a team-building activity.

One particular activity featured all but one participant forming a circle, and that one participant would be in the center of the circle. The centered participant must find things

that he or she enjoys that others are likely to enjoy. If somebody on the circle’s bounds finds the thing enjoyable too, then that person must cross through the circle to find a new opening somewhere else in the circle.

Finding commonplace with the participants on the border of the circle allows the centered person to steal that spot on the border. Furthermore, the opportunity to learn about other people’s likes and dislikes allows everybody in the circle to get to know each other more. Another variation of the same activity features two people in the center, and they must find common ground on something they enjoy in order to find at least one new opening on the bounds of the circle.

Another activity allowed the participants to make eye contact with their neighbors on the bounds of the circle and elicit saying a common agreed-upon food item, such as tacos, pizza, or ice cream, which elicits turning to the adjacent neighbor and saying a different agreed-upon food item. This was done in a clockwise fashion in the circle. An agreed upon color would also be thrown into the mix between neighbors, and the pattern would continue.

The two patterns would continue moving in a clockwise direction, and each participant must focus on each of their neighbors’ two food items and colors that are in the mix. A third pattern can also be thrown in, like a favorite location or travel destination, to make the activity more challenging. Advanced groups can continue to add patterns until they reach a desired level of difficulty.

A third activity that took place included creating a script between a participant’s two index fingers that are characters in a scene. The scene is based on a location. The narrator is the owner of the two fingers, and he or she must say “where has my finger been, said where has my finger been? say what? where has my finger been, said where has my finger been?” A location is thrown

out and the name of somebody else in the circle is stated. The corresponding person must make a dialogue between their index fingered characters at that new location.

After the script is complete between the two characters, “where has my finger been?” is played out again by that new narrator and thrown to a newer participant. The newer narrator would make up a scene about that location and eventually ask “where has my finger been” and select a new location and new narrator. A few of the locations chosen in this particular group of participants were Salt Lake City, an insane asylum and ancient Rome.

Banuelos stated that his “favorite improv [exercise] was the one with the fingers.” When The Independent interviewed Banuelos’ girlfriend, Jacobo, separately, she also admitted that her favorite improv exercise was “the fingers one.” Together, the happy couple agreed that they both liked the silliness that came out of each participant’s responses. They both thought that my portrayal of the insane asylum was funny when I talked about the “straightjacket [and] give me my meds” during the finger activity.

Eye contact and the awareness of a teammate’s actions are crucial during improv

because Babcock said “[improv] is about this group, it is not just [the individual’s] idea.” Thus, improv theater is about having a team-oriented mindset and group dynamic. Improv theater offers both a novel approach as an icebreaker and a source of entertainment for any group of people. Babcock has commented that people usually feel much more comfortable with the group after the first couple of exercises, at which point he would break out into practicing and rehearsing a theatrical scene from a play during an academic class of theatrics.

The importance of taking a dive into unknown and novel activities has its benefits to all students because as Banuelos put it, “the more you do things like [improv], it gets you ready for interviews.” Banuelos also admitted that when working in a real job, employers may ask you unexpected questions and put you on the spot, so it is beneficial for everyone to practice being in that situation.

Jacobo recommends other students to take part in improvisation exercises because it helps to “take some stress off from school and any other personal problems.” Thus, improvisation has real-world application to all students, regardless of the career that students choose!



Babcock and NEIU students, staff and faculty are getting ready to participate in improv exercises.



# Is “Swarm” Worth the Buzz

A Review of the Killer New Amazon Prime Series

By: Luz Analitis, Arts and Life Editor

The new Amazon Prime series “Swarm” initially stirred up a lot of buzz around its portrayal of a certain “Queen Bee” of pop: \*cough cough - Beyoncé\*.

Beyoncé, like many other pop artists, is known for having an extremely dedicated fanbase called “the hive”, who sometimes take being a fan to an extreme. What happens though when this fandom takes it to too far of an extreme, and it becomes obsessive or even dangerous? This question is central to the plot as well as themes that the show “Swarm” beckons its audience to explore.

“Swarm” is a horror/comedy/thriller limited series that follows Dre, a hardcore fan of an uber-famous pop star named Ni’Jah. Dre is triggered by a life-altering event that spirals her into going on a killing spree as a means to defend Ni’Jah from haters, as well as killing anyone who stands in Dre’s way of getting as close to her idol as possible.

Beyoncé is never explicitly mentioned in the show, but it is abundantly clear through the story and visuals that Ni’Jah is meant to emulate the real-life popstar. Each episode even begins with a witty disclaimer that reads, “This is not a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events, is intentional”.

While “Swarm” is largely a fictional story, like the character of Dre and her murder spree, some situations are based on real events. This was confirmed by one of the main writers/co-creators of the show, Janine Nabers, in a *Variety* Magazine article. The little disclaimer is also a cheeky way for the writers to affirm their intention of referencing Beyoncé throughout the series.

There are seven episodes total, with each taking us along Dre’s journey as a serial killer with new sets of victims throughout a few years of her spree. Episode six is the only one that bluntly strays from this structure.

Episode six is a meta-episode that

takes us outside of the story for a moment. It is filmed as a faux-documentary following a Detective Loretta Greene as she investigates a string of murders she believes to be connected. She eventually pieces them together and uncovers Dre as the main suspect.

This episode gives the viewer a chance to learn vital background information on Dre to have a better understanding of her character. More importantly, though, this episode is also thoughtfully utilized as a clever way of opening up discussion of themes that drove the creators to make this show in the first place.

Co-creator Nabers goes into great detail over-viewing her inspirations for the show as well as thematic points she sought to make in a recent *Vulture* interview. She describes an initial spark of inspo co-creator Donald Glover had when he first pitched the show. He came across a Tweet from a teacher he follows, a black woman, that read, “I’m so tired of seeing Black women on TV play therapists and lawyers and doctors and people who just have their sh\*t together. We can be serial killers too”.

Especially within American pop-culture, there is a deep fascination with white-male serial killers, as evidenced through the countless film and series adaptations of them and their stories. But we almost never see black, let alone black-female ones, why is that?

Nabers discussed Dre’s character of being representative of the many black women, even serial killers, that have fallen through the cracks of society. “[Dre’s] been a little bit of a fly on the wall in her own life...but she’s fallen through the cracks... No one’s able to really give her body of work the analysis that it deserves—like, why she did this and what led her to this—in the way that you look at Ted Bundy. I mean, his Wikipedia page is crazy. There’s just so much. So many people have studied him. So

how can we study this character [of Dre]?”

Nabers has emphasized that the series aims to spark conversations, dialogues and discussions that perhaps we as a society are afraid to have. With humility, she expressed, “I really want this show to start a movement for Black writers to feel unafraid to tackle any subject matter and tell it in as punk a way as possible. I remember watching Shonda Rhimes shows and being like, D\*mn, that woman is Black and she’s doing that. And now there are Black people telling a story I never thought I would see Black people tell. That’s the thing: We want a conversation.”

Overall, I appreciate the series’ portrayal of the driving forces and themes of uplifting Black voices and storytelling. It is crucial to see this happening more, and I hope it continues throughout Hollywood and society as a whole.

Moreover, the series is quite visually enthralling. Its use of color, lighting, editing and overall cinematography create a surrealistic feel that perfectly complements the satirical and dark mood of the show.

Dominique Fishback’s depiction of Dre, a strange, quiet-at-times, chaotic and murderous character, deserves high applause. Although Dre’s character is often verbally inept, Fishback evokes her emotions with expertly acted mannerisms. Even through her eyes and eye movements, viewers are able to interpret exactly what Dre is thinking and feeling. Fishback’s acting brings out a certain complexity to Dre’s character that forces the audience to question their relationship and analysis of her.

Regarding the show’s story as a whole, towards the end, I found myself getting a little bored. The first few episodes hooked me in instantly, but watching Dre just going around killing people became repetitive after a while. I felt myself craving a little more complexity plot-wise, but even with this

said, the series was still entertaining overall.

I finished watching the series within two to three days. For an experienced binge-watcher, I could see someone even being able to get through it in a day. So if you are searching for a dark, thought-provoking, quick-watch, then this series is definitely worth the buzz.



Photo by Boba Jaglicic on Unsplash

## Thrilling Wonders and Dark Delight, A Look At “Curious Toys” by Elizabeth Hand

By: Angie Ybarra, Writer

**Trigger Warning:** This story contains topics that some may find disturbing. Sexual suggested content, murder, cross-dressing, and other content that might be disturbing to some readers.

Imagine being transported to the late 1800s in Chicago. Everything is different yet familiar all at the same time. As you walk through the pages of “Curious Toys” by Elizabeth Hand, you come to the corner of Western Ave and Addison. The streets are dirt and cobblestone, street lights are burning by candlelight, and the steamy heat of Chicago’s summer nights stifles the air. The one beacon of relief for the citizens of the city is fun to be had at Riverview Park. Elizabeth Hand does a good job of mixing reality plus fiction and within that mix creating an intriguing, page-turning thriller that captures the reader’s imagination.

Within the story, you are given historical facts that call to you, asking that you investigate a bit more. This is a tale of a young girl who lost her little sister, a single mother, a disgraced ex-police officer, drugs, a life-sized doll, a secret society, disappearing children, and of course a serial killer. We become suspicious of everyone that the main character does. Pin, a young 11-year-old who’s forced to grow up a great deal faster than most takes us along for this thriller of a read. We deal with the loss that Pip and her mother must deal with.

Throughout this story we see part of the history of Chicago, which at the time the story is set is recovering from The Great Chicago Fire of 1871, Chicago’s World Fair of 1893, and the Eastland Disaster that killed over 800 people and so many other events. Throughout this story, we are lured into it by the historical facts and the fictional intrigue that help to build the momentum of the story. All the wonderful sounds and great smells of amusement park food are overtaken by the danger that lurks in the shadows

stealing the lives of young little girls.

I recommend this book. It is a great escape so pick it up and enjoy your time away from studying. You are given a thrill that leaves you turning pages in anticipation of what will happen next. Hand uses Chicago as a brilliant backdrop to her tale and leads you to rediscover long-forgotten Chicago history. Whether you are a lifelong resident of the city or a recent transplant, you will discover or rediscover the city by means of your imagination and of Hand’s storytelling.

## “Bloodline: Daughter of Blade” Review

By Isabella Cardoza, Writer

Do you love Buffy the Vampire Slayer? Are you a fan of “Interview with the Vampire”? Do you like scary vampire stories in general? If you answered yes, then you should check out Marvel’s newest comic book series, “Bloodline: Daughter of Blade”! This comic series is about the main protagonist, Brielle, discovering that she has not only inherited her father’s vampire genes but also his vampire hunting skills too! Brielle’s father Balde is known to be a famous Vampire hunter in the Marvel comics and while he was famously played by Wesley Snipes in the live action “Blade” films from the 90’s, he will be getting another live action movie again in 2024 for the first time in a couple of years.

This horror comic book series is currently

on its second issue with the third to be released in April 2023. While I haven’t read the first issue yet but still read the second issue, I can honestly say that The art style looks very amazing, the characterization is on point, and Brielle sticks with being the daughter of Blade as she fights vampires and various monsters while still trying to complete her father’s legacy.

If anyone has the chance, they should definitely check out “Bloodline: The Daughter of Blade”. I know for sure that I am going to not only read issue two this week, but also buy issue one and issue three when it comes out in April 2023.

Thanks for reading everyone! Hope you enjoyed my recommendation!

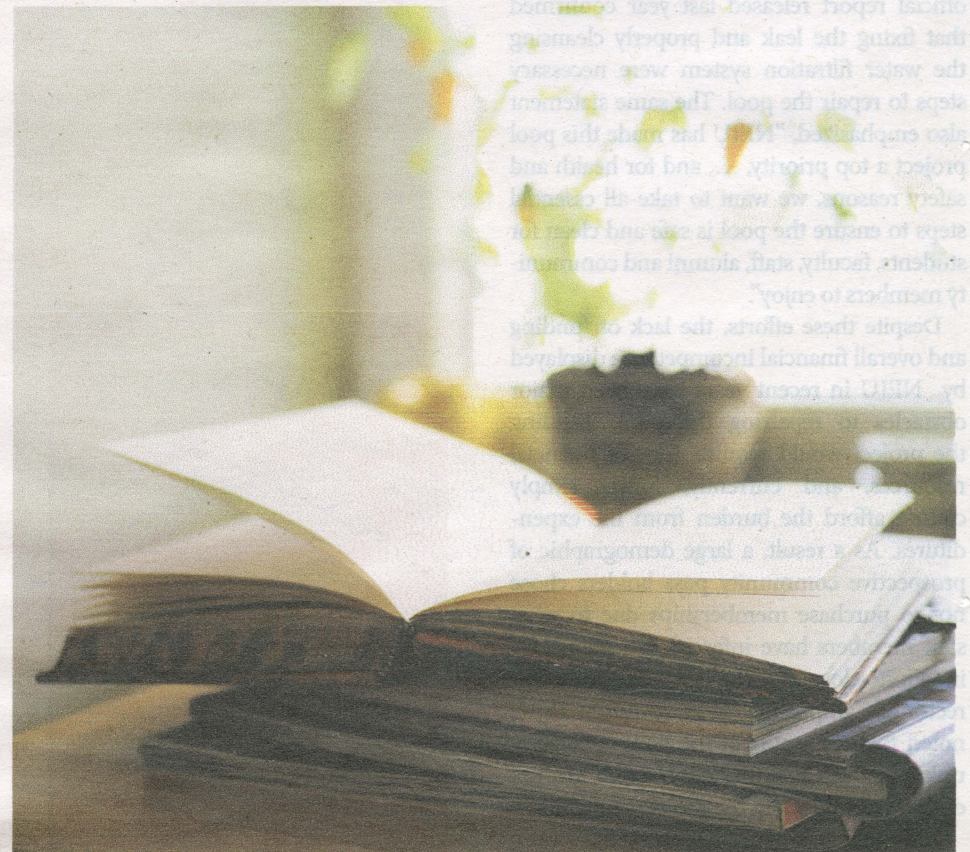


Photo by Fang-Wei Lin on Unsplash

# A Deep Dive Into the Pool's Problems

Written and Photos Taken By: Joshua Lasko, Writer

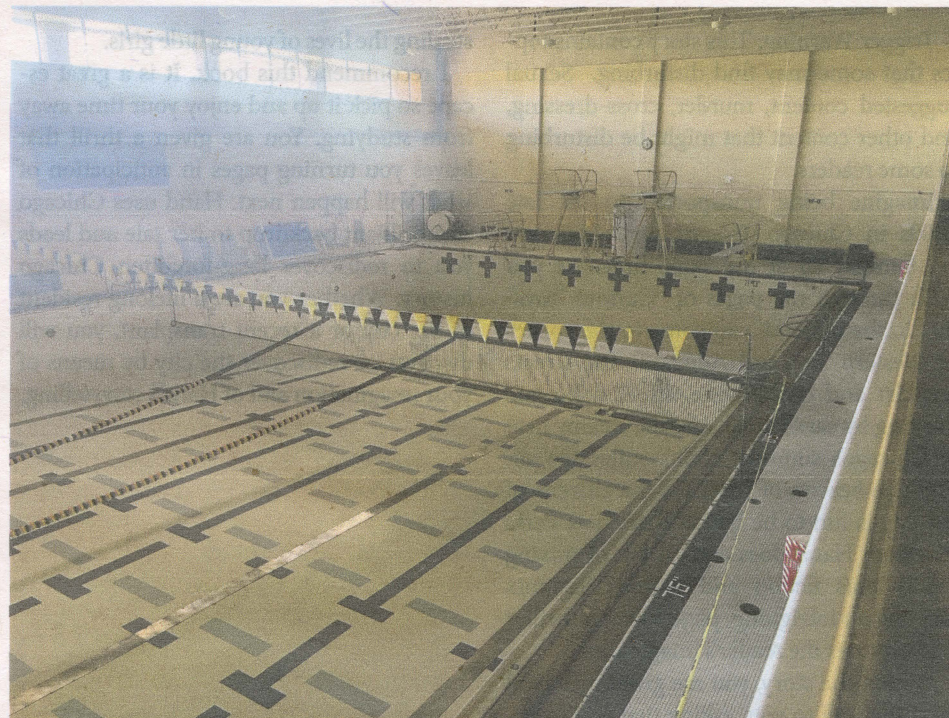
The once-bustling pool area now stands empty and silent, a far cry from its glory days as a top-notch facility at NEIU's Campus Recreation. In previous decades, many people learned how to swim or taught their children in this pool, making it a cherished part of the community. The facility has received countless phone calls from patrons longing for a return to those days where they could rely on a clean and safe environment to teach generations of people how to swim or to simply enjoy an aquatic workout. However, the facility's pool has been closed for about two years, due to the onset of the pandemic and the need for repairs.

According to a statement by Campus Recreation, the pool closure was caused by a leak that wasted thousands of gallons of water. An official report released last year confirmed that fixing the leak and properly cleansing the water filtration system were necessary steps to repair the pool. The same statement also emphasized, "NEIU has made this pool project a top priority, ..., and for health and safety reasons, we want to take all essential steps to ensure the pool is safe and clean for students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members to enjoy."

Despite these efforts, the lack of funding and overall financial incompetence displayed by NEIU in recent years have been major obstacles to repairing the pool. Tackling the project would require a lot of financial resources, and currently, NEIU simply cannot afford the burden from the expenditures. As a result, a large demographic of prospective community pass holders chose not to purchase memberships due to what staff members have inferred is a seemingly indefinite closure of the pool. Executive Director of Campus Recreation, Andrew Dutil, noted that the status of the pool is "slightly unknown" because the contractors are not entirely certain about the project's timeline.

Although it is true that there have been several issues regarding the reconstruction

of the pool, it is undeniable that the facility has made small strides in restoring the facility to its former glory. For example, Campus Recreation has recently renovated the steam rooms for public use, and patrons have the option to relax and decompress after a workout. According to the Campus Recreation Facility Coordinator, Facilities & Outdoor Fields, Derek Ansong, the steam room is, "a deserved treat after a workout." As Campus Recreation continues to regrow, the community's demand for the pool increases every day as patrons reminisce about the good times they had spent there only years ago. Despite the challenges, NEIU remains committed to providing a safe and enjoyable experience for all, regardless of the pool's repair progress.



# What Campus Recreation's Soccer Tournament and Events Mean for the Future

By: Josh Lasko, Writer  
Photos taken By: Dylan Magahis

NEIU remains committed to providing fun and engaging activities for its students on campus. On March 29, 2023, a soccer game was held for those who chose to participate.

Although the number of participants was small, it is undeniable that they had a good time in a relaxed environment, able to enjoy a soccer game without the prying eyes of the public looming down on them. Renowned Campus Recreation legend Benjamin Koptik found himself trading blows and defending against the newly established staff member David Sok.

A friendship turned into a bitter rivalry for the duration of the match as they both performed admirably. "Since the pandemic, [Campus Recreation has] been doing a great job on resetting and reestablishing a place that students and community members can come to enjoy activit[ies] [and] bond" says Koptik.

Hopefully, this event inspires more like it, and more people will be able to show up. These events are held with the intention of growing communities for like-minded students who hope to build friendships, inspire teamwork and get a little exercise doing something they enjoy.

In addition, Campus recreation continues to hold other events, such as the 3v3 basketball tournament on April 7, 2023, and the coveted Health Week which will be held April 11-13, 2023. The Health Fair has featured a plethora of activities, ranging from group fitness activities to rock-climbing, for the students to partake in.

Also, the next big game that is supposed to be held is kickball on April 21, 2023 at 12 p.m. noon. There will be sponsors at this event, so be sure to drop by to see if there are any prizes to be won or food to be had. On top of this, Campus Recreation wants to continue growing the community through

these events held for students, so be sure to invite your friends if you intend on going.

That being said, increasing student participation is a major objective that Campus Recreation intends to achieve by encouraging more and more people to return to campus. Since NEIU is considered a "commuter school," we have more people coming from all over Illinois, either having to make grueling trips to and from school in the treacherous Chicago weather or choosing to take class online and skip the on-campus experience entirely.

This makes it difficult for students to come to the recreation center, which is why the staff is committed to a customer-first approach that ensures that guests can rest easy knowing that they are in a professionally run facility with an emphasis on customer satisfaction. Campus Recreation hopes to nurture this culture to yield a phenomenal experience for new and returning patrons. Feel free to check it out, as the warmer weather will bring new, exciting and possibly outdoor activities.



# CLASSIFIEDS



If you like to place a written ad in the Independent, the first 20 words are free, each word after is 25 cents a word.

If you want to share something to the greater NEIU community, feel free to put it down right here! The first 20 words are free, every word after that is 25 cents.

## Student Organizations

### Seeds

Student Media Board's Literature and Artistic Journal  
Submit, check our latest edition!  
Meetings every other Friday @  
6-7 p.m.  
Insta: neuseedsjournal

### Que Ondee Sola

Student Media Board's Puerto Rican magazine  
Meeting every other Friday @  
4-5 p.m.  
Insta:Queondeesola

### Sociology Club

Interested in your society? On-campus?  
Across the city? Around the world?  
Join the Sociology Club!  
Thursdays 3-4 p.m. LWH 2094


## Businesses

### PepperPub Guys Entertainment

DJ Services, Karaoke, Trivia, Parties,  
Private Events, Weddings  
Locally Owned, Student Run  
630-296-6679  
PepperPubGuys.com

### Flying High Online

Sterling Jewelry, Crystals, Tapestries,  
Clothing  
Flyinghighonline.com  
NEIU Popup Dates: late April  
25% Discount at Popup



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Full Name:  
Section: Example, Job Listing, or  
Community Events  
Ad: (First 20 words for free, extra  
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way for the NEIU community to put  
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