New England NEOA
Educational Opportunity Association
www.neoaonline.org

Empowering Learners
2024 NEOA Annual Conference
Burlington, VT
Hello 2024 NEOA conference attendees and esteemed guests,

Welcome to the 47th annual New England Educational Opportunity Association (NEOA) Conference in Burlington, VT also known as the “Queen City.” The theme this year is ‘Empowering Learners’ which I find appropriate because it is what we do daily as TRIO and GEAR UP professionals. Empowerment is also what TRIO provided me as an Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services student.

It’s truly the reason I am here today serving as NEOA President.

I graduated from the University of Vermont in 2006 so it feels full circle to have the NEOA conference of my Presidency taking place just down the road; even more so because I am a first-generation college graduate, and now serving at the helm of an organization that serves first-generation, low-income students. This place is special in many ways to me. I hope that you will have some time to explore and enjoy all that the Queen City has to offer. I empower you to fill your soul while attending this conference.

Empowerment is defined as, “the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one’s life and claiming one’s rights.” While this is something I know each one of you strives to do with your program participants, my hope is that you will take the time during this conference to empower yourself. Take the time to connect and/or reconnect with colleagues and friends, attend and learn from the workshops being offered, speak with vendors to learn what is out there to assist you and your program, eat some yummy food, have impromptu conversations in the elevator, laugh a lot, find and create opportunities that fill your toolbox and fill your soul. These are all actions that can contribute to your own empowerment-and you deserve it!

When the conference comes to an end and you are driving home, I encourage you to think about those who empowered you up until this moment in your life and then if it’s possible-tell them and thank them! I think about those who have empowered me-my mom Karen, my aunt Jeanne, my uncle Sherm, my 6th grade teacher in San Francisco Miss Hickey, Rick Williams, Bob McCabe, Randy Schroeder, Marti Kingsley, my mentor Ellen Rowe, Craig Werth, Deb McCann, Rob Pote, Ramon Gonzales, Gaeyln Hastings, Linda Shiller, Beagle Bourgault, my husband Brandon, and the one and only Dr. Arnold Mitchem. It is because these people (and many others) believed in me, encouraged me and challenged me that I have been able to take risks and accomplish what I have both personally and professionally. THANK YOU for empowering me on my journey.

Lastly, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to NEOA conference co-chairs, Julie Finnegan and Rachel Casey for their leadership and hard work in putting together this conference. I share this gratitude with their committee because we all know it takes a village! I appreciate each one of you for your commitment to ensuring this event was a success!

Enjoy the 2024 conference and thank you for being here,

Lindsay Carpenter, NEOA President
The Green Mountain State welcomes you to the 2024 New England Educational Opportunity Association annual conference. We are excited to present Empowering Learners. We hope that this conference will fill your toolbox, allow time to reconnect with your colleagues and be ready to empower your students when you return to your program. One of the most important skills that we can impress upon our students is the power they have in reaching their educational goals.

This year we have decided to invite two keynote speakers to the conference. Our theme of Empowering Learners is a subtle marriage of each individual’s personal story and the science behind learning. On day one Will Eberle, Executive Director of Recovery Vermont and an EOC alumni will be sharing his personal journey from deep poverty to an impactful career in Vermont’s human services sector. On day two, Gretchen Wegner, the founder of the Anti-Boring Learning Lab will discuss the science and art behind motivating students to help them discover their internal drive. Our speakers will inspire us on our journey as student advocates and lifelong learners.

As you look through the workshop offerings, we invite you to attend with your toolbox open. While you are here, chat with your colleagues to see what tools they can offer you! Finally, we will return to our work with new tools to combine with our tried-and-true ones. During the conference, there will be time to connect in our program-specific roundtables. This is a wonderful chance to meet our newest TRIO and GEAR UP colleagues.

The conference comes to a close with a focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We will be joined by the Castro Collaborative: Engineering Inclusive Excellence with Heart-Centered Leadership. We look forward to seeing you at this amazing finale.

We leave our favorite conferences with new ideas for our students and our programs. We hope this conference allows you to continue doing the amazing work that you do every day with a renewed sense of purpose and, of course, new and exciting tools.

With excitement for the conference,

Julie Finnegan and Rachel Casey
Kimberly Jones

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.
Aaron Brown

Dr. Aaron Brown is the executive vice president at the Council for Opportunity in Education. He is a TRIO SSS alumnus, who earned his Ph.D. in Public Affairs from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV); Master’s degree in organizational psychology from Antioch University, Seattle; and Bachelor’s Degree in psychology from Eastern Washington University (EWU).

With two decades of experience in higher education and drawing upon his experience as a low-income and first-generation college graduate, Dr. Brown has served in various capacities across campus as TRIO director, instructor, associate dean, and assistant vice provost. Through the submission of multiple federal and local grants, Dr. Brown has secured millions of dollars across three institutions to help TRIO eligible students achieve college access and success. His academic research includes several publications, most recently involving micromessaging, growth mindset, and appreciative advising.

Dr. Brown is a past president and founding board member of the Washington State TRIO Association; designed and oversaw the development of Central Washington Universities inaugural Transfer Center; endowed a scholarship for low-income Veterans at EWU; served on the faculty senate at UNLV; and has experience as a faculty member for Priority II and Priority IV federal TRIO training grants.

This condensed biography reflects a life dedicated to breaking barriers and fostering inclusive academic success.
Sam Blanco III, born and raised in the California central valley in the small agricultural town of Delano. He graduated from East Bakersfield High school and the first from his family to attend a four-year university. Blanco earned a degree in Economics from UC Davis in 1992 and a Masters Degree in Educational Administration from California State University Sacramento in 1999.

Sam has worked at UC Davis for the past 31 years, currently as the Director of Pre-College Programs which includes Talent Search and Upward Bound. In addition to demonstrating leadership on the UC Davis campus, Sam has been very engaged in the larger Woodland community as School Board Trustee with the Woodland Joint Unified School District from 2012-16.

Sam has also served in leadership roles regionally in the state as a member and officer of the Northern California Chapter of WESTOP (Western Association for Educational Opportunity Professionals), served as the WESTOP President in 2017-18, Co-Chair of the COE 2021-22 Resource Development Committee and currently the COE Chair for 2023-24. Sam is also a proud father of two daughters and married to his wife Pam for 22 years.
# Table of Contents

## Conference Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Map</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule at-a-glance</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop descriptions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter Bios</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events and opportunities</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Spotlights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2024 NEOA Awardees Spotlight</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Rising Star Awardees</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Achiever Awardees</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claiborne Pell Awardee</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley Chisholm Awardee</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian Belgrave-Howard Awardee</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Retirees</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Business Meeting Agenda</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Board Officers</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEOA State Presidents &amp; Liaisons</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Committee Chairs</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Ad Hoc Committee Chairs</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Featured Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors &amp; Advertisements</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Conference Evaluation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the Date</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hotel Map
Schedule At-A-Glance

Day 1 | Tuesday, April 09th

NEOA Board Meeting  12:00pm - 5:00pm | Diamond Ballroom I
SSS Grant Writing Workshop  2:00pm - 6:00pm | Emerald Ballroom I
NEOA Board Dinner (invite only)  5:30pm - Close | Atrium

Evening Opportunities

Dinner is not otherwise provided by the conference this day.

Restaurant Recommendations
Will Eberle
Will Eberle (he/him) trains, consults, speaks, and informs public policy nationally. Will is the Founder of Mission Driver Consulting and the Executive Director of The Vermont Association For Mental Health and Addiction Recovery - a statewide non profit organization dedicated to helping ensure all Vermonters have all they need to overcome mental health and substance use challenges and underlying trauma. Previously, Will served as a Field Director of the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Executive Director of Another Way, a Montpelier, Vermont-based mental health drop-in center. He started his human services career as a street outreach worker and at-risk youth trainer and mentor. Will is a Curtis Scholar who has studied at the Harvard Kennedy School, Norwich University, Johnson State College, and the Snelling School of Government’s Vermont Leadership Institute. Will experienced homelessness, ACEs, and crushing poverty as a child in the Mountain West, dropped out of high school and ran away from home as a teenager, and overcame abuse, mental health challenges, addiction, homelessness, and unemployment as a young adult. Will is a person in recovery who models neuroplasticity and resilience in his life and work. He lives with his family in Northfield, Vermont - where you can find him knitting, fishing, playing jazz piano, and running through the woods with his dog.

Will’s Personal Journey
An examination of Will’s journey from deep poverty, homelessness, mental health and substance use challenges to higher education and an impactful career in Vermont’s human services sector; an examination of people and programs that facilitated his resilience, empowerment and impact; and inspiring examples of innovation and successes from his career.
## Schedule At-A-Glance

### Day 2 | Wednesday, April 10th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tech HQ</strong></td>
<td>8:00am - 5:00pm</td>
<td>Carleton Board Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vendor Exhibits</strong></td>
<td>9:00am - 5:00pm</td>
<td>Promenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registration</strong></td>
<td>8:00am - 5:30pm</td>
<td>Hotel Lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silent Auction</strong></td>
<td>10:00am - 5:00pm</td>
<td>Diamond Ballroom II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumni/Newcomers Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>8:30am - 9:45am</td>
<td>Guild Tavern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COE Update</strong></td>
<td>10:00am - 10:45am</td>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEOA Welcome</strong></td>
<td>10:45am - 11:15am</td>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievers Luncheon</strong></td>
<td>11:15am - 1:00pm</td>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keynote I</strong></td>
<td>1:15pm - 2:00pm</td>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Workshops | 2:15pm - 3:30pm

- **Change moves at the speed of trust**  
  - Emerald Ballroom I

- **Exploring the "new" Vermont State University**  
  - Shelburne Room

- **#Gen Z: "The Final Generation"**  
  - Diamond Ballroom I

- **Better FAFSA for Adult Students**  
  - Willsboro Room

- **Surviving and Thriving through my First Year as a TRIO Director**  
  - Kingsland Room

- **Inspire, Engage, Connect and Reflect**  
  - Emerald Ballroom II
Day 2 | Wednesday, April 10th

**State Meetings | 3:45pm - 5:00pm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Ballroom/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAEOP</td>
<td>Diamond Ballroom I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIEOA</td>
<td>Diamond Ballroom I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEEOA</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEOA</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHEOA</td>
<td>Amphitheatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEOP</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evening Opportunities**

- **Past Presidents Dinner** 6:30pm | Guild Tavern
- **Hospitality** 9:00pm - 11:00pm | Diamond Ballroom I

*Dinner is not otherwise provided by the conference this day.*
Keynote Spotlight
Thursday, April 11th

The Motivation Checklist: Coaching Students to Find Their Internal Drive for Doing School Well

“How do you help students be more motivated?” “How do you work with students who just don’t seem to care?” These are the most common questions I get asked as an academic coach. The motivation dilemma has long been on the minds of educators, parents, and students too; but in our post-pandemic world, it’s even louder as students struggle with lagging academic skills, increasing mental health concerns, and identity-based structural oppressions. In this presentation, we’ll do a deep dive into the science (and art!) of motivating students. We’ll look at a checklist of reasons students struggle to be motivated and identify strategies to help them access their internal drive. We’ll discuss how educators can adopt a “coach approach” to better support students’ motivation, no matter their age, and offer some concrete tips for applying “The Motivation Checklist” in your context, whether you’re a classroom teacher or work with students one-to-one or in small groups.

Gretchen Wegner
Gretchen Wegner is the founder of the Anti-Boring Learning Lab, where educators obsess over sharing the science-backed study skills and executive function strategies every student needs to thrive. A master teacher and an academic life coach for over 15 years, she specializes in consolidating the science of learning into fun, digestible, actionable, executive function-friendly nuggets for both students and educators. Gretchen is also a tireless learner, consistently and transparently modeling the tools she teaches in her coaching, courses, and community. Find out more at antiboringlearninglab.com, and download her free teaching and coaching resources at www.antiboringlearninglab.com/library.
## Schedule At-A-Glance

### Day 3 | Thursday, April 11th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tech HQ</td>
<td>8:00am - 5:00pm</td>
<td>Carleton Board Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor Exhibits</td>
<td>9:00am - 5:00pm</td>
<td>Promenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>8:00am - 5:30pm</td>
<td>Hotel Lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent Auction</td>
<td>10:00am - 5:00pm</td>
<td>Diamond Ballroom II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Walk with Rob Pote</td>
<td>6:30am - 7:15am</td>
<td>Hotel Lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>7:30am - 8:30am</td>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEOA Business Meeting</td>
<td>8:30am - 9:30am</td>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote II</td>
<td>9:30am - 10:15am</td>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>10:30am - 11:45am</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Surprising Science of Studying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Access: A Leader in TRIO Software</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Ride a Merry Go Round</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering Learners through Generative AI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Support for Neurodiverse Learners in their Postsecondary Aspirations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate Don’t Hate</td>
<td>Empowering Your Program to make the APR Fun &amp; Fruitful</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Students Who Have Experienced Trauma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Tech HQ | 8:00am - 5:00pm | Carleton Board Room
Vendor Exhibits | 9:00am - 5:00pm | Promenade
Registration | 8:00am - 5:30pm | Hotel Lobby
Silent Auction | 10:00am - 5:00pm | Diamond Ballroom II
Morning Walk with Rob Pote | 6:30am - 7:15am | Hotel Lobby
Breakfast | 7:30am - 8:30am | Exhibition Hall
NEOA Business Meeting | 8:30am - 9:30am | Exhibition Hall
Keynote II | 9:30am - 10:15am | Exhibition Hall

## Workshops | 10:30am - 11:45am

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Surprising Science of Studying</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Access: A Leader in TRIO Software</td>
<td>Shelburne Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Ride a Merry Go Round</td>
<td>Willsboro Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering Learners through Generative AI</td>
<td>Diamond Ballroom I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Support for Neurodiverse Learners in their Postsecondary Aspirations</td>
<td>Amphitheatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate Don’t Hate</td>
<td>Empowering Your Program to make the APR Fun &amp; Fruitful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Students Who Have Experienced Trauma</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 3 | Thursday, April 11th

Free time  11:45am - 1:15pm

Lunch is not otherwise provided by the conference this day.

NEOA Conversation  1:15pm - 2:00pm | Exhibition Hall

Program Roundtables | 2:15pm - 3:15pm

Upward Bound/UBMS  Emerald Ballroom III
Student Support Services  Emerald Ballroom II
McNair Scholars Program  Shelburne Room
Education Opportunity Center  Amphitheatre
Veterans Upward Bound  Kingsland Room
Talent Search  Emerald Ballroom I
GEAR UP  Diamond Ballroom I

Workshops | 3:30pm - 4:45pm

How do you support students as agents of change within their communities?  Emerald Ballroom III
Working Effectively with New Arrivals  Diamond Ballroom I
Family Conversations: Strengthening the Relationship One Conversation at a Time  Willsboro Room
AI in Action: Empowering TRIO Professionals and Supporting Students  Amphitheatre
Schedule At-A-Glance

Day 3 | Thursday, April 11th

Workshops | 3:30pm - 4:45pm continued

Integrating Mindfulness Education for Executive Function, Compassion and Self-Knowledge
Emerald Ballroom I

Utilizing External Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) to Bolster Student Success
Kingsland Room

Blumen Software: Find out why BOT is miles ahead of other software
Shelburne Room

Tangible Tools to Help Students Learn and Thrive through A Trauma Informed Lens
Emerald Ballroom II

Free time
4:45pm - 7:00pm

Awards Banquet (dinner included)
7:00pm - 9:00pm | Exhibition Hall

Hospitality
9:00pm - 11:00pm | Diamond Ballroom I

If you love football & professional development, get your raffle tickets now! Fairshare Football Raffle >
Plenary Spotlight
Friday, April 12th

Lead with the LOVE Formula 101
We guide and support organizations, institutions, and boards in "Engineering Inclusive Excellence with Heart-Centered Leadership," which is a commitment to L.O.V.E.: Listening, Openness, Vulnerability, and Empathy, utilizing a J.E.D.I.: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion framework. We synthesize experiential learning with immersive project-based critical thinking while using dialogue as an ingredient for breaking down barriers, building trust, and modeling application tools, while addressing themes such as stereotype bias, microaggressions, microaffirmations, communication and power dynamics.

Angélica Canlas Castro
Head of Transformation & Founder | Castro Collaborative

Anastasia “Stasia” Morton
Creative Director | Partnership 4 Youth Engagement & Leadership LLC
### Schedule At-A-Glance

#### Day 4 | Friday, April 12th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tech HQ</td>
<td>8:00am - 12:00pm</td>
<td>Carleton Board Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim Auction Items</td>
<td>10:00am - 12:00pm</td>
<td>Diamond Ballroom II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retiree Recognition</td>
<td>8:30am - 8:45am</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>7:30am - 8:45am</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenary Workshop</td>
<td>8:45am - 10:00am</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing remarks</td>
<td>10:00am - 10:15am</td>
<td>Emerald Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Check-out</td>
<td>10:15am - 12:00pm</td>
<td>Hotel Lobby</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Don’t forget to take the post-conference evaluation!
Workshop Descriptions
Day 1 | Tuesday, April 09th

**SSS Grant Writing | Emerald Ballroom**
Laurie Davis & Donna Thompson
Seasoned, successful grant writers, Laurie Davis and Donna Thompson will hold a Student Support Services grant writing workshop. The presenters will review all sections of the RFP and share strategies and common errors that writers make. This workshop is designed for veteran writers as well as those writing for the first time.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

**SSS Proposal Writing Workshop**

APRIL 9, 2:00-6:00 - DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON, BURLINGTON, VT
WITH DONNA THOMPSON AND LAURIE DAVIS

ZOOM OPTION AVAILABLE!

register at www.neoaonline.org

FREE TO NEOA MEMBERS
$150 FOR NON-MEMBERS
Workshop Descriptions
Day 2 | Wednesday, April 10th

Change Moves at the Speed of Trust: Empowering Learners through Deep Listening and Effective Partnership | Emerald Ballroom I
Will Eberle
How can we better understand what motivates struggling students to succeed? How do we forge stronger ties with community partners who are critical for meeting our students’ global needs? This session will assist attendees in forging stronger, more robust partnerships and provide them with tools to build more effective relationships with the students they serve. Workshop content will include practical and scalable techniques for helping youth overcome trauma, mental health and substance use challenges and social-determinants of health-based barriers to academic and career success, and strategies for enhancing partnerships and auxiliary supports for youth served by NEOA.

Exploring the “New” Vermont State University (VTSU) | Shelburne Room
Brandon Kennedy
You may have heard that Vermont State College System has evolved and brought together its 5 residential campuses to become Vermont State University. VTSU provides affordable, accessible, and high-quality education to students of all backgrounds. An explanation of the merger and development of Vermont State University, highlighting the campus identities, and academic programs at each, along with the new student success model will be presented. VTSU provides unique programs and hybrid learning for all. Learn about the support that Vermont State has invested in students' needs to meet them where they are in their education journey.

#Gen Z: “The Final Generation” | Diamond Ballroom I
Bryan Landgren
Come and learn about Generation Z and why they are known as “The Final Generation” from a #GenZ presenter. What are their characteristics? What drives them? How do they differ from other generations? How can you effectively educate, motivate, and relate to them if you are a Millennial or Gen Xer? This session is geared towards those who work with #GenZ students and wants to better understand, connect with, and support them.”

Better FAFSA for Adult Students: Updates, Work Arounnds, and a Brainstorm | Willsboro Room
Stacey King
The updates to the 24-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid and SAI calculation have impacts specific to adult learners. In this session we will review all the changes, including the impacts of aid calculation changes, identify work arounds to known issues, and brainstorm how to best assist adult students as they complete the FAFSA form. Attendees will have an opt-in email group for questions and follow-up.

Psst... don’t forget about the silent auction!
Surviving and Driving Through My First Year as a TRIO Director
Kingsland Room
Naomi Brown-Jones
Join me on the journey through my first year as a TRIO Director. One day it was just me and a 106-page grant, but with minimal guidance and support I persevered. Hear honest reflection on what it took for me to survive my first year in this position. Learn how self-care, transparency and other tools and resources can help others thrive in the position. Share your own experiences and strategies. If you are a new director, this session is for you!

Inspire, Engage, Connect and Reflect: Experiential, Brain-based Group Facilitation, Teaching, and Reflection Techniques | Emerald Ballroom II
Jen Stanchfield
Join this interactive workshop and fill your toolbox with experiential, brain-based techniques to create lasting, meaningful lessons. Build a connected community with learners of all ages. Explore tangible ways to bring learning to life through engaging reflection. Cultivate belonging, voice, choice, and ownership. Integrate training, group work, or academic content with social and emotional learning. Enliven the traditional sharing circle.
The Surprising Science of Studying: Evidence-Based Strategies That Inspire Self-Directed Learning | Emerald Ballroom I
Gretchen Wegner
Worried that students’ academic skills won’t cut it in college and beyond? Neuroscience to the rescue! Join us as we unravel the complexities of how the brain learns, condensing key findings into a simple evidence-based formula for optimal learning. Understanding how their brains learn empowers learners to work “smarter not harder” on their academic skills. Gain practical strategies to boost student motivation and upgrade academic habits and leave inspired to teach the formula to your students. You’ll blow their minds!

Student Access: A Leader in TRIO Software | Shelburne Room
Alex Grote
Learn how StudentAccess can help you manage your participant data. Included utilities allow you to efficiently manage data, create custom reports and online applications, and keep in contact with your participants. We follow the Department of Education reporting requirements for all grant types to ensure that our Annual Performance Report Generator is up to date.

How to Ride a Merry Go Round | Willsboro Room
David Waldherr
NAEP Proficiency is two thumbs DOWN, teacher and student stress are UP, parental approval is DOWN, college and career requirements are UP, AND student engagement is DOWN. This lively session will illustrate how to provide the resources that students and staff need to reduce stress and increase math and reading proficiency along with increasing student engagement and college/career requirements. Specifically, we will look at how to master Power Standards, Scaffolding and Adaptive Data-informed learning.

Empowering Learners Through Generative Artificial Intelligence | Diamond Ballroom I
Sam Bowers
Explore the diverse applications of Generative AI, such as ChatGPT, for students in higher ed. beyond automated paper writing. Using demos and examples, you will learn transferable skills in prompt engineering to guide students in using this tool responsibly and effectively. Enhance your capacity for informed discussions with students on the benefits, drawbacks, possibilities, limitations, and ethical considerations of integrating Generative AI into their learning experience.
**Holistic Support for Neurodiverse Learners in their Postsecondary Aspirations | Amphitheatre**

Jessi Krause Herron

Transitioning out of high school and into the wider world of education and work can be challenging for neuro diverse learners. Join us as we explore the six dimensions of wellness and their importance in the post-high school transition planning process. Learn about one model for holistically supporting high school seniors in setting realistic and challenging education and career goals by collaborating with a student's special education transition team. Hear from a student and parent about how this process felt for them!

**Rate Don’t Hate! Empowering your Program to Make the APR Fun and Fruitful | Kingsland Room**

Rick Williams

Our diligence and struggle through the Annual Performance Report process generates a huge amount of information that is usually put aside when we hit “SUBMIT.” But the APR can be useful to improve your program, share program successes with your college or community, and provide you with valuable information that you may not have looked at. This workshop will outline an easy way to gather that information to help inform you about successes and challenges in your program!

**Teaching Students Who Have Experienced Trauma | Emerald Ballroom II**

Brandy Whitney

Trauma impacts the way the human brain functions. Often a student's inability to focus on a lesson, succeed in class or organize their materials comes from dysregulation caused by trauma. How do we, who are NOT mental health experts, tutor, teach and reach these students effectively? We will discuss various common traumas that students may encounter and methods to best individualize how we educate and support them in their college goals.

**Working Effectively with New Arrivals | Diamond Ballroom I**

Amir Samar

In 2023, more than 500 new Americans from all over the globe arrived and resettled in Vermont. In this session, we will discuss different immigration statuses and what support they may receive after their arrival, successful models or engagement, potential partnerships, cultural competencies and how VSAC EOC has helped them navigate financial aid eligibility that contribute to their success.
How Do You Support Students as Agents of Change Within Their Communities? | Shelburne Room
Adriana Eldred & David Richardson
Student empowerment is imperative to supporting leadership development. So how do we empower learners to become agents of change within their institutions and communities? In this discussion-based workshop, we will examine equitable and democratic education leadership through the perspective of student leaders and alumni of education opportunity programs. Participants will learn about ways that they can support youth to be more involved in decision-making spaces and become agents of change while taking away a renewed perspective and ideas to further implement student participation in your grant’s programming.

Family Conversations: Strengthening the Relationship One Conversation at a Time | Willsboro Room
Cathy Printon
Family conversation “starters” can encourage engagement, strengthen relationships, create opportunities to learn about family history and resiliency, challenges and successes and share aspirations. They can help families gain more understanding of their students’ goals, skills and interests. Using the Vermont GEAR UP "Yack Stacks", we will model and practice how to have authentic family conversations that have the potential for strengthening relationships and understanding the depth of family stories. Attendees will receive Yack Stack decks and materials.

AI in Action: Empowering TRIO Professionals and Supporting Students | Amphitheater
Heather Bacchiocchi
Artificial Intelligence has quickly become a hot topic in education. Discover how AI proficiency can empower Educational Opportunity professionals to better support our students. In this hands-on workshop, uncover the possibilities of AI tools, emphasizing practical applications in your daily tasks as well as understanding the ethical considerations and responsible usage in an educational context. Participants are encouraged to bring their devices for an engaging, interactive session that demystifies AI and enhances their professional toolkit.
Workshop Descriptions

Day 3 | Thursday, April 11th

Integrating Mindfulness Education for Executive Function, Compassion and Self-Knowledge | Emerald Ballroom I

Bonnie Tai

Trauma-informed mindfulness education empowers neuro-diverse learners to facilitate financial, social, and academic integration. This session includes a brief presentation, experiential learning, and a discussion of strategies to integrate mindfulness education to strengthen learners’ ability to regulate emotions and to better understand how their own minds work. This can help our students develop more compassionate relationships with themselves, others, and their experiences of time and other finite resources.

Utilizing External Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) to Bolster Student Success | Kingsland Room

Brittany Green

Research Experience for Undergraduates, (REUs), is an incredible way for students of all disciplines to gain research experience as well as personal and professional development. Learn about resources that can expand learning opportunities for college success students in the New England area. In this session, we will equip student success professionals with resources that will: identify REU’s and the benefits, help students find and apply to REUs and create a plan for success while attending them, and share outcome data from our McNair students who completed REU’s.

Blumen Software: Find Out Why BOT is Miles Ahead of Other Software | Shelburne Room

Gunjan Seth

If you don’t have BOT, (Blumen Online for TRIO) software, attend this session to see all the features you can benefit from, compared to your current database. Attend this session to learn ‘Best Practices’ and other ‘Tips & Tricks’ for an accurate and timely APR submission. You will learn from a technology expert who has worked with TRIO programs for over 23 years.

Tangible Tools to Help Students Learn and Thrive through A Trauma Informed Lens | Emerald Ballroom II

Erin Adams

Trauma changes the brain’ function. Events such as a global pandemic, generational poverty, and abuse rewire the brain. Come to this engaging, interactive workshop to learn tangible tools to help your students and school communities thrive. Learn about the six traumas informed tenants and we will break them down together into tangible, doable practices that you can bring into your everyday interaction with students.
Presenter Bios

Will Eberle | Executive Director | Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery
Change moves at the speed of trust: Empowering Learners Through Deep Listening and Effective Partnerships
Will Eberle, MPA is the Executive Director of the Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery and the principal and founder of Mission Driver Consulting. He trains, speaks, and provides policy consultation nationally. Will is Curtis Memorial Scholar and a TRIO programs alum - his educational journey has ranged from dropping out of high school to obtaining a master’s degree at a private university, studying at the Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education, and serving on his local school boards.

Brandon Kennedy | Associate Director Of Admissions | Vermont State University
Exploring the “New” Vermont State University (VTSU)
Brandon is a first-generation graduate of one of Vermont State University’s Legacy institutions. He has worked on the enrollment team for 10 years. He is passionate about supporting students to find the right path to their future goals.

Bryan Landgren | Assistant Director/Student Success Advisor | Educational Equity Programs/McNair Scholars Program
#GenZ: “The Final Generation”
Bryan Landgren (he/him) is the Assistant Director for Educational Equity Programs and the Student Success Advisor for the McNair Scholars Program at Suffolk University. He is also the Massachusetts State President for MEOA 2023-2024. In previous professional positions, Bryan has transitioned from Suffolk University Upward Bound, worked for Samaritans of Merrimack Valley as a Suicide Prevention Program Facilitator and Hotline Coordinator while continuing to volunteer for the Crisis Text Line. Bryan has always worked towards educating, fighting for social justice reform, and changing minds about mental health and its impacts on college-aged students. Bryan holds a B.A. in Human Development & Human Services and an M.Ed. in Community Engagement & Higher Education from Merrimack College.

Stacey King | Education Counselor | VSAC EOC
Better FAFSA for Adult Students: Updates, Work Arounds, and a Brainstorm Session
Stacey is a former teacher and scientific researcher who has been working in the educational access field for 15 years, and for the last five years as an adult EOC Education Counselor. She is a self-professed financial aid geek and loves sharing her knowledge!

Naomi Brown-Jones | Program Director | Brandeis University
Surviving and Thriving through my First Year as a TRIO Director
Naomi Brown-Jones is a proud Upward Bound alum, with over 10 years of experience working in college access and support. She is passionate about professional development and enjoys creating spaces for productive conversations.
Presenter Bios

**Alex Grote | Vice President | Heiberg Consulting, Inc**

StudentAccess: The Leader in TRIO Software!

Alex Grote, Vice President, has been with Heiberg Consulting, Inc. since 2004. He works with all versions of StudentAccess in both development and support. He has also trained hundreds of TRIO staff at grants nationwide on how to use StudentAccess to track student services and academic progress. Alex has previously attended and/or presented at each of the regional conferences.

**Cathy Printon | Coordinator | Vermont GEAR UP and Family Engagement**

Family Conversations: Strengthening the Relationship One Conversation at a Time

I have worked with the Vermont GEAR UP program for close to 18 years. With a background and passion for higher education, building supportive relationships is the key to much of my work. My path has taken me from teaching high school special education to college admissions, alumni work, and student life, at my alma mater, Johnson State College, of which I am very proud, and graduate school at Virginia Tech. Focusing on the student experience is front and center – and how families engage with and support the process is important. How we follow a student’s curiosity, guide them to explore, and help them build the framework for good work, good community, and good contributions guides my work. I am a proud 2016-2017 Arnold L Mitchem Leadership Institute participant. I love the impact we are able to make with families on their journey!

**Rick Williams | Director | VTSU Lyndon Upward Bound**

The A+ Path to Results: Rate Don’t Hate: Empowering Your Program to Make the APR Fun and Fruitful

Rick Williams is the current director of the Vermont State University Lyndon Upward Bound program. He has served in this role for 20 years and has also been a member of the NEOA Board of Directors.

**Erin M. Adams | Counselor | GUIDE/UVM Education & Student Affairs**

Tangible Tools to Help Students Learn and Thrive through A Trauma Informed Lens

Erin (they/them) is a graduate student at the University of Vermont studying Higher Education and Student Affairs. They earned their BA from the University of Vermont in English and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies. Erin has their graduate assistantship at the Women & Gender Equity Center, where they provide supplemental support for students. Additionally, Erin has worked with Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) for the past year as a GUIDE Counselor, providing students with financial and socioemotional support and resources.

**Brandy Whitney | UBMS Counselor | Mount Wachusett Community College**

Teaching Students Who Have Experienced Trauma

Brandy Whitney comes to TRIO after teaching for 20 years in public education. She has been a foster parent and is the parent of multiple children with special needs. She is the first in her family to not only complete college but also obtain a Master’s Degree in Education and grew up in a low income home.
Gunjan Seth | Vice President | Compansol
Blumen Software: Find out why BOT is Miles Ahead of Other Software
EDUCATION:
• Bachelors in Commerce
• MBA (International Marketing)
WORK:
• With COMPANSOL since 2000

Gretchen Wegner | Founder | Anti-Boring Learning Lab
The Surprising Science of Studying: Evidence-Based Strategies That Inspire Self-Directed Learning
Gretchen Wegner is the founder of the Anti-Boring Learning Lab, where educators obsess over sharing the science-backed study skills and executive function strategies every student needs to thrive. Find out more and download her free resources at antiboringlearninglab.com.

Adriana Eldred | Communication & Outreach Specialist | GEAR UP
How do You Support Students as Agents of Change Within Their Communities?
Adriana works as Vermont State GEAR UP’s Communications Specialist and is a proud program alumni. She earned her BA in Journalism and BFA in Fine Studio Art from VTSU-Johnson in 2020 and is currently enrolled in UVM’s graduate program, Higher Education Student Affairs. Adriana has always been passionate about student leadership and is happy to combine it with her other passions for creativity and social change.

David Richardson | Facilitator & Intern | GEAR UP Alumni Advisory Committee
How do You Support Students as Agents of Change Within Their Communities?
David is a Danville High School graduate and an alumni of the VTSU-Lyndon Upward Bound program and VSAC’s GEAR UP program. David is currently a 3rd-year student at the University of Vermont, where he is studying Political Science and Economics in the Patrick Leahy Honors College. David, on top of being a Student Government Association Senator and Writing Tutor, is the facilitator and intern for GEAR UP’s Alumni Advisory Committee.

Heather Bacchiocchi | Program Director | Access Plus (SSS-D)
AI in Action: Empowering TRIO Professionals and Supporting Students
Heather is the Director of the Access Plus Program (SSS-D) at the Community College of Rhode Island. She got her start in TRIO during college as an Upward Bound tutor. She has also worked in EOC as a supervisor at the College and Career Planning Center in Boston.
Presenter Bios

Jen Stanchfield | Educator, Author, Facilitator | Experiential Learning

Inspire, Engage, Connect and Reflect: Experiential, Brain-based Group Facilitation, Teaching, and Reflection Techniques | Emerald Ballroom II

Jen Stanchfield works with colleges, universities, schools, and mental health organizations worldwide. She helps facilitators and educators increase meaningful engagement and reflection, build community, develop social and emotional skills, and fine-tune their facilitation and teaching techniques. Her engaging and informative workshops and publications stem from three decades of diverse experiences with learners of all ages. She adeptly incorporates the art of teaching, creativity, and educational theory and practices tangible tools and techniques with brain-based and pedagogical research. She earned an M.S. in Experiential Education at Minnesota State University and continues to pursue the latest educational neuroscience. Jen is the author of Tips and Tools for The Art of Experiential Group Facilitation and Inspired Educator, Inspired Learner: Experiential, Brain-Based Activities and Strategies to Engage, Motivate, Build Community, and Create Lasting Lessons. In addition, she is the creator and regular contributor to the Inspired Educator Blog at experientialtools.com.

David Waldherr | Founder | Harcourt Brace

How to Ride a Merry Go Round

David Waldherr, is a first generation, low-income graduated from the U of WI on scholarship. He earned his JD at Chicago-Kent, became the National Dir. of Harcourt Brace, and started Cambridge in his kitchen to help students, regardless of income reach their true college and career potential. His skill-building, tutoring and testprep programs have served 10,000,000 students. He has contributed to 100 titles. David and wife Kathy established the Cambridge Grant Award Program donating $10,000,000 for programming for disadvantaged students.

Jessi Krause Herron | Outreach Counselor | GEAR UP

Holistic Support for Neurodiverse Learners in their Postsecondary Aspirations

Jessi Krause Herron has been working with the VT State GEAR UP Program at the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) for 16 years. Jessi works with students in grades 7-12 on career and college exploration and planning. Jessi lives in Saxtons River, VT with her husband, 12 yo daughter, and rescue mutt. Jessi is passionate about working with neurodiverse students and helping them find their place in this world where they can find happiness and success!

Bonnie Tai | Director & Faculty | College Opportunity Access

Integrating Mindfulness Education for Executive Function, Compassion and Self-Knowledge

As former Curriculum Specialist in a SSS at Brandeis University and currently as a faculty and administrator, I collaborated with a group of faculty colleagues and students to research and develop the COA College Opportunity and Access program to support Pell-eligible and first-generation students, some of whom also identify as BIPOC and disabled. Although my formal training is in educational research and educational equity, I have been increasingly integrating mindfulness education into my courses as a long-time practitioner of mindfulness through yoga and meditation.
Presenter Bios

Samuel Bowers | STEM Development Coordinator | Vermont State University - Randolph & Williston Campus
Empowering Learners through Generative Artificial Intelligence

As the STEM Development Coordinator at Vermont State University's Williston and Randolph campuses, I draw on experience as a high school teacher and instructional coach. Passionate about integrating cutting-edge technologies into higher education, I am particularly enthusiastic about exploring the transformative potential of Generative AI in fostering learning, innovation, and progress.

Amir Samar | Project Manager | Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
Working Effectively with New Arrivals

After earning his bachelor in business administration, with major practices in “Strategic Management” in 2013, Amir worked for non-profit international organizations in his home country, Afghanistan, for seven years. Most of his duties involved developing migrant-related projects, executing and managing the processes. After arriving in Brattleboro in January, 2022 Amir joined BDCC as part of a regional partnership to resettle refugees in southern Vermont, along with ECDC. Amir works directly with refugees helping them to access employment and training. Amir manages trainings and workforce partnerships relating to refugees, and is currently assisting with job placement for new Vermonters.

Brittany Green | Director | McNair Scholars Program
Utilizing External Research Experience’s for Undergraduates (REU) to Bolster Student Success

My name is Britt Green and I am Florida native, I completed my undergrad degree at UCF where I was a proud McNair Scholar! I went to Dartmouth for my MA, and I am finishing my PhD at UCLA where I am a writing a dissertation on the representation of disability in Netflix Original Series Programming.

Angélica Canlas Castro | Head of Transformation & Founder | Castro Collaborative
Plenary Session: Lead with the LOVE Formula 101

Angélica Canlas Castro (she, they) is known as the (R)EVOLutionary LOVE Coach and is Head of Transformation and Founder of Castro Collaborative. She is the Assistant Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Education at The University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she did her undergraduate and graduate work. Ms. Castro has over 25 years of experience working collaboratively with organizations and institutions as a Social Justice Educator, Community Engagement Specialist, Certified Leadership Coach, Executive Consultant, Community Mediator, Intergroup Dialogue Facilitator, and Meditation, Yoga and Energy Medicine Practitioner.

With her Bachelors Degree in Community Health and Theater, and her Masters Degree in Educational Psychology and Social Justice Education, she has trained board of directors, administrators, educators, youth activists, leadership teams and various communities on how to co-create inclusive systems, processes and environments that promote wellbeing, connection and belonging. Ms. Castro’s courageous commitment and powerful intention are to spread Love, Light and Liberation by facilitating transformation, revolutionizing organizations, and offering listening circles and healing spaces so everyone can feel seen, heard, valued and affirmed.
Anastasia “Stasia” Morton | Creative Director | Partnership 4 Youth Engagement & Leadership LLC

**Plenary Session: Lead with the LOVE Formula 101**

Anastasia “Stasia” Morton (she, her) Creative Director of the Partnership 4 Youth Engagement & Leadership LLC, is a dynamic member of the Pioneer Valley community and juggles many roles with grit and grace. She is a New York City native, educator, creative director, facilitator, curriculum developer, fundraiser, and event planner. She is a proud alumna of the Accelerated Studies in Associates Program at LaGuardia Community College, recipient of the Kaplan Educational Foundation scholarship and Passport to Leadership: Advanced Leadership Certificate, and a Phi Theta Kappa member. Ms. Morton was a Frances Perkins Scholar at Mount Holyoke College where she earned a Bachelor’s degree in Educational Psychology, specializing in Social Justice and Youth Leadership. She served as the Assistant Director of Academic Support for Upward Bound and the Youth Leadership Coordinator at the Amherst Family Center for over 10 years. Ms. Morton is passionate about education that empowers silenced young people, and has created hundreds of Youth Dialogue Summits on topics like Well-Being, Leadership, Classroom Management, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access. She strives to teach young people the importance of understanding and exploring internal and external identities, cultural capital, their individual leadership style, the power of one’s voice, and the individual narrative. Every day she is enthusiastically driven to see her students succeed in creating an atmosphere that propels them to see the best in themselves and excel in whatever future they have chosen.
Events & Opportunities

**Silent Auction**
Diamond Ballroom II | 04/10 & 04/11 10am-5pm
Please stop by to place a bid or two on some amazing items and state baskets. All proceeds are allocated to the Jerry Ellis Professional Development Fund which helps support NEOA members attend professional development opportunities they may not otherwise be able to.

**Fairshare Football**
04/10 & 04/11 10am-5pm Diamond Ballroom II
Purchase raffle tickets to win the contents of the football! When you donate to Fairshare, you support the mission and vision of COE and its efforts in providing professional development, research, advocacy, and student opportunities for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the Pacific Islands, and Puerto Rico. 5 tickets for $10 or a wingspan for $20.

**TRIO Swag Store**
Promenade 04/10 & 04/11 9am-5pm
Whether you are looking for gear for you or your entire program, we can get whatever you need. All of our products come with a bonus! The proceeds from each sale goes to the educational opportunity program of your choosing from state to regional or even national. If you would like to get a quote for a large order or are hoping to use custom artwork, just reach out (chris@leestudios.com) and we will be here to help. Together we can help even more deserving students.
Events & Opportunities

Morning walk
Hotel Lobby | 6:15am 04/11
Start your morning with some movement and take a walk with NEOA Past President, Rob Pote. Meet in the lobby at 6am and be ready for some good conversation and brisk walk.

Alumni & Newcomer Breakfast
04/10 8:30am-9:45am | Guild Tavern
The Annual New England TRIO & GEAR-UP Alumni Gathering will kick off our amazing annual conference on WEDNESDAY morning at 8:30 am. All four TRIO Achievers and Rising Stars should be in attendance along with VT Alumni and NEOA professionals who are Alumni as well. This year we are teaming up with the Newcomer Reception ... makes sense, right? New folks connecting with experienced folks and generating all kinds of great new energy!

Achievers’ Luncheon
04/10 11:15am - 1:00pm | Exhibition Hall
Please join us for lunch and celebrate the NEOA Rising Stars and NEOA Achievers for their accomplishments.
Events & Opportunities

**NEOA Conversation with President Lindsay!**
Lindsay Carpenter & NEOA Board Members
Please join in a discussion about how NEOA can help support its members and member programs. This is an opportunity to provide feedback and share ideas to continue to strengthen and grow NEOA.

**Program Roundtables**
Please attend your respective program roundtable for a time to network, discuss, share ideas and learn about what is happening in other programs.

**Awards Banquet**
04/11 7pm-9pm | Exhibition Hall
Please join us for dinner and the presentation of the annual NEOA awards and President’s awards.

**Retiree Recognition**
Linda Shiller
Please join us in celebrating four of our NEOA colleagues on their career journeys and retirement!
2024 NEOA Achievers Luncheon

2024 NEOA Rising Star Awardees

*Larissa Holland, ENV SP*
Bowdoin College Upward Bound Program
Nominated by Ginny Ward

*Rainbow Chen, M.Ed.*
University of Vermont Upward Bound Program
Nominated by D. Elaine Leavitt

2024 NEOA Achiever Awardees

*Krystal Hicks, M.Ed.*
University of New Hampshire Student Support Services Program
Nominated by Randy Schroeder

*Garvey Pierre, MA, MS*
University of Massachusetts Boston Upward Bound Program
Nominated by Terri Morgan
I am writing this letter with hopes of highlighting the immeasurable impact Bowdoin College’s TRIO Upward Bound (UB) program had on my journey to college and continues to have on the overall trajectory of my life. Although I have gained valuable experiences from various facets of UB, including cultural enrichment and access to educational resources, the aspect I wish to highlight is the invaluable mentorship and support I continue to receive from the program.

I grew up in one of the most underserved rural counties in the State of Maine (Washington County), in a beautiful, multi-generational family that consisted of me, my young brother, my two parents, and my two grandparents. My grandparents and mother owned and operated a small plant nursery out of our house and my father was both a fisherman and worked in the local quarries.

Unfortunately, when I was 12 years old, I lost my father to his quick and aggressive battle with lung cancer. While I seem to always remember having an urgent sense of responsibility for my surrounding community, it was not until my father passed away that I truly understood and became passionate about the idea of ‘collective care’. After my father’s passing, my grandparents and our surrounding community stepped up to help me transport my brother and I to school and ensure at least one member of our community was at every extracurricular event to cheer us on. As my grandparents aged and became ill, I took on more responsibility so my mother could focus on the business and caring for my grandparents. When I came home from school with a flier for UB, I told my mom it was a free summer-camp that would also pay for all my SAT testing and college applications when the time came. Since my family now relied on me more, it wasn’t easy to lose my hands for the summer season. However, they agreed it was in everyone’s best interest for me to spend six weeks of my summer with UB. My family’s sacrifice, paired with UB’s structured support system and numerous scholarships, led me to be the first in my family to attend college (and leave the State of Maine, at that!). I am very proud to say I graduated with highest honors from Smith College in 2020.

With that said, the high school residential program is not what makes my long-standing relationship with UB unique. In a span of less than three years (2019 - 2021), I lost my grandmother to her battle with leukemia, my grandfather to COVID-19, and my mother to her battle with colon cancer. In 2021, at the age of 22, I packed up my Boston apartment and moved back to rural Maine to become the guardian of my 13 year old brother. With everyday feeling like a different, impossibly challenging puzzle, without having my family to turn to, I knew I could reach out to my Bowdoin UB counselors. With the help of my Bowdoin UB counselors, I navigated the Family and Medical Leave Act and was able to take time off work to adjust and grieve, I ran a successful GoFundMe and applied for small, one-time grants to help with necessary probate and estate costs, I established an IEP for my brother and sought out necessary support structures for him, and of course - I enrolled him in Bowdoin UB. This coming spring, my brother and I will embark on a college road trip to visit his top 10 out-of-state schools, and are beyond grateful to UB for their financial and logistical support for this trip.
Larissa Holland, continued

The time, resources, care, and love that my Bowdoin UB community has invested in me is reflected in all that I do today. Outside of my role as a non-traditional caregiver for my high school-aged brother, I serve as a liaison and mediator for various committees, organization, centers, and departments with respect to justice-based coalition building. Presently, I work both full-time as an Aviation Sustainability Planner with C&S Companies, a nation-wide engineering, design, and construction firm, and part time as the Development Advisor for JustME for JustUS, a place-based non-profit organization that ensures young people in rural Maine have their voices heard throughout our state, especially around issues of climate, environment, and economic opportunities. Outside of work, I spend a lot of time supporting rural municipalities with electrification and climate related grants, and serve on the board of directors for GrowSmart Maine, an organization dedicated to revitalizing historic neighborhoods and vibrant communities suited for residents of all ages, to foster entrepreneurs and creative thinkers, and to provide a safe and inclusive place to raise children. I also attend weekly support groups for parent-less children, enjoy hiking and camping with my partner, hosting dinner dress-up parties with my friends, and slowly working on my first memoir.

Thank you, again, for your time in reading this statement and for your consideration. It’s impossible to feel as though I write with justice when describing the impact TRIO Upward Bound has had on my life, because it’s just so immense. Regardless, it’s a joy and an honor to reflect on my TRIO journey and can confidently say, TRIO works.

Sincerely,
Larissa Holland

Rainbow Chen, M. Ed.
Nominated by D. Elaine Leavitt

I have the honor of being nominated by Elaine Leavitt, the former director of the University of Vermont’s Upward Bound program, for the NEOP Rising Star Award. The Rising Star Award would exemplify not only my successes as a first-generation and low-income college graduate, but also the successes of my first-generation and low-income community of Winooski, Vermont. I am proud to hail from Winooski, Vermont, a community that is home to immigrants and refugees from around the world--something uniquely ours in the state of Vermont. I grew up hearing insults and jokes about my beloved hometown due to our reputation as a “bad school”, the majority of which was influenced by standardized testing, something that did not accurately portray the potential of first-generation students who enter the educational playing field at a lower level than their wealthy, well-educated counterparts.
Our reputation influenced by test scores did not match our community of bright minds coming from around the world to receive an education. Even when communities around us tested our resilience, it is thanks to communities like Upward Bound that bring students like myself together to not only have hope that we can go to college, but also have faith in our identities. Being from Winooski and having our identities as first-generation, low-income students of color were no longer the cause of Winooski having a “poor reputation”, but rather the cause of alumni that continue to fight and advocate for Winooski wherever we went.

With newfound confidence, I made it my life goal to fight for justice for Winooski. I began advocating for my hometown starting at the local level in high school as the Vermont State Board of Education’s Student Representative. My work on the State Board inspired me to pursue a career in education to further opportunities for first-generation students. Although I had immense anxieties about getting accepted into college, Upward Bound encouraged me to apply, establishing faith in that I do deserve college and to thrive in college so that I can pursue my career passions. With their support and my determination to see Winooski thrive hand-in-hand, I pushed forward and made it not only to Brown University for my Bachelor’s Degree in Education Policy and History, but also a Fulbright Scholarship in the Netherlands and a Masters in Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Today, I continue to serve in education and keep in touch with my mentors from Upward Bound so I can give back to Winooski and first-generation students.

It is with all my heart that I thank Upward Bound; I owe it to Upward Bound’s endless efforts to ensure that students like myself not only attain higher educational opportunities as first-generation and low-income students, but also the confidence and pride in said identities so that we further uplift and inspire others to have faith in our innate strengths and abilities. I could not possibly be the same person without Upward Bound today and it is because of them that I continue to serve in education, now as a high school Humanities teacher dedicating myself to future generations. Thank you for considering me for the Rising Star Award.

Warmly,

Rainbow Chen, M.Ed
UVM Upward Bound 2013-2017
Krystal Hicks, M. Ed.
Nominated by Randy Schroeder

My name is Krystal Hicks, 38, and I’m a University of New Hampshire 2007 graduate and former Student Support Services (SSS) student.

To say I was lucky to find the SSS (a/k/a “TRIO Scholars”) program my senior year at Dover High is a massive understatement. As a first-gen, low-income student who was pursuing the University of New Hampshire’s journalism program, I only knew two things: one, I needed to get in and out as quickly as possible (for my loans’ sake), and two, I needed all the help I could get to survive the vast unknown that was college life. Neither of these things would have been possible without the SSS program, specifically my advisors, Randy Schroeder and Craig Werth, at UNH’s Center for Academic Resources (CFAR). As a broke commuter, I already struggled to “fit in” with the rest of the student body my first year. I didn’t have the same chance to build community or hear about possible opportunities on campus since I didn’t have the time (or resources) to spend in the dining halls or dorms.

(I even strategically scheduled my classes for Monday-Thursday so I could work double shifts at my restaurant job Friday-Sunday.) Don’t get me wrong, the stipends I received as an SSS student were helpful (and the ultimate incentive at first if I’m being honest) but the guidance I received from my CFAR advisors was really what saved me – in every sense of the word.

When my lung spontaneously collapsed sophomore year, when my dad died unexpectedly junior year, and when my roommate/childhood best friend passed in a car accident senior year... it was Randy and Craig who helped me navigate how to ask for help and advocate for what I needed from professors so I wouldn’t fall behind. I was determined to not miss a term, and Randy and Craig were honestly the cheerleaders I didn’t know I needed. Whether it was emotional support, time management skills, or studying tips, they provided the navigation I needed that my parent(s) just weren’t able to help with. There is no way I would have graduated (let alone on-time and with honors) without this program’s assistance. Randy and Craig also made connections for me around campus, helping me find journalism-related work-study jobs and opportunities I never would have known about. This experience helped me build a network of additional supporters/mentors and a way more competitive portfolio, ultimately leading to me landing my desired internship at the Eagle Tribune my last semester.

Fast forward 16 years... I now have a master’s degree, a house I bought myself, a non-profit I co-founded that supports women and girls locally, and a career counseling practice that I’m really proud of. I still seek out ways to support first-gen students and even taught summer courses for the UNH Upward Bound program in 2021 and 2022. Giving back to the NEOA programs that helped me get here is always something I prioritize, and in 2019, I was invited to travel to DC with one of my forever-cheerleaders, Randy, where we [successfully] lobbied for more NEOA funding directly with New Hampshire’s Members of Congress. I can’t even begin to explain the impact this program, and the people who make up this program, had on the trajectory of my life and career, especially when my ability to just cope was put to the test. They truly held me down, and I’m forever grateful.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued dedication to supporting first-gen, low-income students. Best,
Krystal Hicks
Garvey Pierre, MA, MS.
Nominated by Terri Morgan

I was born in Boston, but I grew up in Port-au-Prince, where I spent the first fifteen years of my life. When I left Haiti, I pledged to my family that, upon receiving my share of the American dream, I would serve those who need it the most. As soon as I got to Boston, my cousin insisted that I enroll in Upward Bound. He talked about how much fun he had in the summer program and the tight knit community he was part of, but little did I know, Upward Bound would be a transformational experience at a critical point in my life.

I moved to Boston from Haiti during a very difficult time when I didn't speak English and was adjusting to an entire new world around me. I was uprooted from my community, away from my parents who had given me everything they could, but I was determined to make the best of the opportunities I had.

I remember in my first meeting with Terri who was then the Assistant Director, she made me feel supported and empowered to face whatever obstacle would come my way – knowing I had a community of teachers and counselors who wouldn't let me fail.

During my undergraduate years and beyond, I made it a priority to pay it forward by spending my summers supporting the program as a tutor, teacher, and counselor. My Upward Bound experience had such a profound impact on my life that I decided to join the Teach for America (TFA) program immediately after graduation. One of my recommendations came from an Upward Bound Counselor and alumnus who proved once again that this community always delivers. I then went from TFA back to Upward Bound where my mentor, Terri, who welcomed me in the program when I was 15 years old, hired me to become the Assistant Director.

After completing a master’s in Education and Social Change at the University of Miami and a second master’s in International Education Development at Columbia University, I joined the foreign service as an American diplomat but even then, I stayed true to my Upward Bound roots. I volunteered to speak to students in Ecuador, organized a book drive for underserved schools in Mexico, and helped create a State Department’s federal program to support first-generation college graduates both in the United States and at our diplomatic missions abroad. I also created a mechanism to recruit Afro and Indigenous candidates to diversify our staff, while showing these marginalized communities that the U.S. welcomes their perspectives.

Since 2014, I have served in various positions in the State Department; and recently, I was offered the role of White House Director for Global Engagement and Multilateral Diplomacy, which I expect to begin this spring. Upward Bound was a life-changing experience that gave me all the tools to reach my fullest potential. I was blessed to have had that community behind me at such a pivotal time in my life and I wouldn't be here without them.
The Claiborne Pell Award recognizes individuals whose pioneering leadership and vision have made an indelible mark on the struggle for equal educational opportunity.

Dr. Jerry L. Lewis

Dr. Jerry Lewis is a distinguished individual whose educational background speaks volumes about his commitment to academia and resource management. His academic achievements include a B.S. in Radiologic Technology from Creighton University, M.A. degrees in General Administration, Resource Management, and Public Administration/Public Law from the University of Maryland and a J.D. from Howard University.

As the Executive Director of Academic Achievement Programs (AAP) at the University of Maryland, College Park, Dr. Lewis oversees multiple state and federal programs aimed at supporting students' educational endeavors. His supervision includes programs such as the Summer Transitional Program (STP), Intensive Educational Development Program (IED), and several Federal TRIO programs like the Educational Talent Search Programs, Educational Opportunity Center, Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, and Student Support Services. His dedication to these programs spans over 43 years in higher education administration and more than 40 years specifically in TRIO program administration.

Dr. Lewis is not just a leader within his university but has been a key figure in elevating the TRIO programs to the national policy arena. He has played instrumental roles in founding organizations like the MEAEOPP (regional TRIO professional association) and the National Coordinating Council, now known as the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE). His expertise extends to being a certified grant writer, having secured over $27 million in grants during his tenure at UMD and an additional $10 million as a consultant.

His exceptional leadership has been recognized through numerous awards, including the Walter P. Mason national award from COE, Chancellor's Minority Achieving Award, Black Faculty and Staff Award of Excellence, and induction into the Maryland Hall of Fame for his service to low-income and first-generation students. His commitment has been acknowledged with the President’s Medal, the highest honor bestowed by the University of Maryland community, in recognition of his lifelong dedication and service to the university.

His unwavering dedication to education, community service, and advocacy for underserved populations make him an exemplary candidate for the Senator Claiborne Pell Award.

Congratulations, Dr. Lewis!
Shirley Chisholm Awardee

The Shirley Chisholm Award was founded in 1983 to recognize individuals who have demonstrated outstanding commitment and active support for the clients served by TRIO Programs. Former Congresswoman Chisholm was a strong and active national advocate for TRIO programs during her tenure in the House of Representatives. This award has enabled our association to recognize the contributions and support of individuals outside the TRIO community.

Senator Peter Welch

Senator Peter Welch has spent his life working to improve the lives of folks who too often get left behind. Peter was born in Springfield, Massachusetts to Edward and Mary Welch, a dentist and a homemaker. Peter observed from a young age that his father treated folks in the nearby jail the same way he treated the priests and nuns. His mother raised Peter and his siblings while helping keep the books of his father’s business.

Peter attended College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. Before he finished his degree, Peter left school to hitchhike to Chicago and organize against housing discrimination in 1969. After returning to school and completing his degree, he attended and received his law degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1973. After law school, Peter settled in White River Junction, Vermont, becoming one of the county’s first public defenders for low-income folks. He then founded a small law practice, winning high profile cases to restore retirement benefits for workers, protect property rights for the elderly, and more.

He was first elected to the Vermont State Senate in 1980. Within five years, he was unanimously elected by his colleagues to lead the chamber, becoming the first Democrat in Vermont history to hold the position of President Pro Tempore.

In 2006, Peter ran and won Vermont’s sole seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in a race that received national attention as the only contested congressional race in the country where both candidates refused to air negative ads. Peter has worked throughout his career both to defend progressive values and also to find bipartisan compromises. He approaches his work in the Capitol the same way Vermonter do back home, focusing on getting the job done and not on getting the credit. In the House, Peter worked across the aisle to lower costs for working families. He’s led on legislation to advance green technologies, bring down the cost of prescription drugs, expand broadband and telemedicine in rural America, and more.

After Senator Patrick Leahy decided to retire after more than four decades of service in 2022, Peter ran in and won the election to become Vermont’s next Senator. In this new role, he’s continued his work to lower costs for working families, combat the impacts of climate change, and invest in rural America.

When he’s not working, Peter (as he’s known by his constituents) can be found hiking and skiing around Vermont with his wife Margaret and enjoying the Green Mountain State’s uniquely beautiful nature.
Marian Belgrave-Howard Awardee

Marian Belgrave-Howard served as the first President of the New England Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel, NEAOPP, (now the New England Educational Opportunity Association, NEOA), in 1976. This award is given to individuals for their “inspiring and enduring contributions toward the achievement of NEAEOPP’s (NEOA’s) mission and toward the expansion of equal educational opportunity.”

Dianne Griggs

Dianne started her career in college access shortly after college graduation by working as an Upward Bound counselor. She joined VSAC in 1994 as a counselor for the National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership Program (NEISP grant), the precursor to GEAR UP, advising students in schools in Vermont’s Upper Valley. When VSAC was awarded one of the nation’s first GEAR UP grants, Dianne became a lead counselor. She began directing the statewide GEAR UP program in 2009 and has been doing so since. Dianne has helped hundreds of students directly and now has touched the lives of thousands. The current GEAR UP grant serves over 2,500 students across Vermont. Dianne has overseen impactful innovations such as the introduction of the “seventh-year” program, GUIDE, which services GEAR UP participants in their first year of postsecondary education; as well as the E=MC2 program, a collaboration between secondary and postsecondary educators introducing a math program to ready high school students for college level math, helping them to avoid remedial college courses. Dianne has been involved with the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP), the national GEAR UP advocacy organization, and in 2021 was awarded their Professional of the Year award to recognize the tremendous contributions she has made to helping students succeed. In addition, Dianne has helped others advance college access in Vermont as well. One of her GEAR UP colleagues recently said “Dianne just wants everyone to succeed and doesn’t care about taking credit herself.”

Congratulations, Dianne!
Tony Blueter | Director | VTSU-Johnson

Tony started his career with TRIO as a Learning Resource Coordinator with SSS at JSC in 1990. In 1995 he became the Associate Director of Upward Bound and remained in that position for 2 years when he became the Director in 1997. He remained in that position for 26 years and recently retired in 2023. During his tenure, he offered his students many wonderful experiences including the Classroom at Sea Program, the Maritime Lab, Coral Reef Restoration project, Odyssey of the Mind, Hyde Park to Harvard, and many more. We’re sure Tony would be glad to share more about these unique experiences if you ask! In 2015, he was awarded the Jack Anderson Distinguished Service Award. In addition to his TRIO experience, Tony also taught many college classes, including dual enrollment, but here is what he says about his experience working in TRIO: “I am truly grateful to have worked with so many outstanding Vermont Youth throughout my career in TRIO and to collaborate with exemplary, caring, and talented colleagues. My time in TRIO provided me endless opportunities to design and participate in so many wonderful educational programs designed to not only inspire our students to pursue post-secondary education, but equally provide them with new life experiences and skills to appreciate the value of lifelong learning. Best job ever!” Tony’s future includes retirement which is enjoying thoroughly, Florida! Sunshine and football!

Elizabeth King | Director of Student Services | CCV

Elizabeth is the Director of Student Services at CCV and has been teaching and working at CCV for 18 years. She has been TRIO Director for almost 5 years. She has served as VEOP Advocacy Chair and as Policy Seminar Team Leader for the state for 2 years. Before becoming Director, she served as the Career Services Pathways Manager for 4 years where she initiated the development of and directed the implementation of CCV’s inaugural Career Services program at all 12 sites across Vermont. And before that, she served as Coordinator of Academic Services at CCV for 6 years. Elizabeth states, "As a low-income first-gen student, and TRIO SSS alumni, serving as TRIO director has been one of the most rewarding chapters in my nearly 35 years of working in the helping professions.” Post-retirement Elizabeth plans to take about 6mo off to relax, read books just for fun, spend time with her husband, 4 adult sons, 2 grand littles, and go to as many rock concerts as possible. After that, she’ll begin to explore her next chapter!
Dianne M. Griggs | Director | VT State GEAR UP

Dianne started her career in college access with a new Upward Bound program at what was then Lyndon State College. That experience solidified her interest in working with students who need additional support to achieve their educational goals. After taking some time to be a non-working mom, she decided it was time to get back to work and spent the first five years as an Outreach Counselor with the National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership program (NEISP), the precursor to GEAR UP, and the next 24 years with the Vermont GEAR UP grant starting at its inception in 1999.

She served in a variety of roles with GEAR UP including as an outreach counselor, supervisor, co-manager, and interim director before making it to the director’s seat in 2016. As director of the program, she said, “I had the pleasure of working with some of the most amazing people I’ve ever known. When I think about my retirement, it’s the team we’ve pulled together that I’ll miss the most. These 16 people are the heart and soul of GEAR UP, and an incredible group of individuals who believe in the GEAR UP mission and make me proud every day.”

GEAR UP is a unique grant offering many opportunities for students, families, and schools, and it’s been a pleasure being part of everything our population has access to and benefits from. She is still in touch with a few former students, and it warms her heart to know they are doing well in their chosen careers and life in general – even though it does make her feel old!

Dianne states: “I wouldn’t change a thing when it comes to my work at VSAC, and with GEAR UP in particular. However, I do look forward to passing the torch to someone new who can bring new energy and ideas to GEAR UP so I can get more rest! “

In her retirement she looks forward to spending more time with her grandchildren, visiting their son and his wife in Denver, spending time at Clearwater Lake in Maine to see what comes next!
Education access for all students has been the focus of my work at Massachusetts Education & Career Opportunities, Inc. (MassEdCO), for 27 plus years. I have been the Talent Search Director in the Worcester Public Schools for the past 14 years, and before that was an advisor at South High Community School. I was also the Director of the Collegiate Success Institute (CSI), an after-school college and career readiness program, and of On Our Way, a program for pregnant and parenting teen mothers.

I have a BA from Assumption University in Social and Rehabilitation Services, and an MS in Human Service Management from Worcester State University. I am blessed with my sons, Shaun and Mark, and their wonderful wives, Mairead and Samantha, and my greatest joy, 3-year-old Davin Moses. I wish all my NEOA friends and colleagues’ peace and joy as they continue this very important work.
2024 Annual Business Meeting

Location: Doubletree Hotel, Burlington VT | Room: Exhibition Hall
Date: April 11, 2024
Time: 8:30-9:30am

I. Call to order | Lindsay Carpenter
Action: Approval of agenda

II. Secretary’s Report | Julie Coon
Action: Approval of minutes - 2023 Business Meeting

III. Treasurer’s Report | Matt Bourgault
Action: Approval of Treasurer’s Report

IV. Finance Chair Report | Chris Lee
Action: Approval of Finance Report

V. President’s Report | Lindsay Carpenter
Action: Approval of President’s Report

VI. By-laws Committee | Brian Post
Action: Approval of updated by-laws

VII. President Elect Report | Yara Zoccarato
Item: Welcome/Goals for upcoming year

VIII. Past President’s Report | Rob Pote
Item 1: Current slate of nominees
Item 2: Nominations from the membership
Item 3: President Elect Candidate
Item 4: Secretary Candidate
Item 5: VP Candidate
Item 6: Treasure Candidate
Item 7: State Liaisons

IX. New business
Item: New business

X. Adjourn
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Congratulations Beth Fitzgerald!

on your retirement after many years of dedicated service to expanding college access to the UMass Boston TRIO Talent Search scholars!

Thank you for your guidance, contributions and outstanding leadership! You are simply the best! #WeGotYouMiss!

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Thank you President Lindsay, for your inspiring leadership!!

Thank you!

Good luck Pres-Elect Yara!!!
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VEOP extends a sincere THANK YOU to all the Educational Opportunity Professionals for their hard work, dedication, and commitment towards college access for all. VEOP particularly would like to welcome the new professionals and hope to see you at state and regional events in the future. Visit www.veop.org.

Congratulations NEOA President Lindsay Carpenter for a successful year. VEOP thanks you and the NEOA board for all the good work.

Thank you to NEOA Conference Co-Chairs, Julie Finnegan and Rachel Casey (and your committee) for a fantastic conference in Burlington, VT.

Finally, VEOP wants to give a huge shoutout to the VT team that went down to D.C. for Policy Seminar this year. Three amazing EOP alumni represented our programs and shared their stories with our legislators.
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- Creating Your College Bucket List: Explore, Experience, Succeed
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**PERSONAL MANAGEMENT**
- Eating Disorders: Types, Causes, Symptoms & Support
- Emotional Intelligence: The Other Key To Academic Success
- Financial Literacy: Smart Money Skills For College & Beyond
- How To Achieve Well-Being, Balance & Success
- How To Develop Your Cross-Cultural Skills
- How Your Personality Style May Impact Your Academic Success
- Improving Student-Faculty Relationships
- Mental Health & Suicide: Helping Yourself & Others
- Navigating The Financial Aid Process
- Overcoming Procrastination: Causes & Cures
- Stress Management Techniques
- Setting & Accomplishing Realistic Goals
- Sexual Violence Awareness & Prevention: A Title IX Training For Students
- Time Management: Strategies For Success

**READING & WRITING STRATEGIES**
- Developing A Strong Thesis Statement
- Drafting Introductions, Body Paragraphs & Conclusions
- Pre-Writing Techniques: Planning & Idea Development
- Reading Comprehension Strategies
- The Revision Process: How To Proofread & Edit Your Writing

**LEARNING TO LEARN**
- 10 Habits Of Mind For College Success
- Academic Integrity: The Do's and Don'ts
- Classroom Expectations & Behaviors
- Developing Critical Thinking Skills
- Exam Preparation Tips & Test-Taking Strategies
- Handling Failure In & Out Of The Classroom
- How To Reduce Test Anxiety
- How To Succeed In Math
- How To Overcome Math Anxiety
- How To Work In Groups: Creating A Productive & Positive Learning Experience
- Information Literacy: How To Master College Research
- Learning Strategies Every Student Should Know
- Preparing For Final Exams
- Study Tips & Note-Taking Strategies
- The Difference Between High School & College
- Understanding & Avoiding Plagiarism

**ONLINE LEARNING**
- 10 Tips For Success In Your Online Course
- Effectively Communicating Online
- Online Courses: Staying Motivated & Disciplined
- Taking Tests Online: Strategies For Success

**SUCCESS STRATEGIES**
- Discover Your Learning Style Preferences
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• Training, Assessment, and Group Process around Leadership Styles, Communication Skills, Conflict Management and many other topics selected 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.)

• Total Tuition of $750 to supplement cost of all programming and materials, lodging and meals for retreats. Transportation and attendance at NEOA conference provided by participants and/or their programs.

“I am 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.” – Craig Werth, Director since 2014
$15,000 BEST SCHOLARSHIP
Bringing Education and Success Together
Giving back to the TRIO community since 1992.
Available to all TRIO Staff and Students.
Visit our website for more details on how to apply for the BEST Scholarship.
www.comphansol.com/scholarship

BOT Makes Your Job Easy
SERVING TRIO FOR 30 YEARS

BOT FORMS
Convert all your physical forms (application, survey etc.) into online BOT forms for prospective & existing students. Capture digital signatures; enable adding of new students with collected data. Request for multi-lingual forms.

APR & PE POINTS
Use multiple error-checking tools for accurate and stress-free APR submission. PE Points can analyze your grant objectives at any time.

TWO-WAY BULK SMS
Send Bulk SMS & receive replies from students back in BOT. BOT allows to track delivery status of all sent messages. Text messages are sent via anonymous numbers so your personal phone number stays personal.

STUDENT CHECK-IN KIOSK (BOLT)
Let your students scan/swipe their ID cards for Auto Check-in/Check-Out for appointments, workshops, field trips etc.

#1 DATABASE SOFTWARE FOR TRIO

Compansol
Computer Analysis & Solutions
www.comphansol.com blumen@comphansol.com Toll Free 1-800-597-8204
The University of Massachusetts Boston and its college access and success programs would like to thank the New England Educational Opportunity Association for 48 years of advocacy and support.

- TRIO McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
- TRIO Student Support Services
- TRIO Talent Search/Project REACH - Boston
- TRIO Talent Search - Lawrence
- TRIO Upward Bound
- TRIO Upward Bound Math-Science/Urban Scholars - Boston
- TRIO Upward Bound Math-Science - Lawrence
- Early College Program

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PRE-COLLEGIATE AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS PROGRAMS

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StudentAccess is the database solution to help track participant data and streamline the APR process

- Comprehensive Data Management
- Text Messaging
- Multiple Student Tool
- Online Participant Application
- Dynamic Report Generator
- Email Generator
- Data Set Editor
- Customizable Fields

**Online Applications**

*Over 137 thousand applications submitted*

Fully integrated into StudentAccess. Create and manage custom intake applications for your participants. Easily accessible both Online and Mobile for your students, and simplified data entry for you.

**Text Messaging**

*Over 5.5 million texts sent*

Send individual Text Messages to participants or send a group message with our Text Message Generator! Making it easier than ever to stay in touch with your participants. You can even record the text messages as a Contact in a participant’s file.

**APR Generator**

The APRG is a built-in utility that streamlines the APR process. Easily verify your included students, check for missing data, and review data validation. We make your reporting season easier!

Heiberg Consulting, Inc. | (800)-801-1232 | info@studentaccess.com | www.studentaccess.com
Feedback & Support

How did we do?

Scan this QR Code or Click this link.

Post-Conference Evaluation Link.

Please take 2 minutes to complete this post-conference evaluation survey. It helps us learn more about what made your experience great and how we can make it even better next year!
Silent Auction
QR Code

Winners will be listed during the Banquet
Save the Date!

2025 NEOA Conference
April 09th - April 11th, 2025
Crowne Plaza
Warwick, Rhode Island

See you next year!