

New England



Educational Opportunity Association  
www.neoaonline.org

## WINTER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024

### IN THIS ADDITION:



**WELCOME TO THE NEW COE PRESIDENT <<<**

**UPCOMING EVENTS <<<**

**NEOA UPDATES <<<**

**ALL ABOUT MONEY - OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS <<<**

**PAST EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS <<<**

**ALUMNI CORNER <<<**

**STUDENT SUBMISSION <<<**



## WELCOME TO THE NEW COE PRESIDENT



On October 1, 2023, Kimberly Jones assumed the presidency of the Council for Opportunity in Education. For nearly two decades, she has served as a leading advocate for low-income students, first-generation students, students with disabilities, and other marginalized learners. Previously, Ms. Jones fulfilled several roles at the Council. In her present role, she serves as the chief executive officer of the Council, which represents the interests of its member colleges, universities, and community-based agencies that serve nearly 900,000 students in the Federal TRIO Programs. As president, she serves as the primary liaison between the Council and the United States Congress, the Executive Branch, and all governmental agencies as well as all other postsecondary education associations. Additionally, she

oversees the organization's professional development offerings for college access and success educators; scholarly and experiential learning opportunities for low-income, first-generation students; and the research agenda of COE's Pell Institute for the Study of Higher Education.

Prior to joining COE, Ms. Jones was an Associate in the Communications Practice Group at the law firm of Dow Lohnes, PLLC (now Cooley LLP), where she advised clients on a variety of broadcast and media law issues.

Ms. Jones has served in leadership roles within various professional and civic organizations, including the Committee for Education Funding, of which she served as President. She is an inaugural Advisory Board Member for Black History 365, a comprehensive textbook and curriculum guide designed for students and educators that spans the breadth of Black American history, and a Board Member of Marked By COVID, a non-partisan charitable organization that promotes accountability, recognition, and justice for the millions of victims of COVID-19, including her father. Ms. Jones also a member of the Junior League of Washington and volunteers with the DC Family & Youth Initiative, an organization that provides mentorship and support for young people in and aging out of the foster care system in the Washington, DC metro area.

A Harry S. Truman Scholar, Ms. Jones is a graduate of Yale University and the Georgetown University Law Center. In 2016, Ms. Jones was named one of the "40 Under 40 Nation's Best Advocates" by the National Bar Association and also received the organization's Excellence in Activism Award. In 2018, she was selected for the Diversity Executive Leadership Program sponsored by ASAE, the American Society of Association Executives. In 2021, she earned the Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential from ASAE.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### >>> **NEOA ACHIEVERS AND RISING STAR NOMINATIONS**

Due February 1

Read more below on Page 5.

### >>> **TRIO DAY**

February 21-23 - Springfield, MA

Read more [here](#).

### >>> **COE POLICY SEMINAR**

March 17 - 20 - Capitol Hill, Washington, DC

Read more on pages 6-7 and register [here](#).

### >>> **NEOA BOARD MEETING**

April 9 - Burlington, VT

All NEOA members are welcome to attend!

### >>> **NEOA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

April 10-12 - Burlington, VT

More details on Page 4.

### >>> **NEOA BOARD MEETING**

June 6-7 - Nashua, NH

All NEOA members are welcome to attend!

### >>> **ARNOLD L. MITCHEM LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**

Applications for 24-25 cohort begin April 1

Read more below on Pages 10-11.

## SAVE THE DATES: 2024 NEOA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



April 10 - 12, 2024  
Double Tree  
Burlington, VT

REGISTRATION OPENS  
JANUARY 22, 2024!  
MORE INFO TO COME.

**2024 NEOA ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Vermont is excited to host the annual NEOA conference this year in spectacular Burlington, Vermont! Our conference THEME is Empowering Learners. Read more about it below!**

With all that is happening in our country and the world, we want to empower our students to be the best they can be!

There will be two keynote speakers who will provide insight and tools to Empower our Learners.

- Will Eberle, MPA (he/him), a person in co-curing recovery, is the Executive Director of Recovery Vermont and the Vermont Association of Mental Health and Addiction Recovery. Will has overcome trauma, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, mental health crises, and addiction. He models neuroplasticity and resilience in his life and work and is a Vermont EOC graduate!
- Gretchen Wegner is an Academic Life Coach who inspires students of all ages to uncover their true identities as capable, clever, and creative learners in school and life. She is an internationally recognized expert in how to destressify learning by building executive function skills, teaching learners a unique system for time management, organization, and studying based on brain science called The Anti-Boring Approach to Powerful Studying™.

We will wrap up our conference with a workshop focusing on working with our diverse and unique population through a DEI lens. Get ready to join us to fill your toolbox with practical and innovative tools to Empower Learners of all ages.

See you in the Green Mountains!

## SAVE THE DATES: NEOA ACHIEVER AWARDS

### 2024 NEOA Achiever Awards nominations are being accepted now through February 1!

The NEOA Achiever Awards are given to outstanding graduates of New England's regional Educational Opportunity Programs. Nomination criteria for both awards are listed below and on the nomination form.



- **The Rising Star Awards** honor emerging leaders who strive toward the highest levels of personal and professional accomplishment, who excel in their chosen field, devote time and energy to their community in a meaningful way, and serve as a role model for other low-income, first-generation college bound students and students with disabilities. This award allows the region to recognize Rising Stars who have either completed their associate degree and/or their bachelor's degree and are just beginning to make an impact in their careers and communities.
  - Application form: <https://forms.gle/1qkHWVQzgG5xLDzK8>
- **The NEOA Achiever Awards** are given to outstanding graduates of New England's regional Educational Opportunity Programs. They are recognized as a person of high stature within their profession or they have received recognition for their outstanding academic achievements, are employed above the entry-level designation for their profession, have received a post baccalaureate degree or are enrolled in a post baccalaureate program, and have made significant civic, community, or professional contributions.
  - Application form: <https://forms.gle/2UsNXJPK9Dnfavt28>

Nominator must be an active 2023-2024 NEOA Member. If you have any questions, please contact the NEOA Achiever Award Co-Chairs Adam Keese at adam.keese@keene.edu or 603-358-2467 & Becky Carrasquillo at rebecca.carrasquillo@keene.edu or 603-358-2041.

## SAVE THE DATES: COE POLICY SEMINAR 2024

### COE Policy Seminar 2024

This year, the Council for Opportunity in Education's annual Policy Seminar, runs Sunday, March 17 through Wednesday, March 20, 2024, and includes three events: the Leadership Summit, the Seminar on Relations with the U.S. Department of Education, and the Legislative Conference.



MA Team Policy Seminar Hill Visit, 2011.

### NEOA Advocacy at Policy Seminar

NEOA has a robust turn out every year, sending teams full of New England professionals and alumni, representing each state, and program. We are calling on our members to help support our state leaders this year in advocating for the many vital issues and legislation that will impact our students and programs for years to come. This is a particularly important year for us to demonstrate our commitment and resolve and the power in our numbers. **Please reach out to your state presidents, state liaisons and the NEOA Advocacy committee for more information about joining a state team.**

**[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]**

## SAVE THE DATES: COE POLICY SEMINAR 2024 (CONT.)

### COE Policy Seminar Preparation Webinar

There is a **free webinar** offered by COE to help prepare for Policy Seminar Thursday, **January 18 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.** TRIO veterans will discuss what happens during the Policy Seminar, and how to identify different ways to fund your participation. While you may cover some portions of the Policy Seminar with grant funding, you may not use those funds to cover the lobbying activities in preparation for meetings on Capitol Hill. This work is critical to ensuring the survival and growth of TRIO, and the webinar will provide important resources



### Early bird pricing available before Friday, February 2.

Policy Seminar will take place at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill. The series of events includes the Leadership Summit on March 17, 2024, the ED Relations Seminar on March 18, 2024, and the Legislative Conference from March 18 to March 20, 2024.

## NEOA UPDATES

### >>> THE NEOA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR FEEDBACK

The Professional Development Committee would love to hear from you about what you would like to see this year. Please take a minute to fill out this year's [professional development survey](#).

### >>> TRIO DAY 2024

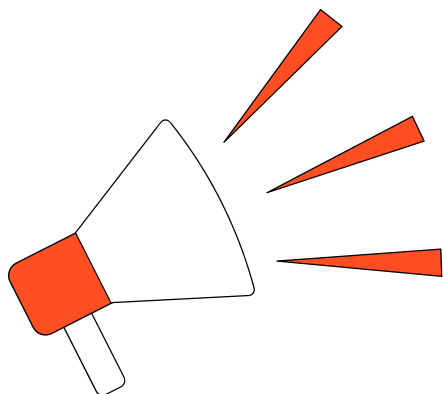
TRIO Day 2024 in Springfield, MA is a month away! Thank you to all who registered - we are looking forward to seeing you soon!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact TRIO Day Co-Chairs Arielle Derival-Joseph at [aderival@bu.edu](mailto:aderival@bu.edu) or Miguel Peralta at [mperalta@wesleyan.edu](mailto:mperalta@wesleyan.edu).



The graphic is a collage of information for TRIO Day 2024. It includes a microphone icon, the text 'TRIO DAY 2024', the tagline 'EXPLORE. NETWORK. FELLOWSHIP. LEARN.', the dates 'FEB 22ND-23RD', the location 'Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel Springfield, MA', and registration details: 'REGISTER FOR CONFERENCE HERE' and 'BOOK HOTEL HERE' with dates and rates.

## ATTENTION RETIREES!



The NEOA Board would like to acknowledge members who plan to retire this year. If you have worked in an EOP/TRIO/GEAR UP Program and plan to retire or retired this year, please contact us! We want to give you a much deserved send-off at the annual conference and acknowledge you in the conference booklet!

To be included, please contact Linda Shiller Cormany and Gaelyn Hastings: [shilcorm88@gmail.com](mailto:shilcorm88@gmail.com) AND [ghastings@sevenhills.org](mailto:ghastings@sevenhills.org)





# NEOA UPDATES

## >>> COE FAIR SHARE

### What is COE?

The Council for Opportunity in Education, based in Washington, DC, is the organization that advocates for TRIO and GEAR UP programs, working directly on Capitol Hill to lobby Congress on behalf of our organizations and students.

### What is Fair Share?

Fair share is the monetary donations COE receives from both individual contributions and institutional memberships. As a non-profit organization, COE is limited to what it can and can't use its funding for, and Fair Share contributions allow COE the flexibility to lobby and advocate on behalf of TRIO and other college access programs.

### What is Fair Share used for?

COE uses fair share funds to: provide training to member institutions (many at no cost, including grant writing workshops/webinars), advocate for TRIO and other college access programs at Congress, provide updates from the U.S. Department of Education, coordinate the TRIO alumni network, research, student leadership opportunities, and professional development.

### Where are we at as a region?

Currently, NEOA is at 42% of our Fair Share goal, as shown in the chart below.

### How can I contribute to Fair Share?

You can donate on the COE website: <https://coenet.org/>

Council Fairshare State Report						
State	Membership	Contributions	Sum	Budgeted	Difference	%
CT	\$8,800.00	\$226.00	\$9,026.00	\$39,921.00	\$30,895.00	23%
MA	\$32,200.00	\$1,031.00	\$33,231.00	\$86,835.00	\$53,604.00	38%
ME	\$28,750.00	\$681.00	\$29,431.00	\$46,623.00	\$17,192.00	63%
NH	\$0.00	\$1,856.00	\$1,856.00	\$13,404.00	\$11,548.00	14%
RI	\$5,200	\$42.00	\$5,242.00	\$6,935.00	\$1,693.00	76%
VT	\$12,300.00	\$835.00	\$13,135.00	\$23,136.00	\$10,001.00	57%
<b>NEOA</b>	<b>\$87,250.00</b>	<b>\$4,671.00</b>	<b>\$91,921.00</b>	<b>\$216,854.00</b>	<b>\$124,933.00</b>	<b>42%</b>

1/5/2024

**NEOA Fair Share contributions as of Jan. 5, 2024 by state.**

## NEOA UPDATES

### ➤➤➤ **THE ARNOLD L. MITCHEM LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE - LEADING WITH HEART AND MIND** **A MESSAGE FROM AMLI DIRECTOR, CRAIG WERTH**

Since 1998, the Arnold L. Mitchem Leadership Institute (AMLI) has been providing members of NEOA (over 200 to date) with an opportunity to build professional community, while exploring skills and traits for effective, rewarding leadership within educational opportunity. It has been Craig Werth's great honor to serve as director of AMLI since 2014. Every two years, the institute accepts a class of 12-14 applicants with various levels of experience, from a variety of educational opportunity programs throughout the NEOA region. We have welcomed counselors, teachers, directors, outreach staff and more – from Gear Up, and each of the TRIO programs. As you might expect, the diversity in cohort makeup gives strength to the programming and helps make for a wide and deep experience.

The institute runs throughout the academic year, with three, 3-day residential retreats (from noon of day one to noon of day three). There is a very modest amount preparation and supplemental work between sessions. The AMLI cohort gathers at the NEOA conference in April to meet and present a session at the conference. Major topics have included Effective Communication and Presentation Skills, Managing Conflict, Natural and Adapted Workstyles and other topics chosen by participants. These have included: "Imposter Syndrome," "Building Your Social Media Reach," "Representing Our Work At Our Institutions," "Self Care for EO Professionals," and many more.

The class of 2024-25 will start this fall. **The application process will begin April 1, 2024** and run through June. More detail will be available at that time. Those interested are invited to send Craig a note to be included in the updated information and application materials as soon as they are available. Craig will be present at NEOA's April 2024 conference to talk about AMLI and invite application. Please feel free to catch up with him then, or reach out in advance with any questions or to express your interest.

Craig is passionate about this work – passionate about exploring leadership with a small group of dedicated folks who share deeply held values, and who, invariably, form a lasting community in friendship and collegiality as we learn, and support, and grow in strength and effectiveness together.

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## NEOA UPDATES

### >>> AMLI (CONT.)



Craig Werth with the 22-23 AMLI cohort

If you are interested in  
AMLI, contact Craig at:

[craigwerth.leadership@  
gmail.com](mailto:craigwerth.leadership@gmail.com)

OR

603-327-9792

(email preferred. Please  
put “AMLI” in your subject  
line.)

### >>> REMEMBER TO FOLLOW NEOA ON SOCIAL MEDIA



INSTAGRAM: [NEOA24\\_](https://www.instagram.com/NEOA24_)



FACEBOOK: [NEW ENGLAND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ASSOCIATION](https://www.facebook.com/newenglandeducationopportunityassociation)

Please like, follow and re-share to any and all!

## ALL ABOUT MONEY

### >>> THE JERRY ELLIS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

***Need money to fund professional development?*** The Jerry Ellis Professional Development Fund (JEPD) is receiving applications NOW! Read more about it below.

#### **What's the purpose?**

- To provide NEOA members with the opportunity to participate in a variety of trainings with preference given to PD opportunities outside of TRIO/EOP trainings.
- To encourage awardees to share their experiences for potential replication with colleagues and programs in the NEOA community.

#### **Who is Eligible?**

- Must be an NEOA member
- Has worked in a TRIO/EOP program for at least 6 months
- Must demonstrate need - why their program can't pay the cost

#### **What types of professional development opportunities are considered?**

- The proposed training must relate to Educational Opportunity work, participants they serve, and the work an applicant currently or in the near future will perform.
- The PD is offered by a legitimate/credible organization
- Types/topics that would be eligible:
  - Direct Service: Enhanced skills and knowledge serving the following: participants, parents, schools and partners
  - Individual skill development for professional/career goals: management and leadership, supervision, technology, grant writing, advocacy, etc.
  - Program Development, Operations and Enhancement: building/strengthening partners and stakeholders, PR, strategic planning, organizational structure and operations (record keeping, compliance, etc.).
- AMLI or state/regional conference support IF their institution can't fund the cost due to:
  - Frozen program funds by DOE or institution
  - Administrative specialists seeking technical training
  - Newly hired staff without program funds to support PD

**[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]**

## ALL ABOUT MONEY

### >>> JEPD (CONT.)

#### How much will JEPD offer?

- Depending on how much the board allocates in a given year, there is a range of \$500-\$1,500 per award.

#### What's the timeline/process?

- For now, the application process follows the NEOA fiscal year, has no deadline and will be awarded on a rolling basis depending on available funds.
- It's suggested that applicants apply at least 2 months before they need the funds.

#### Are there Expectations if I receive the award?

- Awardees are asked to report back to the NEOA board on their outcomes from attending the PD event and how they can share their learnings.

Apply now using this link: <https://www.neoaonline.org/jepd.php>

### >>> WE HAVE A NEOA TRIO STORE!



The Northeast TRIO Gear Store

(<https://www.leestudios.com/ne-trio-gear>)

has all of the gear you need for your Educational Opportunity Program. We offer custom apparel, accessories, and home items. All proceeds for products sold will go

to NEOA or the state association of your choosing. We will have samples at the Annual Conference in Vermont, for you to view and to talk about options. Please use the contact page to reach out for bulk orders, as all products are listed at single-item prices.



[Visit our Northeast TRIO Gear Online Store here!](https://www.leestudios.com/ne-trio-gear)

## ALL ABOUT MONEY

### >>> THE NEW FAFSA IS NOW OPEN! RESOURCES BELOW

On December 31, the “Better FAFSA” soft launched, opening for limited times each day, and closing to do maintenance and updates on the website. Here are some key changes according to Federal Student Aid (FSA):

- **Student Aid Index (SAI) is replacing the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).**
  - The SAI has a different calculation from the EFC, and does not include number of family members in college.
  - The SAI has minimum of -1500.
  - The Pell Grant formula is NO LONGER linked to the SAI calculation, and has had changes which are expected to increase the number of students eligible for Pell Grants.
- **All those who enter information are now called “Contributors”**
  - Student, biological or adoptive parent(s), spouse, and/or stepparent
  - All contributors must have their own StudentAid.Gov account
  - Parents/guardians without a SSN can now create their own account
- **Federal Tax Information will now be imported directly from the IRS through the Direct Data Exchange tool**
  - Consent for this must be given by all contributors for the student to be eligible for federal financial aid. If consent is not given, the student will NOT be eligible for federal financial aid.

**Federal Student Aid (FSA) has free resources and trainings for student aid professionals and the general public: <https://fsatraining.ed.gov/>**

**COE also has resources for members: <https://coenet.org/better-fafsa-support/>**

## PAST EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### NOVEMBER 8: FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE CELEBRATION DAY

First-Generation College Celebration Day occurs annually on November 8, the anniversary of the 1965 Higher Education Act. It is celebrated among colleges across the country, bringing awareness, support, and celebration to students, faculty, staff, and administrators who are/were first-generation students. Read more about it [here](#).

#### »»» FGCC IN VERMONT



More than 100 students and staff attended Vermont's Upward Bound National First-Generation College Celebration Day at the University of Vermont. Participants were welcomed to campus by UVM's Director of Admissions Moses Murphy and keynote speaker, Angelina Woychosky, a former Keene State College Upward Bound student, a freshman at UVM who spoke about her college access program and her transition into the UVM campus. The students also had a tour of campus, enjoyed a students' panel, and had an admissions and financial aid overview.

#### »»» FGCC IN CONNETIGUT

On Wednesday November 8th, the Pre-Collegiate and Access Programs Department hosted it's 6th annual First Generation College Celebration Day at Western Connecticut State University. Students and faculty came together to receive shirts and have apple cider donuts and hot chocolate. Both students and faculty shared stories about experiences as first-generation college students. The event was also attended by CT State Senator Julie Kushner, who spoke to attendees about the journey and experiences of her parents as first-gen students. Trayvonn Diaz, the Sr Outreach Assistant to Senator Christopher Murphy also attended the event and shared his experience of being a first-gen student.



## PAST EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### »»» NEOA AT EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



A dynamic cohort of NEOA members and New England state leaders embarked on a transformative experience COE's Executive Leadership Institute, hosted at Johns Hopkins University. With minds ablaze, these dedicated leaders are honing their skills to champion inclusive, equitable, and innovative educational practices. The exchange of ideas and collaboration among NEOA members and national peers is fostering a vibrant network to drive positive change in education. From dynamic workshops to insightful discussions, the institute's curriculum empowered attendees to navigate the complex landscape of educational leadership with confidence and vision. NEOA leaders seized this opportunity to broaden their horizons by asking questions and leading group discussions.



### »»» MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE APPLICATION CELEBRATION

Riding the Wave of Success! Worcester GEAR UP North High recently hosted its Massachusetts College Application Celebration event, drawing over 300 students and 30 College Reps. Bringing a beach vibe to the College Fair, it was an unforgettable blend of education and fun in the sun.





## PAST EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### >>> MEOA CONFERENCE

The Massachusetts Educational Opportunity Association conference was an extraordinary blend of insight and inspiration, setting the ground for a high benchmark for MEOA’s 40th conference this coming year. Engaging speakers, such as [Maria Milagros](#) and a panel discussion on the history of MEOA with esteemed guest speakers delivered thought-provoking talks that resonated deeply with attendees. The workshops offered diverse perspectives and practical strategies, from Dr. Rebecca Lancaster & Cynthia Mendieta-Gill of Texas, presenting on “Jumpstarting Your Grant” and a workshop by Erik Baumann, Daniesha Tobey-Richards, Vera Delgado entitled “From High School to Higher Education: Creating Realistic Transition Plans for Graduating Students” stood out for their innovative approaches. MEOA was also grateful to present six MEOA Scholarships to a group of great individuals who have continued to make an impact within their programs, their communities, and the MEOA community. Overall, this event showcased the best practices, fostering collaboration and idea-sharing that MEOA membership can leverage for significant growth and development. As MEOA gears up for their 40th Annual Conference in October 2024, they welcome all insight, suggestions, and collaborative efforts the membership has to offer.



## PAST EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### »»» NHEOA CONFERENCE

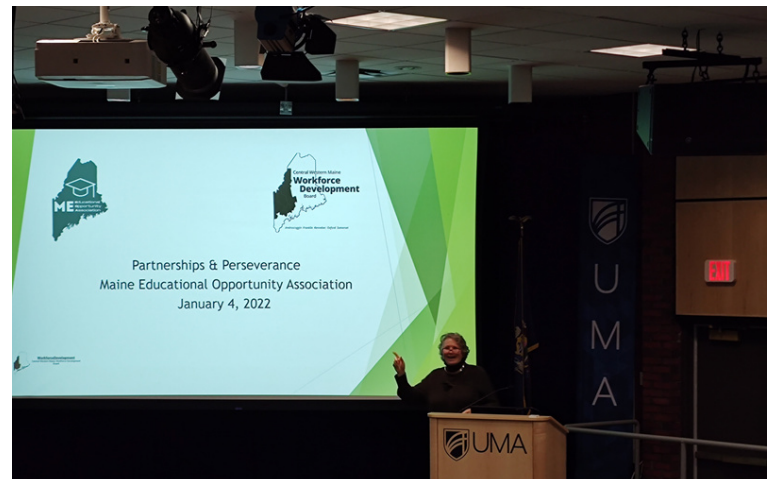
Plymouth State University hosted New Hampshire Educational Opportunity Association’s annual conference on Thursday, November 9th, welcoming almost 40 NHEOA members from across the state. While the weather was foul, the event was a success. The theme of the day was “Balance, Recharge, and Thrive: Self-Care for Student Success,” and the keynote speakers helped kick off the conference with an emotional appeal to care for ourselves so we can keep doing our good work. Break-out sessions revolved around self-care with topics including meditative drawing, artistic affirmations, reflective practice and journaling, and intentional movement. After lunch, they enjoyed an exploration of the new FASFA with PSU’s director of Financial Aid, which was both informative and eye-opening; followed by the CEO award, which was given to PSU’s Tom Morin for his above-and-beyond service to TRIO students. The rest of the conference was devoted to business, and then folks headed downtown for the after party at Plymouth’s iconic pub, Biederman’s.



## PAST EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### >>> MEEOA CONFERENCE

The 41st annual MEEOA Conference was held at the University of Maine at Augusta with a theme of Higher Education in 2024: Perseverance and Partnerships. The conference kicked off with a pre-conference session about “Using Serendipity to Create Opportunities and How To Use the Holland Code” with Jim Peacock. Keynote Speaker, Erin Benson, emphasized the importance of partnerships and how we can work together across our state to assist with educational and workforce needs. Breakout sessions varied in topics such as: ChatGPT, the new FAFSA, emotional intelligence, early college opportunities, and many more. To top it off, four incredible alumni were recognized at the awards banquet and GEAR UP received a warm welcome back. It was a great conference and as always a wonderful time with colleagues.



## ALUMNI CORNER

### JACOB CHIZA



“Jacob Chiza is my name, and I work for Delphi Construction as a safety manager. I assist management in the annual inspection of workplaces to ensure safe and healthy conditions for workers, and I provide the appropriate advisories for management to issue for the abatement of any identified hazards. I also provide the necessary safety and health accident prevention, and investigation training for managers and supervisors. In addition, I'm in charge of checking health and safety standards for compliance in order to reduce injuries and improve both the site's workers' and the business's overall safety.

As a member of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, I traveled around the country giving speeches to audiences to give the community a voice. I spoke up for all the black people who were shy about speaking up, risking my life in the process but believing that in the end, something positive would result.

When choosing a college, I was searching for one that would treat me like a member of the family and take excellent care of me, as well as one that would challenge me to improve. When I joined Aspire during summer school, it helped me through the classes I was taking, pushed me to grow, and challenged me to be better. Without Aspire, I don't believe I would have graduated from college. Keene was the ideal school for me because they gave me the opportunity to arrive at school early to be ahead of my class. Katie and Miss Jeanne were the people who were instructing and escorting me. I will always be grateful to them since Miss Jeanne always assisted me in selecting the best classes, always made sure I had a tutor to assist me, and always looked out for me. I have a lot of chances thanks to the Aspire program. I am really grateful to the Aspire program for helping me develop into a better person and for being the reason I am currently succeeding in everything I have set out to do.” - Excerpt from Jacob’s Impact Statement

“As a low-income, first-generation college student, Jacob embraced the TRIO family and encouraged his teammates and classmates to do the same. He was a great advocate for TRIO while at KSC and still is today. I meet incoming students who contact Aspire because “Chiza told me to get connected with you guys”. Jacob credits Aspire-SSS, and “Miss Jeanne” specifically, with helping him through KSC and graduating, and perhaps that is true. We certainly helped him, as we do many students each semester. But Jacob had the drive to succeed and Aspire simply provided him the space to ask questions, learn, and grow into the capable adult he is today.” - Statement from Beth Zinn, TRIO Advisor with the Aspire Program at Keene State College

## ALUMNI CORNER

### ADRIANA ELDRED



“My name is Adriana Eldred and I was first introduced to the TRIO SSS program my freshman year of college in 2016. Before then, I was struggling in high school; with limited access to accommodations and resources, never mind an authoritative figure that could champion me through the system, I felt helpless.

After graduation, I landed at Northern Vermont University – Johnson. I attended a week-long transitional program called the Summer Bridge Program, where I stayed on campus a week before fall orientation with a group of 50 other students. Bridge was put together by the TRIO office on campus and is where I met and cultivated life-long relationships with its staff members. It was perhaps the first time I felt validated about my educational hardships. These people seemed to get it. I became a fixture in the TRIO office from then on; I was granted a work-study position within my first semester, and eventually trained as a peer academic coach in English. Soon I started group tutoring at nightly drop-in hours. I learned about what it meant to be first in my family to attend college. I became determined to see everyone who walked through the Academic Support Center’s door succeed. Every person in that office became a trusted mentor, and somehow trusted me to be a mentor to my peers. In fact, the first summer after I completed my freshman year, I was hired as the Summer Bridge Program’s events coordinator. I would hold that title with pride for two summers. Afterwards, through my connections to TRIO, I landed an internship with Vermont State GEAR UP, where I was hired full-time in the October after I graduated college with two bachelor’s degrees, magna cum laude.

Because of the wonderful mentorship I received in the TRIO office, my grades went up; my confidence boosted; and most of all, I was able to mentor students like me to ensure they knew there was someone who believed in them. In a system that feels rigged, I was able to find community and mentorship through TRIO—and in turn I earned the trust of a community that respected and valued my experience; something I’ve never experienced elsewhere in my life. I attended the graduation of my first TRIO mentee last May; every semester she was unsure if she would return, but somehow found a way. I had watched her grow from a timid, quiet student to being a confident public speaker at the podium that graduation day, her TRIO tassels proudly displayed on her regalia. In that moment, I realized truly how important TRIO was to me. TRIO has impacted my life in such a way I don’t think I would be where I am today without it.” - Excerpt from Adriana’s Impact Statement

“Adriana credits the TRIO community and programs with supporting her and helping her build the skills she needed to succeed. Adriana had quickly found her home in TRIO, first as a new student in Summer Bridge, and then as a Peer Academic Coach and Student Office Assistant and she never looked back. Adriana will be extending her talents and passions even further as she has returned to school to study for her Master’s of Education degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs at the University of Vermont.” - Statement from Michele Feiner, Director of Academic Support and TRIO at Vermont State University Johnson

## A POEM BY THOMAS COLLEGE SSS STUDENT ALYSSA WILLIAMS

### **A chance at something new.**

A new life  
and an opportunity to write your own story  
and make the future something you can  
control  
To defy your family before you  
and plunge into the unknown

I always used to wonder how people could  
move on so quickly. To just up their lives and  
move to a place they'd be for the next how  
many years?  
But I did it.  
You did it.  
And so many others.

As a child  
college was a dream.  
This upcoming reality that made me excited to  
get older  
spending hours upon hours researching.  
At age 11,  
I was ready to have the next decade of my life  
planned out.

### **But things change.**

### **People change.**

### **And most importantly**

### **Priorities change.**

Life gives us experience  
Good, bad, and everything in between  
It shows us lessons and gives you memories to  
last a lifetime

High school was the most influential period of  
my life.

It tore me down  
and stripped to my core  
leaving me to figure out who I am and what I  
value.

No one expects to lose a family figure.

Let alone a month before you pack your life to move to  
an entirely new place.

But because of this battle lasting for three years  
**it taught me the beauty of the time you do have  
the importance of the connections you make  
and to really enjoy where you are**

Life is a book

and each and every one of you are writing your own  
story.

You are putting in the work  
pushing yourself to have new experiences  
and you stepped into the unknown.

### **That's what it means to be first-gen.**

Whether you have cheerleaders and family supporting  
you from the sideline  
or if you're a lone soldier  
It's important to remind yourself you're amazing  
and should be proud

A new chance

An opportunity to rewire your history  
and create your own path.

### **College is an open book.**

For you to scribble on the lines  
and put ink all over the page and covers.

### **It's meant for you to discover.**

To discover what you like  
definitely what you don't

How you live

and how you won't

But the one thing it's guaranteed to teach you

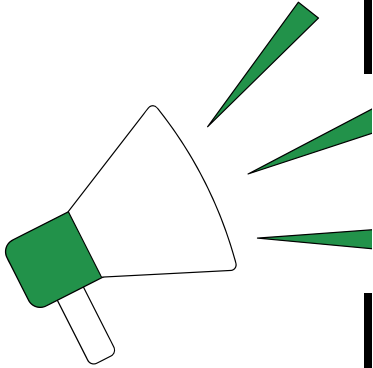
### **Who you are**

So hello

Hello to me

I'm so excited to see how you evolve

## CALL FOR NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS!



Do you have ideas for future newsletters? We always accept submissions, and would love to hear from you!

Things we are looking for include:

- Current student highlights
- Alumni highlights
- Interesting programs/events you've conducted
- New or retiring staff and staff highlights
- Questions or calls for help from NEOA
- Other issues or highlights related to your work

To submit, please email Linda and Kylee:

[shilcorm88@gmail.com](mailto:shilcorm88@gmail.com) & [kylee.casner@unh.edu](mailto:kylee.casner@unh.edu)

## INTERESTED IN JOINING THE NEOA BOARD?

The [NEOA website](#) has a list and descriptions of all current positions. Also, feel free to attend a board meeting in person or on Zoom to learn more. Dates are listed on page 3.



### JAN. 24 BOARD MEETING SPRINGFIELD, MA.

The age span for the January board meeting has widened with the addition of President Lindsay Carpenter's wonderful family! Welcome Branden, Arlo and Theo!

As a board, we did an exercise lining up by age (without talking!) Can anyone guess the youngest and oldest ages AND FACES on the board? Feel free to submit your guess for the youngest and oldest board member and their age to Kylee at [Kylee.Casner@unh.edu](mailto:Kylee.Casner@unh.edu). We will announce the winner(s) and the ages in the spring newsletter!