

Member Newsletter

~Mark Your Calendars~ 2019 Dates and Events

June 7, 2019	NEOA Board Meeting*	Location TBD
September 8-11, 2019	COE Annual Conference	Chicago, Illinois

****Attend an NEOA Board meeting and discover how much fun and rewarding Board work can be.*** The meetings are open to all NEOA members. See the work that is being done and become familiar with Board work. Interested in attending a meeting? Please contact Ms. Stephanie Cruz at scruz@ccri.edu or 401-825-2305.

\$\$\$\$\$ Fair Share \$\$\$\$\$

Your help is needed! NEOA is lagging behind in COE Fair Share contributions this year! If you are planning to contribute this year, please do it soon! If you hadn't thought about contributing, please think about it now...and contribute! Any amount is welcome and appreciated! Expect an email from your state fair share coordinators in the near future! It doesn't matter the amount, as long as we all give! Click here to donate <http://www.coenet.org/donate.shtml>

Questions? Contact Jane Kimball Foley, Fair Share Coordinator/NEOA Past President

*******National TRIO Achievers*******
Chicago, Illinois
September 8 – 11, 2019

What do an astronaut, award-winning actress, college president, and TV writer/producer have in common? They have all been National TRIO Achievers. COE is seeking nominations for the 2019 awards. Do you know of any outstanding TRIO alumni who you would like to nominate for this year's or a future competition? Now is the time to reach out and nominate!!!!

OUR 2019 TRIO ACHIEVERS

NEOA Achiever Awards are given to outstanding graduates of New England's regional educational opportunity programs, TRIO and other educational opportunity programs alike and who are recognized as persons of high stature within their profession or have received recognition for their outstanding academic achievements; are employed above the entry-level designation for their profession or they have received a post baccalaureate degree or are enrolled in a post baccalaureate program; and have made significant civic, community, or professional contributions.

Tina Heather Nadeau, Esquire

Tina Nadeau is a leading criminal justice reform advocate in Maine. She is the Executive Director of the Maine Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers with a subspecialty in juvenile justice at both the appellate and policy levels. For nearly a decade she has served on the Maine Equal Justice Board, representing and advocating for the poorest, most vulnerable people in Maine, ensuring that they have access to the benefits and programs they so desperately need. Here is her story.

"I grew up in Madawaska, a small paper mill town on the Canadian border, the most northernmost part of Maine. I was the oldest of four children; we were raised by our single mother in the 1980s and 1990s, dependent on federal, state, and local support in the form of AFDC, food stamps, and general assistance to get by. It was a hardscrabble life and one that my mother encouraged us to rise above through education.



I was selected to attend Upward Bound at Bowdoin College following my sophomore year in high school. I had never been to Bowdoin before, but I was enamored with the idea that I would get to spend a summer reading and learning with new friends from across the state. Little did I know at the time how transformative my Upward Bound experience would be for me. Not only was my educational experience enriched by amazing instructors and individualized instruction, but my cultural imagination expanded with each festival, performance, college trip that we were given. The staff cared deeply for our personal and academic success. I felt supported and understood in a way that I

never had before. My horizons expanded immeasurably. I knew that academic success would be in my reach.

I know that I would not have attended Bowdoin College and received a wonderful education there had it not been for Upward Bound. The academic curiosity sparked at Upward Bound left its fingerprints in so much of the work I did in college. Inspired by the lessons learned at Upward Bound and my upbringing, I ultimately decided to leave a stilted graduate program after one year and pursue teaching through Teach for America, hoping to give back to a community some of the gifts I had been given over these many years.

I taught high school English in Greenville, Mississippi, in the heart of the Delta for three years. It was a terribly demanding job, but I truly loved my students and tried with all my twenty-something might to imbue them with a sense of how important education was to achieve one's dreams.

Following my teaching career, I moved back to Madawaska for two years and worked as a local newspaper reporter and editor. I knew that this was not the career for me, but this experience, combined with everything to that point, led me ultimately to law school. I loved law school, and I decided very early on that I would devote my legal career to public service.

My commitment to social, racial, and economic justice was really sparked by my experience with Upward Bound all those years ago. I cannot imagine what my life would look like today had I not been blessed with the opportunity to challenge myself and explore the world around me.”

Tabitha Pohl-Moore

Tabitha Pohl-Moore is a high school counselor in rural Vermont, a Training Coordinator for the Department of Children and Families as well as the Executive Director for the State of Vermont to address racial bias. She is the founder of the Rutland, Vermont branch of the NAACP. She co-sponsored Act 54: The Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice bill. Tabitha was invited to give the NAACP Hall of Fame Induction Speech for Professor Charles Ogletree, the lawyer who defended Anita Hill. In addition, Tabitha works with the Vermont State Police's Fair and Impartial Policing Committee and the Vermont Criminal Justices Training Council's Fair as well as with the ACLU on bills to address curriculum gaps and disparities in Vermont for people in marginalized positions. Tabitha participated in the VSAC Gear Up Program. Here is her story.



“Growing up, most kids hear that they can do anything with enough hard work and passion. As a high school student from a poor farming family, I heard the same things, but because no one in my family had accomplished any of the things I wanted to do and no one who looked like me or shared my experiences as a Vermonter of color reflected my thoughts or feelings, I had doubts as to whether it would ever be possible to turn that cliché into a reality.

I didn't know what to expect when I met “the lady from VSAC” at Mill River Union High School all those years ago. No one in my family had gone to college and, even though my parents supported my dream to be the first one to finish my Ph.D., they couldn't really help me. So, there I was- a kid with a lot of passion and a strong work ethic who believed that I could do anything, but I didn't know how. It seemed like all of my friends were smarter than me and that they knew exactly what to do. That “lady from VSAC”, Jo Austelle, would be the one who showed me.

Like any kid from a disenfranchised background, even though I heard the dreams and I knew I could do anything, there was still a part of me that didn't believe that. I realize now that Jo always knew how I felt, even though she never said it out loud. I suppose that is why stepping foot on the Harvard University campus my sophomore year was such a defining moment for me.

When we went on a VSAC college tour to MIT and Harvard, I thought Jo was crazy. I wasn't smart enough to go to either of those schools. Why was she bringing me? Without so much as a pause in her stride, she said “Come on! Let's go!” with such infectious confidence that I took that first step onto campus. She acted like this experience was the most natural thing in the world, so I just followed her lead. Looking back, I am grateful that I did.

When I got back and all of my “smart” friends asked me about Harvard-- none of us had ever been, I felt a new sense of confidence; the same one Jo sparked within me when she led me on that tour. As I talked about the relationship between Harvard and Radcliffe (who would go to an all-girls school?) and talked to my one friend who wanted to be an engineer about all that MIT had to offer, I realized that even if I didn't plan to attend either of those institutions, being on such prestigious campuses made me realize that I belonged in college. It sounds so simple today, but as a teenager who often felt like I didn't fit in or that I didn't deserve a college education because I couldn't afford it, the mere act of taking me to a place I never imagined I could go broke those unspoken mental barriers that people in poverty often struggle with.

Over the years, Jo supported every idea I had. No dream was too big, and no idea was impossible. I remember the day I decided that I wanted to go to Syracuse University and become a cheerleader. She pulled out the big book of colleges that sat in every high school counseling office and said, "pick a place". By this point, I was learning not to question her tactics, but still looked at her incredulously. "You can go anywhere. Just pick a place." When I said "Syracuse," per the norm, she didn't bat an eye. She got right to work helping me figure out what I needed to do to make that happen. Writing this letter, I realize how many of our conversations would come to fruition in my life. Maybe they didn't happen as I wanted, but every one of these moments has come back to be a meaningful part of my life as an adult.

I was slightly heartbroken when I didn't get in to Syracuse University for undergraduate school. I was fortunate that my letters from Syracuse University and Wells College came on the same day, because I was accepted into Well, a tiny women's college in Aurora, New York.

In my time at Wells, Jo's advice never left me, even though we never saw each other again. She had completely convinced me that the world was my oyster, and that if I didn't know how to do it myself, I would always be able to find someone who would. I think that is why I tried out for the field hockey team while I was there. I also think it's what gave me the courage to become the student body president my senior year and push the campus-wide dialogue about what it meant for my trans friends to be at a single-sex institution. And I know that Jo's ability to instill confidence in me is why I decided to create my own major, merging Psychology, Spanish language, Latin American Studies and Women's Studies. I studied abroad twice and conducted research on women and identity development in the Dominican Republic. And through it all I was never afraid that I was going to fail because I knew that someone would always be there to help me—because someone already had. When I walked across the stage and learned that I had graduated with distinction for my research in the Dominican Republic, I remember feeling like I had done something important for people in my global community. I liked that feeling.

Continuing the circle, I never abandoned the dream of Syracuse University and ended up at SU for my graduate degree. Growing up as a racial and economic minority, I always felt a pull to work with the most vulnerable among my community. I felt like I needed to share what I had learned from Jo; that just because we didn't have money or because we didn't look the same or grow up like mainstream America didn't mean that we didn't deserve to achieve our dreams. We could go to Harvard, too. This message has driven my life's work. My goal has been to assess and understand how all of the systems that influence youth development either amplify or mute that message so that I can make sure every

youth in my community feels that they both deserve to achieve their dreams and that they know how to do so.

I never planned to move back to Vermont. I was sure I would never return. But that same voice that told me that I could do anything and showed me how to make it happen nagged at me. I needed to come home and work with people who needed to hear that same message and just needed someone to walk them through the process the way Jo walked me through. When the opportunity arose, I came home and became a school counselor at my alma mater. I got to be Jo for eight and a half year as a school counselor. I also took on coaching the same high school cheer team I had cheered for all those years ago. I knew I needed to take my work further, though. I'd explored mental health, law enforcement, and education, but I didn't know much about child welfare from the inside. Now I work at the University of Vermont as a Training Coordinator for the Department for Children and Families. But that is just my paid work.

I would say that it has been strange getting used to friends texting me to say, "I heard you on NPR today!" or receiving calls asking me to speak at state-wide rallies, or a press conference, or even receiving requests for collaboration from the Arab American Institute, the US Institute for Peace or Huffington Post. But then I remember that if I can step onto Harvard's campus, I can certainly step in front of a crowd and say what is on my mind or work with people who literally went to Harvard."

NEOA RISING STARS 2019

The Rising Star Award honors 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.

Eman Akam

Eman Akam is a graduate of the University of New Hampshire and the McNair Scholars Program. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of Arizona where she serves on several committees and organizations both interdepartmental and university-wide. She served the maximum two-year term as a student-

representative on the Graduate Program Committee in the Chemistry and Biochemistry department where she was involved in decision making about changes to the graduate program policies and award decisions. She served as the first treasurer for The Program to Advance Women Scientists (PAWS). In that position she has been able to provide funding to host seminars featuring prominent female scientists, conduct outreach activities, and hold professional development workshops. She has served as a mentor and tutor for the African Americans in Life Sciences (AALS). In 2015 she was presented with the College of Science Service award in recognition of my various involvements. Here is her story.



“Living in Philadelphia as a teenager, I was unaware of being a “minority” at a national level. I did not fully understand, until I left Philadelphia to attend the University of New Hampshire, what being a black woman signifies; that my skin color led others to perceive me in a way that was so vastly disparate from my own self-perception. My undergraduate experience taught me about the complex historical and social issues related to race, gender and class and the effects they have on the current U.S. populations. Early in my undergraduate career, I became a member of several programs that focus on multicultural affairs and diversity related issues as well as acclimating first-generation and minority students to college life. Through such programs, I was eventually introduced to the McNair Graduate Opportunities program which is perhaps the main reason that I am pursuing an academic career today. Through this affiliation, I was educated about graduate school, and introduced to STEM faculty members and their research. In my second year as an undergraduate, I applied to the McNair program and became a McNair scholar, where I experienced scientific research for the first time. The following year, I received a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) fellowship and began my first research project in bioinorganic chemistry.

Being part of these communities, as well as my involvement with the McNair Scholars program, allowed me to begin to understand barriers that exist between minorities and higher education as well as actions that we can take (on individual and collective levels) to overcome such barriers.

My involvement in undergraduate research solidified my desire to pursue a PhD; nonetheless I never imagined that I would be pursuing an academic career. It seemed a farfetched idea, and not within my grasp. My personal experiences have allowed me to recognize the importance of having black and minority leaders,

mentors, and educators in the sciences. I firmly believe that if had I interacted with professors who looked like me, I would have pursued an academic career earlier in my undergraduate education. Because of this, part of my motivation in pursuing the ranks of faculty is with the hope to be such a mentor to someone in the future, and I yearn for the privilege to mentor and inspire some of the next generation of minority scholars.”

Sandra Cano

Sandra Cano a graduate of the Rhode Island Educational Opportunity Center. She is currently the Assistant Vice President for Community Development at Navigant Credit Union where she is responsible for developing strategic business sector and community-based partnerships and developing financial education campaigns for the emerging markets. Since April 2017, Sandra has also served as a Rhode Island Senator for District 8. She began her political career in 2012 when she was elected to the Pawtucket School Committee; the first Latina ever elected in the whole city. In 2014 she was elected as the first Latina to the Pawtucket City Council. Here is her story.

“In August of 2000 while living in my native country of Colombia my mom opened my bedroom door and told me that guerillas had attacked my father’s place of business. I was sixteen years old. I had seen on the news all of the murders and blood that guerilla attacks left behind. I cried for my dad and for all the people that might have been dead after the attack. That was the first time that the war in Colombia touched me directly, but that was more than enough. Finally, after all the uncertainty of the moment, we received a call from my dad telling us that he was alive and was coming home.



We had to get out of Colombia as soon as possible for fear of being kidnapped. It took us three weeks to get everything ready for our escape and we had to leave many things behind. We arrived in Rhode Island on September 1, at a friend’s house with just the clothes on our backs and a little money. We all slept in one room and started our new lives. From that point on, I have never looked at things the same way. I looked at myself and finally I realized that event though I had lost all my possessions, I still had my family with me and that was more precious than everything in this world. At that moment, I realized that I had to start a new life and that thinking about the past would not help me

move on. I often think back to the words my dad told me one day when I was depressed. He told me that even though we lost everything, we still had each other, and that would help us make our lives better here. Together as a family we would overcome all the obstacles. Those words touched my heart and gave me the strength to continue and find success in a new country with a different lifestyle.

Moving forward, I started as every immigrant has, by climbing the ladder. My first step was to overcome a common obstacle that is very real for the majority of immigrants, the language barrier. I then started looking for a school where I could learn English. I was directed to the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) where I enrolled, learned English and started my new life making friends and adapting to this whole new world. It was there where I hit another roadblock, paying for my classes. Because education is one of the top priorities in my life, I had to get a job. The money I earned in this job would hopefully keep me enrolled in school.

In need of additional help, I turned to the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) at CCRI. I met an individual who would change my life, Mr. Barry J. O'Connor. Through the EOC office I found that all the advising and mentoring necessary to reach my goals, but I also found a wonderful staff that was available and willing to help at all times. After constantly asking for help I began to think I was a pain for EOC, but the staff, always made me feel comfortable and part of a family called RIEOC.

Thanks to the help they provided me and through hard work and dedication, I enrolled full time and completed all my classes in two years! I graduated CCRI with an associate degree in general studies on December 2003. I would go on to complete a baccalaureate degree in Management Economics at Bryant University in 2007 and in 2012 I completed a Master of Public Administration at the University of Rhode Island.

I am forever grateful to the support and direction I received from the EOC and especially from Mr. O'Connor. They were there to help me set a course that has put me in a position to represent my community in the state legislature.”

TRIO COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS Winter 2019

National TRIO Day Celebration Nashua, New Hampshire

On February 21 & 22, 2019 over 500 students from 36 NEOA TRIO/GEAR- UP programs descended upon Nashua, New Hampshire for the annual National TRIO Day. Students and staff spent most of Thursday attending 14 college trips to 18 New England higher education institutions. Thursday evening featured a keynote address from Richard Haynes, Associate Director of Admissions at UNH, where he shared his inspirational message of no longer just going to school, rather, “wake up in the morning and *go to work*.” The evening was filled with dancing to a DJ, karaoke, bingo, advocacy letter-writing, a Scholars Bowl, and various great games.



On Friday students participated in a send-off rally that featured speakers from three New Hampshire congressional offices and an address from Josefine Garcia, a TRIO-SSS alumna from UNH. She reminded students that “You are worthy of all of the things that you strive for exactly as you are, so don’t buy into the myth that only kids who talk or dress or act a certain way are worthy of respect, worthy of an education or worthy of a chance at success. All people deserve to have those

things.” After the rally, students were invited to attend a college fair with representatives from over 40 colleges and a workshop on financial literacy/budgeting, college success strategies, the McNair Scholar Program, cracking the SAT, exploring the college essay, finding a college that fits or fun with math. U.S. House of Representatives/TRIO Caucus member Annie Kuster (D-N.H) was available during the college fair to meet with students, staff and admissions representatives and to share her commitment to strengthening TRIO programs.

For more photos from the National TRIO Day Celebration check out:

<https://rocketman.smugmug.com/TRIO-Day-2017/TRIO-Day-2019/>

**Policy Seminar
Washington, D.C.
March 26-27, 2019**

The NEOA experience at the COE-sponsored Policy Seminar in Washington, DC. was nearly perfect in visits to congressional offices with 32 of 33 offices being visited and materials were dropped off at that office! States reported mainly positive outcomes for the ‘asks’ at Policy Seminar including a \$60M increase in TRIO funding. Also, most members reported willingness to sign letters in their respective houses. Many had already signed, and Senator Susan Collins of Maine sponsored the Senate letter.

Most members and/or their aides also support our concerns about some of the possible language being considered for Reauthorization of Higher Education Act (HEA). Specifically, language is being considered that would *mandate* TRIO work with foster and homeless youth. While no bills have been presented there is conflicting opinion on whether anything will be presented this year.

To see some fantastic images from NEOA’s participation in Policy Seminar go to: <https://rocketman.smugmug.com/Policy-Seminar-2019-NEOA-Team/>

Arnold Mitchem Leadership Institute 2018-19 **“Leading with Heart and Mind”** **from AMLI Director, Craig Werth**



“I am still abuzz with energy from the profound opportunity to work for the better part of a year with another amazing group of NEOA leaders as director of the Arnold L. Mitchem Leadership Institute (AMLI). Thirteen, remarkably diverse (especially in natural and adapted work styles) leaders from throughout New England gathered near the coast of Maine for three, 3-day retreats and once again at this year’s NEOA conference. Gathering for our retreats, despite the logistical and scheduling challenges was the relatively easy part. Beyond that, they engaged full-on around leadership challenges, including deep investigation and practice around work styles, making powerful presentations, giving and receiving feedback, managing conflict creatively and effectively, and much more.

Congratulations to the AMLI Class of 2018-19. It has been my honor to work with you all. Thank you for your courage, commitment, dedication and trust.

Much gratitude to the AMLI classes of 2014-15 and 2016-17 for serving as my leadership journey partners and teachers along the way. I always learn and grow from these opportunities and I have found myself in the best of company. Thanks also to the AMLI Directors before me, especially Gerry Ellis and Sigh Searles, who passed along much wisdom and experience. Finally, and especially, deep gratitude to the NEOA Board of Directors for their trust and faith in me, and for their decades long vision and respect for and valuing of the NEOA membership through this offering.”

2019 NEOA Annual Conference



NEOA's 43 Annual Conference was another exceptional event! Almost 300 TRIO colleagues from throughout the region joined together in Warwick, Rhode Island for professional development, alumni and colleague recognition, and celebration of the incredible work that is done throughout the year. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. So, please, click on to the links below to catch a Randy Schroeder glimpse of the conference!

<https://rocketman.smugmug.com/NEOA-Gallery1/>

<https://rocketman.smugmug.com/NEOA-Gallery2/>

Best Practices

FROM MAINE

- Public Relations: On March 19, TRIO professionals were featured on Maine Calling on Maine Public Broadcasting. They discussed college readiness and programs that assist with college preparation. The article and link are: <https://www.mainepublic.org/post/college-readiness-programs-help-high-school-students-who-need-extra-help-preparing-college?platform=hootsuite>
- Upward Bound STEM Conference: On March 1-2 all Upward Bound Programs staff from throughout the state met to hold their first STEM Conference. The conference focused on best practices, brainstorming and idea suggestions. For information contact Doris Juarez at University of Southern Maine (Doris.Juarez@umaine.edu).

FROM MASSACHUSETTS

- Social Justice: Northfield Mount Hermon Upward Bound Program sponsors a *social justice conference* for pre-college students throughout New England each summer. The annual event features performances, speakers, and workshops that cover a wide range of social justice topics to inspire, inform, and require participants to think critically about the world. For more information email Sharon Gralnick (NMH UB Director) with any questions: sgralnick-ub@nmhschool.org

FROM VERMONT.....

- Fundraising: VEOP established an ad hoc committee to provide more funding for student scholarships. They secured *corporate donations* for the VEOP conference auction. The same committee will organize a *10K run* in the fall. All increased funding is to provide more funding for student scholarships.

- SAT Training for Upward Bound Staff: Upward Bound Directors, Assistant Directors and Advisors from all VEOP Upward Bound Programs convened at the University of Vermont to receive SAT training. Mr. Bill Goldworthy, expert in SAT Do's and Don'ts provided a full day of skills training on March 3, 2019.

Upward Bound North Country Scholars Bowl



The 15th Annual Green Mountain Scholars Bowl was held at SUNY Adirondack on March 2. Over 60 students participated in a campus tour, heard from a panel of TRIO alumni on how to be successful in college, and competed in the Scholars

Bowl competition. SUNY Adirondack came out on top in 1st place, Castleton came in second, and Northern Vermont- Lyndon came in third.

Positions Available

Do you know someone who would be fantastic as a TRIO professional or who is a TRIO professional ready for a new challenge? Casey Henderson quietly and consistently sends out announcements to the membership as he learns about positions. Please, consider the folks you know who might be a good fit for our community and forward the announcements to them. Current vacancies include:

University of New Hampshire-Educational Talent Search, Academic Advisor (part time; North Country Region)

<https://jobs.usnh.edu/postings/32334>

NEOA SPONSORS

American Student Assistance (ASA) with a **\$10,000** donation is a Masters Level Sponsor for NEOA's 2019 activities! We thank ASA for their strong support of equal educational opportunity throughout New England!

MasteryPrep has become a sponsor of NEOA activities at the Associate level with a donation of **\$5,000**. They are very excited to become more engaged in TRIO and GEAR UP activities in New England.

NEOA SOCIAL MEDIA SITES:

Facebook -- <https://www.facebook.com/NEOAonline/>

Instagram -- <https://www.instagram.com/nea19>