

New England



Educational Opportunity Association  
[www.neoaonline.org](http://www.neoaonline.org)

## A Message from the NEOA President

### What's In This Issue:

- A message from the NEOA President
- Dedication to Jerry Ellis
- Important Dates
- AMLI
- Annual Conference Update
- COE Policy Seminar Update
- Retirees
- Alumni Corner
- News Bites

Wow! The year has gone by so fast! It has been my honor and pleasure to serve as NEOA President this year. It has been a wonderful learning experience and such an opportunity for professional growth. I have especially enjoyed getting to work with lots of amazing professionals here in New England and getting to know TRIO and Gear Up leaders from around the country. The highlight of my year was the NEOA Conference. It was a great professional development opportunity with terrific speakers and workshops. I loved being able to honor our NEOA Achievers and Rising Stars. But especially I appreciated the opportunity to be together with colleagues to share ideas and just catch up.

There are so many ways for people to be involved in NEOA. It is easy to be on a committee-they meet remotely. This is a simple way to share your ideas and dip your toes in. Anyone is welcome to attend a Board meeting at any time, if you want to see what it is all about. If you have an interest in any particular area-you can talk with anyone on the Board.

I hope the rest of your school year goes well. Good luck with your summer programs! Thanks for all of your support this year! Thanks for all that you do for low-income and first-generation students and students with disabilities.

Debbie McCann

# Dedication to Jerry Ellis

*This Newsletter Edition is Dedicated to our friend and colleague, Jerry Ellis.*

Jerry Ellis, former Director of the Onward Program at UMaine, passed away on May 9, 2022 in Wesley Chapel, Florida.

Many of us who knew him personally appreciate how talented, determined, dedicated, compassionate and generous he was. Throughout his life, Jerry gave a helping hand to many people during their most difficult times always with kind, patient, loving support.

As a young man he walked in protest for civil rights in Selma, Alabama (1965) and later served in Vietnam vowing to serve his country but in his own way in peaceful service. He was awarded two Bronze Stars for meritorious service while serving as a US Army Captain. He was an American advisor to a South Vietnamese unit during its Hearts and Minds campaign.

An accomplished athlete, he won various competitions in cross country and track. His love of athletics continued throughout his life culminating in riding his road bike from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean and from Canada to Mexico. In addition to biking, Jerry completed three marathons including running the Boston Marathon. Jerry was inducted into the University of Maine's Sports Hall of Fame in 2019.

Jerry completed his under-graduate degree at UMaine, a Master in Divinity at Boston University and a Master's degree from the University of Oregon in Counseling. Professionally he worked at UMaine as the Director of the Onward Program dedicating his time, energy and love to helping students from diverse backgrounds attend and complete a college education. Many will remember him for his unwavering kindness and compassion for his students and coworkers. His strong leadership skills led him to serve as President of NEOA and as Director of the NEOA Arnold Mitchum Leadership Institute for several years. Many of his "students" benefitted from his thoughtful, supportive and introspective leadership style and as a result, his "graduates" have had the opportunity to excel in their own leadership positions, many in TRIO and GEAR UP positions throughout New England.

# Dedication: Jerry Ellis

If athletics was his refuge and service his profession, his family was his greatest love. He leaves behind his wife, Ronnie, daughter Christine, two sons Nicolas and Lucas and 6 grandchildren. Jerry was predeceased by five younger siblings.

Adored by many, one student in particular started a scholarship in his name, the **Jerry Ellis Scholarship Fund**. In life he supported this fund and in his passing his family asks you to consider support of this scholarship so that the spirit of Jerry will live on helping students on their path at UMaine. Gifts may be made to the University of Maine Foundation, Two Alumni Place, Orono, Maine 04469-5792 or online at [umainefoundation.org/memorial](http://umainefoundation.org/memorial) for the Jerry Ellis Scholarship. His family welcomes others to join them in a celebration of his life on **Sunday, June 26, 2022 at 101 East Broadway, Bangor, Maine at 2 pm.**



# Quotes about Jerry Ellis

"Jerry was one of my first professional mentors. He encouraged me to take on the Student Leadership conference and it was that conference that took us to Hulbert in VT. He was one of the kindest men I've known, quick to tears and laughter. His students adored him, his camping trips were the stuff of legends! We were so fortunate to have him in our community."

-Lynn Ploof-Davis, NEOA Professional Development Chair, Director of TRIO Programs, University of Maine at Farmington



"Although I didn't get to work with Jerry, his reputation preceded him. As I crossed paths with him through the years his grace, kindness, inclusive, intelligent, and calming commitment was apparent. He'll be greatly missed." - Gaelyn Hastings, NEOA Past President, UB Director, YOU, Inc.

An Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation



In MEEOA, we used to say "It isn't a conference until Jerry cries."

-Karen Hadley Keim

"Jerry Ellis had a profound impact on my trajectory as a TRIO and College Access & Student Success professional. I still remember the leadership workshop he co-led at the New England Student Leadership Conference (early to mid-1990's). I was a young TRIO professional who didn't fully realize the legacy and impact of TRIO programs or my own capacity as a leader. Jerry took the time to mentor me that weekend and I'll never forget his kindness, encouragement and sense of purpose. It inspires me to this day."

- Mike Dennehy, NEOA Past President, Executive Director, College Access & Student Success, Boston University Wheelock College of Education

# Quotes Continued...



"Feather and Stone" by Craig Werth

Inspired by leaders I have known and loved.

Originally presented in honor of Jerry Ellis upon his retirement from TRIO.

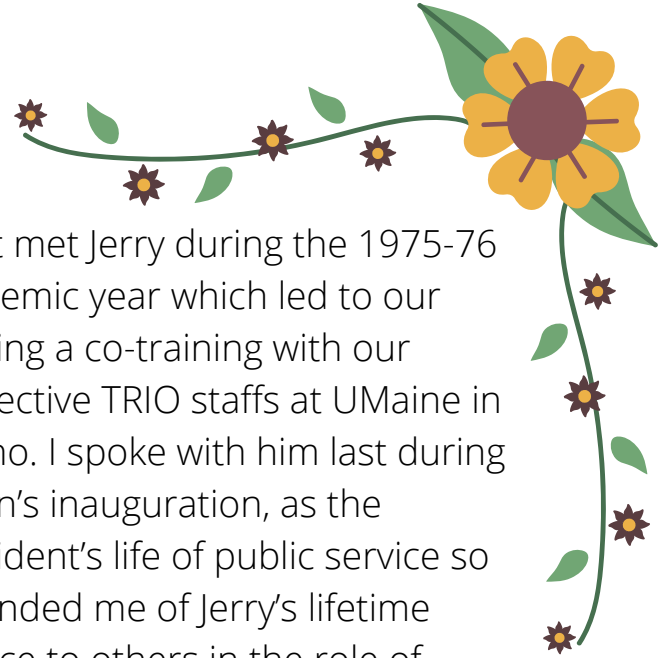
of the feather, of the stone,  
of healing heart, and mended bone,  
they're the ones to see us through,  
these who lead and follow, too.

she the wounded and the strong,  
raised herself to right some wrong,  
surrounded by her loyal crew,  
for when she led, she followed –

he the humblest of us all,  
strengthened by some mighty falls,  
he's lifted me, he's lifted you,  
when he leads he follows –

failed attempts and backward steps,  
for those in whom our faith is kept,  
these are but stepping stones,  
the winding pathway leading home.

of the feather, of the stone,  
of healing heart, and mended bone,  
they're the ones to see us through,  
these who lead and follow, too.



I first met Jerry during the 1975-76 academic year which led to our holding a co-training with our respective TRIO staffs at UMaine in Orono. I spoke with him last during Biden's inauguration, as the President's life of public service so reminded me of Jerry's lifetime service to others in the role of leader-servant, particularly related to his many years in TRIO. In between, I was fortunate to share in countless warm, instructive and humorous moments with him.

Jerry was an intriguing role model as a leader and for TRIO men, as he wore his sensitivity on his sleeve and allowed himself to be transparent and vulnerable in public, more than once sharing a tear with his TRIO colleagues. His empathy, kindness and humility were both his personal and leadership strengths. Jerry, a mentor to me and many others in so many ways, sweetest of men, may you rest in peace.

-Len Lamberti



# Important Dates

## Expected Dates of Awards:

**July 19** McNair

**August 19** UBMS

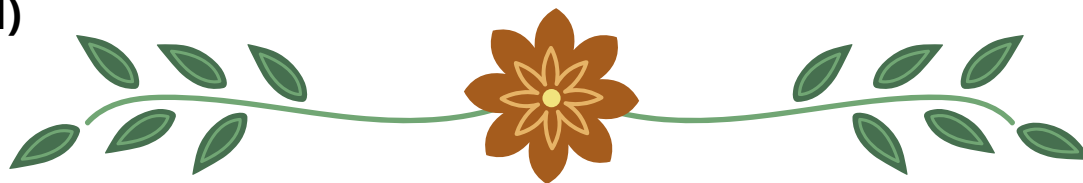
**August 22** VUB

**August 23** Training Grants

**\*TS/SSS/EOC** should receive GAN's by the end of July. They are still working and will continue to fund down the slate.

**September 8-9** Board of Directors Meeting UMass Lowell Conf. Center

**September 21** NEOA Virtual Roundtables (3rd Wednesday of the Month at 3:00PM)



***HAVE A NEWS BITE, ARTICLE,  
STUDENT ARTWORK OR  
WRITING FOR THE  
NEWSLETTER?  
SEND IT ON!***

***PLEASE EMAIL LINDA AT:  
shilcorm88@gmail.com***

# "AMLI" – The Arnold L. Mitchem Leadership Institute for 2022-23

## What is it and is it for you?

From AMLI Director, Craig Werth **About AMLI –** Cheers! I'm Craig Werth, Director of the Arnold L.



Mitchem Leadership Institute (AMLI, pronounced "am-lee"), since 2014. My connection with AMLI goes back to when it was conceived of, in 1997. I was at that first meeting of NEOA past presidents as they met to develop a way to foster the long-term health of the organization, and support its members and the mission of educational opportunity that we all serve. Fully established in 1998, the NEOA Leadership Institute is designed to provide participants an opportunity to build strong leadership skills and, in turn, enhance their program's ability to expand educational opportunities for the students they serve. AMLI is a year-long program of leadership development that meets for three, 3-day retreats during the year and culminates with a fourth gathering and presentation at the annual NEOA conference.

**Who is it for?** The Institute accepts up to fourteen EOP professionals with varied levels of experience for a year-long exploration of leadership styles and practice, working with experts from both within and outside the TRiO/GEAR UP/EOP community. Participants will engage in a variety of experiences, designed and expertly facilitated, to cultivate deep self-awareness, and strengthen their individual abilities and the programs they serve. They will work collaboratively with fellow EOP professionals from across New England; examining their careers and achievements; setting and/or rededicating themselves to short-term and long-term goals; and confronting professional challenges with renewed awareness, insight, creativity and confidence.

**The Institute Design and Cost -** The Institute will meet at the Marie-Joseph Retreat Center in Biddeford Pool, Maine (south-eastern Maine) for three, 3-day sessions in the months of November, January and March, -- from 1:00 PM on Day 1 to 1:00 PM on Day 3.

We will also have a final meeting and group presentation at the NEOA Annual Conference in April of 2023. In addition to full participation at all sessions, participants will be expected to read leadership material and complete short assignments between the sessions. NEOA will cover the costs of programming, lodging and meals during each of the three sessions over and above the tuition cost. Participants and/or the programs they represent will be expected to cover travel expenses for sessions and costs related to the NEOA Annual conference. The Institute tuition fee for this year is \$750. This tuition fee is an allowable cost for TRIO and GEAR UP.

# “AMLI” – The Arnold L. Mitchem Leadership Institute Continued

**Application Process** – Applicants must be a current member of NEOA and submit a 3-part application by August 24, 2022. Visit here for the application:  
[https://www.neoaonline.org/a\\_professional\\_li.php](https://www.neoaonline.org/a_professional_li.php)

Participants will be selected by a committee of NEOA Board members based upon the strength of the application, with special attention given to the personal statement and to the applicant's demonstrated commitment to their community and profession. The committee will select some participants who have considerable experience and some who are relatively new. The compliment of “seasoned” and new participants has created a potently positive synergy in the past. The selection committee will strive to ensure that each class of participants represents the rich diversity of the NEOA membership and includes participation from different ethnic groups, programs, and geographic areas of our region.

I’m proud to serve as Institute director for this, my fifth term. I humbly follow in the footsteps of some amazing leaders. I was a participant myself in one of the earliest classes, and I served as a presenter for several more years. My enduring connection with NEOA through this role is a great honor and opportunity for me – to reconnect, to put in practice my own leadership style, and to guide and learn from the community of educational opportunity champions who will form the class of 2022-23. After reviewing this information and the application process, please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any comments or questions. Thanks to the Board of NEOA for their support and trust, and to previous directors, especially Gerry Ellis and Sigh Searles, who provided support and an excellent foundation of work for me to draw from and build upon.



**Contact:** Feel free to contact me with any questions about the institute.

Craig Werth – 603-327-9792, [craigwerth.leadership@gmail.com](mailto:craigwerth.leadership@gmail.com).

Some members of AMLI class of 2021 with our institute’s inspiration and namesake, Dr. Arnold L. Mitchem, at the NEOA conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.





# Annual Conference Update

The NEOA 2022 annual conference was held in Portsmouth New Hampshire from April 13-15th. There were 50 participants who participated in the pre-conference. The pre-conference was led by Dr. Patricia Marshall, and the topic was Racially Equitable Practices in Higher Education. The 30 conference committee members put together an amazing conference that included 25 workshops, a plenary session on critical issues for higher education in a post-pandemic world, and Washington and COE updates.

The conference ended with a delicious brunch and a presentation by Dr. Arnold Mitchem- 40 Years of COE. 231 conference participants enjoyed this IN PERSON event, and a popular highlight listed was simply being able to see one another for learning and fellowship live and in person.

Submitted By:  
Taryn Tomkins  
Conference Co-Chair

Congratulations to Casey Henderson on receiving the 2022 NEOA President's Award! Thank you for your continued commitment.

Photo Credit: Randy Schroeder



Click on the link to view the conference booklet:

<https://www.neoaonline.org/pdf/conference/2022/2022%20NEOA%20Conference%20Booklet.pdf>

# Annual Conference Photo Gallery

Photo Credit: Randy Schroeder



[View more photos from the Annual Conference on the next page...](#)

# Annual Conference Photo Gallery

Photo Credit: Randy Schroeder



# Policy Seminar Update

Teams from all 6 New England states gathered in Washington DC in March for the annual Policy Seminar. This was a special year for NEOA because both Senator Collins from Maine and Senator Hassan from New Hampshire were featured speakers. They certainly reiterated their support for TRIO programs. For the first time ever in history, a Secretary of Education spoke to us in person. Of course, this is Dr. Miguel Cardona-originally from Connecticut! His wife participated in Upward Bound and he is a supporter of our programs.

During the Legislative Conference this year, 27 meetings were held in person or virtually with legislators from New England. This represents 82% of all of our legislators. Additional meetings were held after the event when teams returned home. This year, 17 alumni of TRIO programs were involved in the legislative visits. The powerful stories from these alums is what really makes an impression on the legislators and helps them to understand the immense value that these programs provide.

Each year COE determines what we should ask for when we visit our legislators. This year these were the “asks”:

- Would the member support at least a \$170 million increase?  
96% of the legislators that were visited said YES!
- Will the member sign the annual TRIO funding letter for FY23?  
96% of the legislators said YES!
- Will the member include TRIO funding in the top 10 on their list of priorities.  
19% said YES. Many legislators indicated that it was too early in the process to establish priorities.

Overall, this was a very positive event for TRIO programs in New England. We are fortunate to have significant support from both Democrats and Republicans. This only happens because we are continually building relationships. If you are having an event on your campus, please consider reaching out to one of your legislators and inviting them to come and visit. Or invite them to your summer program. These are wonderful opportunities to show the great work that we do.

Submitted by: [Debbie McCann](#)

# Policy Seminar Photo



**Senator Maggie Hassan speaking to TRIO Nation ... Deb McCann and Adam Howard at the head table! #NEOA22 #coeps2022 #TRIOWorks**



# Retirees

## **Anne Kaplan, VSAC Talent Search Counselor**

Anne Kaplan has worked as a VSAC Talent Search Counselor since August 1995. Anne came to VSAC Talent Search after a brief career as a high school and elementary school teacher, and middle school counselor. As a VSAC Talent Search Counselor, she worked with the schools in central Vermont from Northfield to Hartford. She was a regular staff member for VSAC's Summer Program when it was available for Talent Search students.

She also participated in many Trio Days Events with students. In addition to her role supporting Talent Search students, Anne presented financial aid information to Vermonters in her service region.



enjoy!

# Alumni Corner

## **VSAC Talent Search Alum, Haleigh Gould, accepted into UNH's Washington Center Program.**

Haleigh Gould, a 2020 graduate from Lyndon Institute in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont was accepted into UNH's Washington Center Program for the fall of 2022. Through this experience, Haleigh will participate in internships and seminars in Washington DC while also gaining cultural networking experiences in our nation's capital.



## **VSAC Talent Search alum, Walker Wright, graduates from UVM and enters a Master's Degree program.**

Walker Wright, a 2020 graduate from Hazen Union High School in Hardwick, VT, graduated in May 2022 from UVM with a Bachelors in Psychological Science and a minor in Sociology. When checking in with Walker about his next adventure he writes, "Thanks to TRIO and other financial aid, I will graduate having actually made money (that is, net positive) from college due to how much time I spent without room and board costs due to COVID. This August, I will be starting a Master's Degree program in School Psychology at Castleton where I already have an apartment and a job set up. It's a three year program with two years of education and a year long internship designed to prepare me for licensure. After that, the plan is to start working for a school district somewhere in the VT area!" #TRIOworks.



# NEOA News Bites

## Congratulations Melissa and Zac!

Zac was a student from Manchester West High School that has overcome some unbelievable challenges. He began his college career at the University of NH with both home and food insecurities and had to work too many hours just to remain enrolled in college. Zac stayed connected to Talent Search during his entire college career and he participated in the TRIO Scholars Student Support Services at UNH. Zac worked with Melissa to transfer to Plymouth State University (PSU), where Admissions Director Matthew Wallace helped him to get a job working for the institution as a Community Advisor. This not only gave him a place to live whether school was in or out of session, he no longer had to pay for room and board. Zac did not have to work as many hours and he participated in the TRIO PASS Student Support Services program at PSU. Zac graduated from PSU as the top male student with his Bachelor's degree and we walked, with one of his mentors (Melissa) with his MBA. Zac also attended Melissa's dissertation defense and shared his story to support Melissa's research findings relating to student persistence of low-income first-generation college students. We are so proud of Zac for his unyielding persistence in the face of extreme adversity, and we predict that he will be one of our TRIO Achievers some day! Stay tuned!

# CONGRATULATIONS



Pictured here are Melissa Goyait graduating with her Doctorate in Higher Education Curriculum and Instruction & TRIO Talent Search Alumni Zac with his Master's in Business Administration.





# NEOA News Bites

## Updates from MEEOA - What Is Happening in Maine:

-MEEOA held a professional development day for MEEOA members to discuss making a magical student experience in your program, a training on Liberating Structures, and also a focus on how to begin advocacy work. This event was held May 20th at Eastern Maine Community College. (An update of this event is on the following page) MEEOA members were very excited about the event!

-Sadly, a TRIO legend recently passed. Jerry Ellis was a long-time TRIO force and the first Maine state president (MEEOA). This newsletter has been dedicated to Jerry Ellis for all he has done for TRIO.

-MEEOS is happy to introduce Maine's Government Relations co-chairs to the NEOA crowd! Aaron Dombroski, Coordinator of Veterans Upward Bound at the University of Southern Maine and Chris Vogel, Advisor from University of Maine at Farmington's Upward Bound program, have recently joined the MEEOA board and are looking forward to being more involved in advocacy work.

Submitted by Sam Prosser  
MEEOA President



Aaron Dombroski

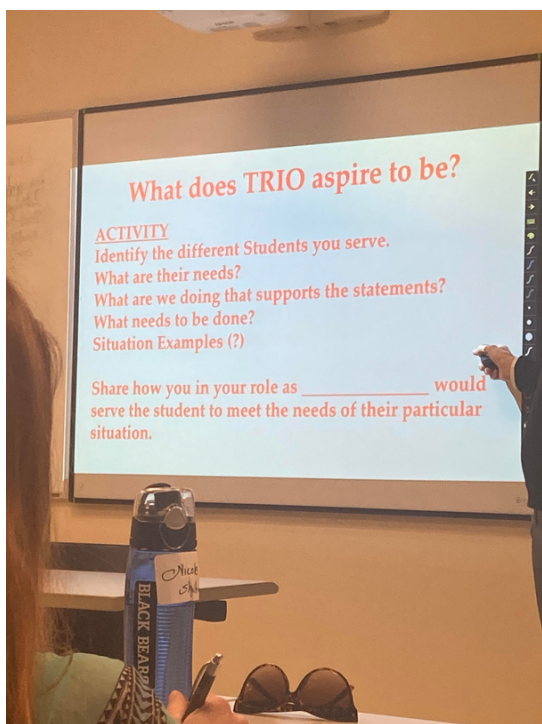


Chris Vogel

# NEOA News Bites

## MEEOA Advocacy and Professional Development Day

Thanks to generous grants from COE & NEOA, the Maine Educational Opportunity Association (MEEOA) held an advocacy & professional development day for members at Eastern Maine Community College on Friday, May 20th. With the help of Matt Morrin (UMFK Dean of Students), participants spent time learning and applying facets of a well-known customer service model to their programs and work with students, particularly how programs create a world-class, personal and magical experience that aids retention. In the afternoon, attendees participated in a series of Liberating Structures ([liberatingstructures.com](http://liberatingstructures.com)) facilitated by Ginny Ward, aimed at building connections, sharing challenges, & reflecting on resilience. The day culminated in sharing both the micro- & macro-opportunities to advocate for our programs. With so many best practices, successes, and resilience to celebrate, participants shared the even small ways they can use their spheres of influence to promote their programs' success and advocate for more support from their institutions, state government and their US delegation.



# NEOA News Bites

## MassEdCO's GEAR UP Program Hosts Career Fair

MassEdCO's GEAR UP program recently hosted a career fair for North High Seniors. 23 local businesses, trades, and public service organizations participated in the event and spoke with over 225 NHS seniors. These speakers included the Worcester Police and Fire departments, Polar Beverages, QCC admissions, U.S Army, Navy and Marines, MA Army National Guard, YouthBuild, Worcester Emergency Communications (911,) Peterson School, and the City of Worcester Division of Youth Services. The career fair had 3 main objectives; the first was for local businesses to offer summer employment opportunities to students. The second was to introduce students to a wide variety of jobs that could offer on-the-job training and provide benefits with a healthy living wage. The third was to introduce students to jobs for which they could begin working and earning money immediately but would also help them pay for their college education. When asked about his opinion of the NHS GEAR UP College Fair one student replied, "I think this career fair is a really good opportunity for students to see what they want to do after high school and to find their true passion to have a successful life."

The GEAR UP staff would like to express their gratitude to all of the organizations and NHS staff who gave their time to collaborate for this very successful event.



[View more photos from this event on the next page...](#)

# NEOA News Bites

## Photos from MassEdCO's Career Fair

