

Welcome Message from the President

Dear NEOA Members,

It is with great enthusiasm and a great sense of responsibility that I welcome you to this year's NEOA journey! As your newly elected President, I am honored to serve alongside such a passionate and dedicated community of professionals committed to advancing educational opportunity and access for underrepresented students.

A Little About My Background:

My journey to this point is deeply rooted in my personal experience. As a TRIO Upward Bound alumna and first-generation college student from Irapua, Brazil, I understand firsthand the transformative power of education. While my parents did not have the opportunity to finish high school, they instilled in me the belief that education can change lives. This belief has driven my journey as a student and my professional passion for ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have support and opportunities they need to succeed.

I graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2014 with a Bachelors' degree in Political Science and Latin American Studies. After college, I worked in the insurance business for a bit. While I learned a lot from my business experience, my desire to work with students encouraged me to pursue a Masters in Educational Psychology at Western CT State University (WCSU). While pursuing my Master's, I accepted an offer to work at WCSU's Pre-Collegiate and Access Programs Department – the same department that took me in years before as a TRIO Upward Bound student. My experiences as a TRIO alumna continue to impact my day-to-day interactions with the students I work with today!

How My Involvement with NEOA Began:

My journey with NEOA began in 2021 when I served the board as the CT State Liaison. In that role, I learned more about the history of CTs Association of Educational Opportunities Programs (CAEOP) and advocated for TRIO programs at Capitol Hill during Policy Seminar in March. I then served as CAEOP's President Elect in 2022 and continued my role as CT State Liaison for a second year. In 2023, I had the pleasure of serving as CAEOP's president and representing the state of CT on the NEOA board. I also had the honor to attend COE's Executive Leadership Institute in October at John Hopkins University where I met educational leaders from around the United States.

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Welcome Message from the President Continued

Becoming involved with CAEOP and NEOA has fostered many networking and leadership opportunities I had never imagined for myself. I am grateful for the mentors I have met along the way and for the colleagues I know I have yet to meet. While my history on the NEOA board has merely started, I am excited to share this journey and experience with you all.

My Hopes for NEOA This Year!

This year, I am excited to continue the work of my predecessors, and thank our former President, Lindsay Carpenter, and former Past-President, Rob Pote for their leadership and mentorship. Their guidance have been instrumental and I am committed to carrying forward their vision for NEOA. I am also thankful for the support of our NEOA Board Members, whose dedication and hard work ensure that we can continue to make meaningful impact in servicing our membership.

As we move forward, I am eager to learn from NEOA's rich history to help shape our present and impact our future. Understanding the successes and challenges of the past will guide us in making decisions that will strengthen our association. I am committed to sharing this knowledge with our membership along the way, ensuring that we all benefit from the wisdoms gained over the years.

I want to emphasize that your engagement as members is crucial to our collective success. NEOA thrives because of the active participation, ideas, and passion of its membership. Your involvement – whether it's attending our events, joining a committee, or simply sharing your thoughts and ideas- makes a significant impact on the direction and effectiveness of our association! Membership is not just about the benefits you receive; it's about the powerful difference we can make together!

As we embark on this new year, I am eager to showcase the work of NEOA and to better support our states, TRIO, GEARUP, and EOP programs in their mission and goals. Our New England region is rich with diversity, drive, and dedication, and I am committed to highlighting the extraordinary efforts of our region in servicing first generation, low-income, and students with disabilities. Be sure to follow our NEOA Instagram @neoa24_.

Let's continue to work together, support one another, and amplify the voices and needs of the students we serve! Your membership and engagement are the heart of NEOA's mission, and I look forward to what we will accomplish together in the coming year!

Yara Zoccarato



Upcoming Events

October 24 - NH State Conference in Concord, NH

November 14 - 15 - NEOA Board Meeting in Newton, MA

January 9 - 10 - NEOA Board Meeting in Nashua, NH

February 20 - 21 - TRIO Day in Nashua, NH

March 16 - 19 - COE Policy Seminar in Washington, DC

April 9 - 11 - NEOA Annual Conference in Warwick, RI

June 5 - 6 - NEOA Board Meeting in Southbury, CT

All NEOA members are welcome to attend board meetings! Virtual is always an option.

Please contact Yara at zoccaratoy@wcsu.edu.

First Generation College Celebration Day

November 8, 2024



As we all know, navigating college as a first-gen student is a HUGE deal! Lets show the nation how our NEOA region celebrate the accomplishments of our First- gen TRIO students, faculty, staff, and alumni!

Please feel free to email your celebration pictures to Rachel at caey@vsac.org to showcase them in our next newsletter!

Visit COE's [First Generation College Celebration](#) webpage for ideas on how to celebrate!

Upcoming Events

A poster for a First-Gen Day ZoomTable event. It features a grid background with illustrations of school supplies like pens, pencils, and a graduation cap. The text is centered and uses a mix of red, green, and black colors.

**Wondering what to do on
First-Gen Day?**

*Join NEOA State Leaders to hear about successful
past events and brainstorm ideas for November 8!*

**First-Gen Day ZoomTable
Wednesday, October 9
2:00-3:00**

Come and share your ideas, big and little!

**Link is in the email.
Contact Lynn Ploof-Davis
lynnp@maine.edu.**

New England
NEOA
Educational Opportunity Association
www.neonline.org

Start
thinking of
your
nominations
for NEOA
2025
Achiever
Award!

A circular poster for NEOA Achiever Award Nominations. It has a blue circle on a dark olive green background. The text is in white and yellow. A horizontal line with end caps is positioned above the application information.

SAVE THE DATE!

**2025
NEOA ACHIEVER AWARD
NOMINATIONS**

Help us recognize and celebrate successful
TRIO & GEAR UP Alumni throughout New
England's Educational Opportunity Programs!

**APPLICATIONS OPEN
DECEMBER 1ST, 2024**

QUESTIONS? CONTACT:
ADAM AT ADAM.KEESE@KEENE.EDU
RACHEL AT CASEY@VSAC.ORG

Who's on the NEOA Board this year?

Yara Zoccarato
President

Josh Gagnon
President, NH

Lynn Ploof - Davis
Chair, Professional Development Committee

Lindsay Carpenter
Past - President

Melissa Goyait - Heikkinen
State Liaison, NH

Casey Henderson
Chair, Technology Committee

Arielle Derival-Jospeh
President Elect

Milary Tavarez
President, RI

Ramon Gonzalez
Chair, Corporate Development Committee

Heather Bacchiocchi
Vice President
Annual Conference Chair

Stephanie Cruz
State Liaison, RI

Linda Shiller Cormany
Co - Chair, Public Relations

Julie Coon
Secretary

Dylan Bertolini
President, VT

Bryan Landgren
Co - Chair, Public Relations

Matt Bourgault
Treasurer

Chris Lee
Chair, Finance Committee

Rachel Casey
Co - Chair, Achievers Committee

Jessica Coronel
President, CT

Sarah Morrell
Chair, Advocacy Committee

Adam Keese
Co - Chair, Achievers Committee

Fiorela Hidalgo
State Liaison, CT

Taryn Tomkins
Chair, Membership &
Credentials Committee

Randy Schroeder
Chair, Alumni Committee

Michelle Richards
President, ME

Rachelle Lappinen
Co-Chair, Membership &
Credentials Committee

Rick Williams
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

Ginny Ward
State Liaison, ME

Mona Savastano
Chair, Diversity Committee

Brian Post
Chair, NEOA Bylaws Committee

Kevin Linton
President, MA

Becky Carrasquillo
Co - Chair, TRIO Day

Gaelyn Hastings
Co-Chair, Retirees Committee

Naomi Brown - Jones
State Liaison, MA

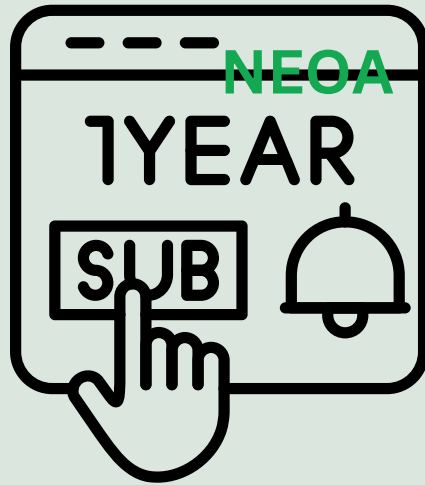
Heidi Dyer
Co - Chair, TRIO Day

Reggie Jean
Board Historian

Please visit the [NEOA website](#) for Board of Director's contacts.

Membership

NEOA Members: It's time to renew your membership!
Invite a friend to renew or join!



Take pride and pleasure of supporting your Regional Association, an Association that is recognized nationally for its long history of leadership and commitment to the TRIO ideals.

Click [Here](#) to renew/join!

Reminders when renewing:

Professional membership: is generally for self-pay – if you leave your institution, you take the membership with you.

Institutional membership is generally paid for by your employer, and if you leave in the membership year, your replacement will receive the membership.

Membership Cost: \$70/membership year (September 1st – August 31st)

State News

New Hampshire

1. We're excited to be hosting our annual conference on Thursday, October 24th at the Granite Edvance offices in Concord, NH. For more information, or to register to join us, click [here](#)!
2. The Plymouth State University TRIO Program welcomed its largest group of TRIO Scholars ever for Connection Days, their summer bridge program. PSU's Domenica Medaglia-Brown was given the prestigious Patricia Storer Award for their outstanding dedication to service. Congratulations, Dom!
3. The St. Anselm TRIO SSS program just wrapped up year two of their grant and have successfully submitted our grant proposal for another 5 years (fingers crossed). As you can imagine with a brand new grant, we are working hard for TRIO to become part of the everyday vernacular here at Saint As. We have integrated our program into the college's tutoring center, career services, and intercultural center allowing us to have a broader outreach.
4. Our friends at Breakthrough Manchester survived the hot and humid weather - but it certainly cooperated with their rainforest theme of "Branching Out" for their 33rd summer! Their 88 middle school students and 24 Teaching Fellows were excited to teach, learn, and embrace new experiences together. Experience the spirit of Breakthrough as captured in our summer video! <https://vimeo.com/995081044>!
5. The NH ETS Program has a number of exciting updates:
 - a. They are thrilled to announce the hiring of Becky Carrasquillo as our new Western Region ETS advisor. Becky brings a wealth of experience from her years with the Upward Bound program, and we are excited to welcome her to our team.
 - b. After a successful pilot last year, we are also excited to host our "ETS Launch Into College" event for the second time. The event is an intensive day-long preparatory experience for juniors, designed to be a kind of mini Upward Bound summer program. The event includes a college fair, SAT prep, college essay writing workshop, a career and majors expo, and much more!
6. Lastly, the UNH Upward Bound program tried a new model for their Summer Academy this summer featuring a 2-week Senior Experience followed by the traditional 4-week Summer Academy! With this model, Seniors were able to have senior focused workshops & activities as well college trips & leadership retreats that saw them take on more leadership roles during the Summer Academy with underclassmen!

State News

Massachusetts

Suffolk University Celebrates First-Generation College Students with a Decades Dance!



To wrap up First-Generation College Student Celebration Week, Suffolk University's Center for First-Generation & Educational Equity is hosting a lively Decades Dance! The event will be held in full TRIO spirit, with a vibrant red, black, and white color theme to represent TRIO's legacy. Guests will enjoy music from across the decades, while learning key facts about the TRIO programs and the Higher Education Act's lasting impact on student success. The celebration will highlight both the past and the future, honoring the history of first-generation students in higher education.

40th Annual MEOA Conference was a success!

What an unforgettable time we had at MEOA's 40th Annual Conference!

With over 100+ attendees in the heart of the state, Worcester, MA, the energy was absolutely electric! We packed the event with amazing workshops, incredible networking opportunities, and some seriously fun moments (shoutout to FreePlay Arcade for making the hospitality suite the place to be!). Our Mocktail Bubble Bar (MYOM, rightfully named) was a huge hit!



Prestigious COE Awards Presented to Two Leaders in our Region

TRIO Alum from SUNY Plattsburgh Receives COE Achievers Award

Michael Cashman, SSS Plattsburgh alum received one of the COE TRIO Achievers award this year at the COE Annual Conference in NYC earlier this month. Cashman who is known as “a trailblazing leader, dedicated public servant and a passionate advocate for first gen college students, kicked off the evenings awards at the event. As a student of the SSS program, at Plattsburg, he fully embraced the opportunities that were offered and benefitted from his mentoring relationship with Michele Carpenter, SSS Director at the time. Michael founded a new chapter of Alpha Phi Omega, a national fraternity dedicated to community service and became the president of the SUNY Plattsburgh Student Association. Today, he is serving in his 3rd term as Town Supervisor, representing over 12,000 residents and an \$18 million annual budget. His resume is quite impressive ranging from being appointed by the Governor to serve on the SUNY Plattsburgh University Council and the NYS Commission on National and Community services. Brian Post and Julie Coons were on hand to represent SUNY Plattsburgh at the event. Congrats Michael.



Prestigious COE Awards Presented to Two Leaders in our Region

Randy Shroeder receives the Walter O. Mason Award

NEOA's Board Member, Randy Schroeder received the most esteemed national award from COE, the Walter O. Mason Award at the annual COE Conference.

“The Walter O. Mason award stands as the pinnacle of recognition bestowed by COE celebrating extraordinary individuals who have made indelible contributions to the realm of college opportunity programs and the relentless pursuit of educational equity for low-income, 1st gen students and those with disabilities”.

Walter O. Mason, Jr, was a visionary luminary credited as one of the architects of the TRIO programs. The award “symbolizes not just exceptional service but the embodiment of transformative leadership in the ongoing quest for educational excellence and equal opportunity.”

Click [Here](#) to see Randy receiving the award.



Professional Development Update

Participants have been selected to attend the Arnold Mitchem Leadership Institute!

The selection of the 2024-2025 Arnold Mitchem Leadership Institute participants is complete and this is one of the biggest AMLI classes in the history of the Institute! There will be 15 NEOA professionals participating in three sessions that will focus on training, assessment, group process around leadership styles, communication skills, conflict management and many other topics selected by participants. We are happy to see some current board members attending!

Congratulations to:

Alicia Johnson, MIT Wellseley UB
 Brittany Green, VT State-Castleton McNair Scholars
 Chris Lee, St. Anselm TRIO Scholars
 Christa Grohoski, Central ME Community College SSS
 Christine Zaimes, UNH TRIO Scholars
 Daniel Cliché, VT State-Lyndon UB
 Debbie Warnock, VT State-Castleton McNair Scholars
 Erin Nason, Central ME Community College SSS
 Fiorela Hidalgo, U Conn CAPS SSS
 Heather Bacchiocchi, Community College of RI SSS
 Jordan Romine, Wesleyan UBMS
 Kailah Easton, SUNY Plattsburgh UB
 Pam Billings, VT State-Johnson SSS
 Rory Carrara, Clark Bruce Wells Scholars UB
 Zoleikha Medbough, Clark Bruce Wells Scholars UB

In other PD news:

- The Professional Development committee will accept applications year-round for the Jerry Ellis Professional Development Fund. The application and more information is available on the NEOA webpage (neaonline.org).
- Interested in serving on the PD committee? The committee attempts to meet monthly for an hour to plan professional development activities and to brainstorm ideas for future events and opportunities. Please contact Lynn Ploof-Davis (lynnp@maine.edu) if you're interested or would like more information. The next meeting is October 1 at 1:00 pm.
- Do you have ideas about professional development for the association? Is there something you'd like to learn? We're open to all ideas! Contact Lynn Ploof-Davis or stay tuned for the annual PD Questionnaire coming your way soon.

New England Student Leadership Conference 2024

Local TRIO Upward Bound & GEAR UP Students attend 2024 NESLC!

47 students from across New England represented the federal TRIO and GEAR UP Educational Opportunity programs at the 40th New England Student Leadership Conference this past weekend. The three day conference was held at the Hulbert Outdoor Center in Fairlee, VT. The student leaders were chosen to represent their programs and participated in a ropes course, a leadership development workshop and the Eclipse challenge, an exercise in prioritizing the national budget. The emphasis of the weekend was personal goal setting and identifying and building the leadership skills needed to bring back to their schools and communities as they prepare for postsecondary education. Twenty young professionals joined the conference and spoke about their path through higher education

Arielle Derival was the Keynote speaker and spoke passionately about leadership, mentoring, and her path from being an Upward Bound student to becoming the Director of the Boston University GEAR UP program at the Wheelock College of Education & Human Development. Ms. Derival believes in making sure students are well equipped with the tools and resources necessary to succeed throughout their secondary and postsecondary educational careers. By exposing students to positive youth-adult relationships, social and emotional learning, responsible decision making skills, mentorship, and career exploration opportunities, she works to increase the number of students who go on to pursue postsecondary education and successfully graduate.



NEOA Board Picture



2024 - 2025 board members who attended the September Board Meeting in person. At least 10 people attended by ZOOM. You can attend too! Contact our President Yara, zoccaratoy@wcsu.edu

Next Board Meeting November 14 - 15 in Newton, MA!