

# CEP

Civic Engagement Program

## CEP Abroad

An entrepreneur at heart shares his passion for music with the world

“I believe education is the most important force in the world, and I want to understand education at the point of delivery”



**Who:** Eric Santagada, a fourth year Bunche Scholar majoring in business entrepreneurship

**Where:** Ocotepeque, Honduras

**When:** Spring & Summer 1 2012

**What:** Teaching English, music, and the arts at My Little Red House Bilingual School

**Snapshot of Previous Experiences:** Volunteer at SquashBusters & Citizen Schools; EF Education Co-op; Study Abroad in Rouen, France & Dublin, Ireland; Dialogue of Civilization in South Africa; vice president of the Entrepreneurs Club; Honors Program

**Future Plans:** Researching the business potential of Industrial Hemp (hopes to receive a Fullbright Scholarship to study in British Columbia).

### Did you know?

If you have an unpaid co-op with a school, a government agency, or a non-profit organization either in the US or abroad you can earn hours toward your CEP requirements.

Eric Santagada has embraced the experiential learning and global model of education at Northeastern, but more than that Eric has followed his passions. A recipient of the Presidential Global Scholarship, Eric took a unique approach to his second co-op opting to immerse himself in a new culture, a new language, and a new role – that of a volunteer teacher at a bilingual school in a small Honduran community. He teaches a variety of subjects, but the opportunity to teach music - a “universal language” as he describes it - is what he truly loves. “I feel like I am making a positive impact here, which is the most important thing to me.”

Eric is chronicling his experiences through an online blog, [honduranodyssey.wordpress.com](http://honduranodyssey.wordpress.com). Below is an excerpt:

*I have realized that most of the students lack a solid foundation in English. Their education has been fragmented as they have 8 teachers per day, most of who only stay for 6 months to a year. Such is the nature of a volunteer teaching staff.*

*They know a lot of vocabulary, and do alright in conversation (albeit most everything is said in the present tense), but often times they won't know, for example, how to say "J" in English, or will be hazy on some numbers 11-19, or other basic things.*

*Therefore, I'm scaling things back. As a bass player, I know that you need a strong foundation if you want to make beautiful music.*

*In my youngest classes, I want them to know*

*the alphabet back and forth. I'm the spelling teacher, and letters are the fundamentals of spelling. Most kids can (and would love to) sing their ABCs, but believe me, that doesn't mean they'll know how to say Q if you draw one on the board. So, we're making personal sets of letter flashcards. Aa on one side, and they write the word apple and draw a picture on the other. I like to incorporate drawing, as to exercise more parts of the brain.*

*All types of fun and games can spring from this. Getting through the entire alphabet is proving to take quite a while, but I know this foundation will be worth it.*

CEP students on Alternative Spring Break in South Dakota



# Letter from Sara de Ritter

Associate Director, Service & Community Partnerships

Congratulations on an amazing year of service, leadership, and partnerships! As the fourth year of the Civic Engagement Program (CEP) draws to a close, I am so impressed by the growth and evolution of not only the program, but of the individual growth demonstrated by each student scholar and community partner organization.

This year, 421 students representing 10 scholarship programs participated in service and learning activities in communities across the globe – from Roxbury to Dublin, from Dorchester to Buenos Aires – students in CEP actively work to improve and understand the social issues that impact our society.

This inaugural CEP newsletter seeks to capture and highlight some of the amazing students and partners from the past year. Each story demonstrates a piece of what makes CEP such a unique program model

for civic engagement in higher education – it is more than direct service. CEP is about creating a culture of engagement, partnership, and redefining student scholarship at Northeastern.

I would like to take a moment to thank Kristine Gonzales, Javier Muhrer, and Sophie Greenspan – all current CEP student scholars and peer mentors – for making this newsletter a reality. Moving forward, CEP hopes to release a newsletter quarterly, so if you have a story to share, please contact me at [s.deritter@neu.edu](mailto:s.deritter@neu.edu).

Again, congratulations. I hope this newsletter inspires you like it does me.

In Service,

*Sara De Ritter*

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## CEP by the Numbers

**421**  
student scholars participated in the program from 2011 - 2012

**104,000**  
hours of civic engagement activities completed by student scholars since CEP's founding in 2008

**45,000+**  
hours of civic engagement activities completed from 2011-2012

**\$2,722,720**  
contributed to the community since its founding in 2008, based on the value of a volunteer hour in MA (\$26.18)

**\$1,178,100**  
contributed by CEP to the community this year, based on the value of a volunteer hour in MA (\$26.18)

## Thank you to this year's CEP Premier Community Partner Organizations!

826 Boston • America SCORES New England • Balfour Academy • Boys & Girls Club of Boston – Yawkey Club of Roxbury • Generation Citizen • Girls' LEAP • Jumpstart • Linking Education and Diversity (LEAD) • MathPower • New Mission High School • Peace through Play • Sociedad Latina • SquashBusters • The Food Project • Youth Development Initiative Project (YDIP)

## Peer Mentors 2011-2012

- Team 1**  
Sarah Bergeron & Chris LaColla
- Team 2**  
Laura Bristol & Roberto DelValle
- Team 3**  
Eliana Field & Sophie Greenspan
- Team 4**  
Hannah de Luna & Kristine Gonzales
- Team 5**  
Jennifer McBride & Javi Muhrer



## Congratulations to our May Graduates!

- Syeda Anum
- Kelsey Bacon
- Ian Connelly
- Braidie Connors
- Emily Flowers
- Chantalle Hanna
- Andrea Ruiz-Turbay
- Adriana Tzigantheva



## CEP Q&A

With Emily Flowers, Class of 2012  
 Psychology Major, Sociology Minor  
 Recipient of the Reggie Lewis Scholarship  
 Honors Program

*Q. Which community partners have you been involved with at NU, and why did you select these organizations?*

Peace through Play, which is a student organization that works with local elementary schools and teaches nonviolent conflict resolution to children using games. I went to the first meeting and was very excited about their mission and what they do in the community. After the first semester, I didn't want to stop and became more and more involved the longer I was in it. I became an Executive Board member the second semester of my freshman year and stayed in a leadership position and began to take on more responsibility up until spring 2011 since I went abroad in the Fall.

*Q. Have you participated in study abroad?*

I went to Cape Town, South Africa in the Fall 2011 with the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) and did their service-learning program. I took 5 classes (one language course in Afrikaans). During my five months, I did community service at an elementary school in a township called Manenberg, where I worked in the mental health department, with a 1st grade class as a teacher's aide, and with a

small group of third graders working in math and literacy. I also had to develop a capstone project based on the needs of my community service site and I ended up working with another service-learning student to help improve literacy rates in the school. We worked to improve the library at the school by fundraising for more floor mats, pillows, a computer desk/chair, and books; we got a second hand computer, library check-out system software, barcode labels, and small tables and chairs donated to the school so that they could have more resources. We also introduced some of the school administrators to the director of an NGO (PM4Africa) that works to improve school libraries so that he could be there to make sure the project continues and provide support to the school.

*Q. What advice do you have for students in CEP?*

Students in CEP should get involved in the community beyond the 100 hour a year commitment. It's extremely rewarding and you can meet so many different people from the community. It's interesting to get outside the "Northeastern bubble" and get to know people who aren't just students but live in the different neighborhoods surrounding Northeastern.

*Q. Could you share a favorite memory from your service experiences?*

My favorite memory was coming back from study abroad and going back to an elementary in Roxbury that I have been working at for a couple years now and having the kids not only remember my name but that I'm with the "Peacemakers" which is what we call Peace through Play volunteers. It was cool to see that through the work of this student organization, the word "peace" and "peacemaker" are now embedded in the students' vocabularies, even at the young age of five. A volunteer at our weekly meeting shared a story about how one of the students in her after school class shared her knowledge about being a peacemaker and being peaceful in the community to her family. I think that's so cool!

*Q. Biggest lesson learned from CEP?*

Building relationships with community members is important. You can learn a lot from them and they can learn a lot from you. Also, you can help change their perception of college students, especially Northeastern students, by working in the community and taking the time to build relationships with them and getting to know them and their story.



# My Moral Mandate for Neglected Disease Drug Discovery

by Professor Michael Pollastri, Department of Chemistry & Chemical Biology

As an undergraduate at Holy Cross, we were always reminded of the Jesuit axiom, to be “men and women for others.” This concept pervaded nearly everything that happened on campus, and in this context students were regularly involved in campus outreach into the community, both locally and across the globe. I felt the desire to be part of this outreach, yet as a chemistry student, many of the common types of service projects didn't really resonate with me.

Following college and graduate school, I began my career in the pharmaceutical industry. After nearly a decade of some of the most exciting and rewarding science I could have imagined, I felt the tug to leave industry and return to academia. Besides learning to teach well, this would require me to carve out an area of research where I felt that I could provide a significant impact. In assessing the world of drug discovery, it is clear that much work remains to discover the next generation of drugs for cancer, diabetes, or central nervous system disorders, yet I struggled to find a research angle I could fully engage.

By chance, I attended a seminar given by Bob Campbell, who was teaching part-time at Brandeis University. He provided an introduction to neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and highlighted the acute need for new drugs. NTDs are primarily infectious diseases that affect the poorest in the world. Because these patients are typically unable to pay for treatments, the drug

industry (which is generally driven by their ability to recoup enormous research and development expenses and turn a profit) has not focused on this area. As a result, therapies for NTDs are frequently lacking. For example, one of the front-line drugs for African sleeping sickness is an arsenic-based compound that kills 5% of its patients, and, in many of those who survive this treatment, permanent damaging effects are evident. Nonetheless, since sleeping sickness is fatal if not treated, patients have no choice but to take this risk.

This seminar profoundly affected me. I had been working in the previous decade for drugs for important diseases, yet few if any of these programs would improve the life of the very poor. The enormous healthcare disparity represents to me a significant issue in social justice. With this in mind, in surveying the non-profit drug discovery environment (primarily academia), it was apparent that there were very few strong efforts in the area of NTD drug discovery. I realized that the application of my industrial drug discovery background in an academic environment could potentially make a strong impact.

Our research group now consists of twelve students and postdocs who are focused on multiple programs of drug discovery for neglected tropical diseases. Since leaving industry four years ago, we have built nearly a dozen collaborations with leading parasitologists around the world, and are beginning to make headway into

identification of new drugs. In addition, Northeastern University is providing an environment for a significant expansion of these efforts over the next couple of years via a new Global Health Initiative.

So, looking back on the 17 years since leaving college, I have come to realize that it is important to carefully reflect upon where your passions and interests lie when trying to find a way to contribute to your community. In my case, applying my training in organic and medicinal chemistry to NTD drug discovery has become a powerful vehicle for working for social justice. Beyond this, perhaps one of the most important aspects of this effort is the cultivation of the next generation of scientists and policy makers who will continue this work beyond their time at Northeastern. For these reasons, I look at our research program as a good example of how a person can discern their passions and interests, and then work to translate that into service for others.



*Did you know?*

You can earn hours while conducting research on-campus!



## Be our friend?

CEP has a Facebook! Like our page to stay updated with announcements and service opportunities.



## Photo Contest!

CEP wants pictures of YOU wearing your CEP shirts or hoodies! Post pictures to the CEP Facebook page and **you could win an awesome prize!**

Yep, we are looking for photos of YOU while you are volunteering, traveling, or simply hanging out. Show us your CEP pride!



## Entrepreneurial Service

How an Undergrad Created His Own CEP Partner Organization

**By Bobby Steinbach, Class of 2013**

Computer Science major & East Asian Studies minor  
Recipient of the Reggie Lewis Memorial Scholarship



As a first-year CEP student, Bobby Steinbach struggled to fulfill his CEP requirements. “I didn’t really feel a strong connection with any of the CEP community partner organizations so I just did what I could to scrape up hours,” he said. As a Computer Science major, he was having trouble finding a way to engage the community that also engaged his own interests.

Bobby’s moment of inspiration came unexpectedly when he was visiting his grandmother at a rehabilitation center for senior citizens. The large rehab center provided

*“CEP has had a profound impact on my time at Northeastern. It has driven me to form a non-profit, connected me to various community leaders and organizations, and transferred over 400 hours from video-game time to productive time, a fact I haven’t always been grateful for but, looking back, realize was certainly for the better”*

- Bobby Steinbach, CEP 2013

only one computer for patient use, and that computer was rarely used. With his grandmother complaining of feeling bored and isolated, Bobby hatched an idea with the help of his mom.

Back on Northeastern campus for his second year in as a CEP scholar, Bobby started the process of founding his own nonprofit organization “targeting the lack of computer knowledge

and skills in the elderly population.” Digital Grandparents, Inc. (DGI) was born. The goal of DGI is to educate the elderly in basic computer and Internet tasks through in-person workshops. Recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, DGI operates as a full-fledged charity able to accept tax-deductible donations.

Now in his third year at Northeastern, Bobby has that connection to his community service that he lacked in his freshman year. DGI has helped Bobby outside of CEP as well. Set to begin his third co-op this fall, he says that founding a nonprofit has certainly turned the heads of prospective employers. By founding a nonprofit organization that combines his own personal interests with a community need, Bobby Steinbach has found great satisfaction in fulfilling his service.

## CEP Q&A

With Sean Burns, Class of 2013  
Chemical Engineering Major  
Recipient of the Ralph J. Bunche Scholarship  
Honors Program, Squashbusters volunteer



*Q. Which community partners have you been involved with at NU, and why did you select these organizations?*

A. Squashbusters – I tutored students in high school and wished to continue this service in Boston. Also, the location right on campus is excellent.

Brigham and Women’s MCEP Program – I was interested in volunteering in healthcare, especially since I will be applying to medical school this year.

MSPCA Animal Shelter – I have always loved working with animals and this position gave me the opportunity to not only walk and play with adorable dogs, but also to train them for their future homes.

*Q. What’s your favorite thing about volunteering at Squashbusters?*

A. Working with high school students as they pursue college acceptances is both challenging and exciting. Having been through the same process only a few years

ago, I love acting as a mentor and offering my own insight. Many of the students were accepted and enrolled at Northeastern, and it’s very cool to see students I used to tutor as part of the next generation of CEP scholars.

*Q. How long have you been at Squashbusters?*

A. 4 years

*Q. Why do you keep coming back to the same organization?*

A. Every year, there is a new group of students with a new set of challenging classes. I really enjoy walking them through homework problems and nothing beats returning the next week to hear that they aced a quiz on the topic.

*Q. What has been your most memorable experience so far?*

Q. My favorite experience was attending the end of the year celebration and hearing all of the phenomenal schools the students will be attending in the fall. Seeing everyone so excited to start college is quite the reward after a challenging year of applications and classes.

# CEP's Year End Celebration

April 17th, 2012  
the Fenway Center



Left:  
CEP students who went  
'Above and Beyond' 150  
hours of community  
service this year



Above:  
CEP's graduating seniors

