

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Welcome Message from PD Chair, Lynn

Greetings NEOA!

We're pleased to present this PD Newsletter, the first of its kind. Many thanks go to Linda Shiller-Cormany and Rachel Casey who took a great idea and brought it to you, the membership! Appreciation also goes to the rest of the mighty PD Committee: Brian Post, Rick Williams, Monique Coulson, Mona Savastano, Lynn Ploof-Davis. Are you wondering how you can help?

TRIO's strength comes from networking and learning from each other. One of the benefits of an NEOA membership is access to quality professional development throughout the year. Won't you join us? The PD Committee invites you to join the fun! Meetings are held approximately once each month, contact any member of the committee if you'd like to be included.

The Professional Development Survey went out this fall. If you haven't had a chance to complete it, [here's a link](#). The committee really wants to know what you'd like to learn! We would appreciate any ideas you have for ZoomTables or larger remote or in-person events. Better yet, let us know if you have an interest in organizing and leading a professional development activity. The committee can provide administrative support.

PD activities are announced via the NEOA listserv and on social media. Keep an eye out for PD activities that are now in the planning stages! Thanks for your energy and support.

-Lynn Ploof-Davis

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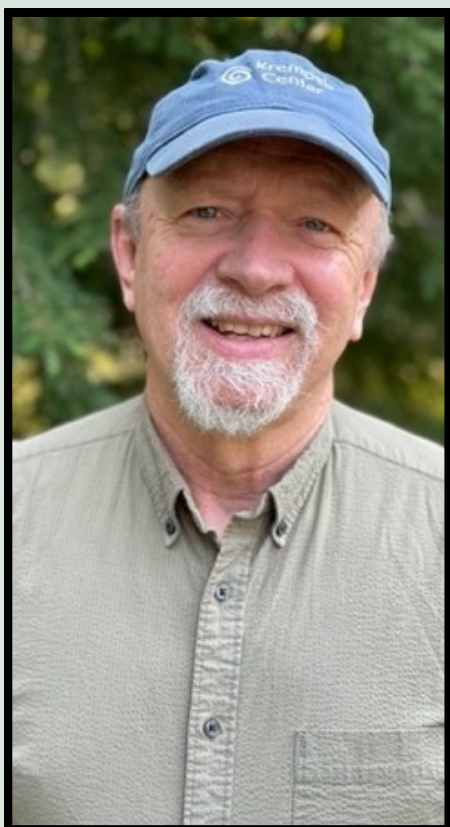
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Arnold Mitchem Leadership Institute 2024 - 2025

WHAT IS IT AND IS IT FOR YOU?

FROM AMLI DIRECTOR, CRAIG WERTH



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

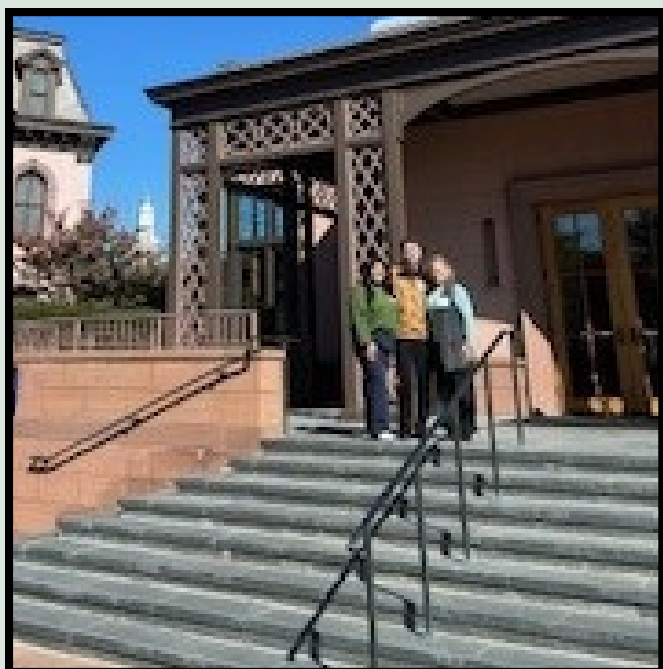
Who Is It For? The Institute accepts up to fourteen EOP professionals with varied levels of experience for a year-long exploration of leadership styles and practice, working with experts from both within and outside the TRiO/GEAR UP/EOP community. Participants will engage in a variety of experiences,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

AMLI Testimonies

I was privileged to attend the AMLI Institute during the very unique and challenging year of 2020-2021. Although our group's experience may have been slightly different than that of many because we had to be remote, we quickly became a committed and close-knit group of professionals. Craig was, and is, a remarkable leader and he masterfully challenged all of us to learn, grow and dig deep to become the very best leaders that we could be.

I became the Director of my SSS program in 2022. Would this have happened if I had not attended AMLI? Maybe. But what I can say for sure is that it was my AMLI companions who helped me make that decision when I did, and to help me navigate that path in what was a highly challenging time in general. AMLI gave me that little extra dose of confidence that was needed and being in the company of so many others committed to a similar purpose also gave me that extra portion of desire to continue to want to reach ever higher in order to make a difference in the lives of others.

A few weeks ago, I was granted another leadership opportunity as I attended the Executive Leadership Institute at Yale University as I now serve as the President Elect of VEOP. I was thrilled to be able to share the experience with one of my AMLI family, Kevin Linton, who serves as the President of MEOA. Look Craig we are still reaching!



-Michele Feiner
SSS Director at VTSU Johnson



Pictured is Milary, Kevin, and Michele at ELI.

AMLI Testimonies

I participated in AMLI in 2000-2001 – before it was named after Dr Mitchem. I was a year into my role and had been promoted quickly with Director changes. I was hired in August of 1999 as the program counselor. The Director at the time was super supportive of me being part of everything so was happy to support me in applying for the LI. He moved on in December of 2000. While in LI, I was the interim director and then Assistant Director as I hadn't started my master's yet. LI helped me process stressful situations, transitions and intentionally work on my communication and leadership skills. It was really ideal timing for my participation in such a special learning experience and those that I went through this experience with became trusted friends.

The learning experience was unique, as it is intense during the 3 day, 2 night retreat style set up and has a variety of professionals participating to learn from and share with. A participant can leave with growth and come back months later for another intense and deep dive learning experience until the AMLI grad in April. Participants range from professionals with decades of experience to those that are newer (1-3 years) in the professional and college access/success world.

-Gaelyn Hastings

Director, YOU Inc. College Access Programs

I did the AMLI back before it was called that. I had the late Jerry Ellis as my coach. I was young, it was 2005-2006. For me, the AMLI is more than just a PD opportunity. It was a way to open up to a group of like-minded professionals about the ups and downs of TRIO and sometimes your own personal life.

If it weren't for the AMLI I don't think I would have stayed in TRIO. I was a Director for the GU program in Worcester at the time. It helped me to see that you can get involved with NEOA (I was just MEOA at the time) and that we are way more than just our small circle in the region. Jerry did a good job of personalizing the experience for AMLI. He asked each of us what we would like to get out of it and was able to get many of the topics and speakers that everyone asked for. As an older professional, would I do it again, yes I would....Perspectives change over time as your experiences change. After AMLI I went on to be the MEOA Membership Chair, MEOA President, NEOA Membership Chair, NEOA Vice President, NEOA President and currently the NEOA Development Chair and I have my eye on the MEOA State Liaison position for the spring. Aside from the PD opportunities something like this brings, it also opens you up to have colleagues in other states, which in turn could open up for a change in positions. I went from GU Worcester to MWCC as Talent Search Director, now I am the Senior Director of College Access overseeing our 2 Talent Searches, a UBMS and our GU program.

-Ramon Gonzalez

Senior Director of College Access

AMLI Testimonies

The training I received from the Arnold L. Mitchem Leadership Institute (AMLI) came at the perfect time for me, during the 2019-2020 scholarship year when I was elected to the MEOA. It played a key role in helping me succeed in that position. The following year, I stepped up to serve as the chair of External Relations for MEOA, planning a state advocacy day, which later transitioned to a virtual event due to COVID.

Since then, the skills I gained from AMLI have shaped my career. In 2021, I was promoted to coordinator of GEAR UP Worcester and co-teacher of an IT pilot program, placing students in internships. We've successfully run this program for three years and even presented it at a national conference in Washington DC! Recently, I've been asked to co-chair the membership committee for NEOA. The leadership roles I've taken on over the last four years are directly tied to the confidence and skills I gained through AMLI training.

-Rachelle Lapin

Gear UP IT Internship Coordinator



2019 - 2020 AMLI Cohort

AMLI Testimonies

I had the privilege to attend AMLI in 2012-2013. Our cohort consisted of 8 women which made for a unique and intimate experience. When I signed up for AMLI, I had only been working for TRIO for 5 years and still struggled to see myself as a leader. I saw AMLI as an opportunity to improve my leadership skills and hopefully boost my confidence. AMLI did not disappoint! AMLI provided a safe, supportive space to be vulnerable and look inward to develop meaningful leadership skills and gain confidence.

My participation in AMLI led to my first role with the Maine Educational Opportunity Association (MEEOA). The President at the time reached out to me personally to say that the board took note of my participation in AMLI and believed in my leadership abilities. They wanted to start an alumni committee for MEEOA. an alum a participated in AMLI, they wanted me to be the Alumni Committee Chair. I gladly took the role and remained in it for 6 years. Since, I have taken on multiple roles within MEEOA such as Chair for Public Relations, Advocacy Day, and now President.

Through AMLI, I developed a passion for leadership. Since, I have participated in MEEOA's Maine's Emerging Leaders Institute and COE's Executive Leadership Institute. I co-led a statewide leadership council for Upward Bound students in Maine. I earned a Master's degree in Leadership Studies and became a Coordinator for our program. I will be forever grateful for my experience with AMLI as it served as the catalyst for my leadership abilities and accomplishments.



-Michelle Richards
Upward Bound Coordinator
University of Maine



2012 - 2013 AMLI Cohort

Jerry Ellis Professional Development Scholarship

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE JEPD?

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

WHO IS IT FOR?

- NEOA members
- Members who have worked in a TRIO/EOP program for at least 6 months
- Those who can demonstrate need- why their program can't pay the cost

WHAT TYPES OF PD OPPORTUNITIES ARE CONSIDERED?

- The proposed training must relate to Educational Opportunity work, the participants they serve, and the work an applicant currently performs or plans to perform soon.
- The PD is offered by a legitimate/credible organization.

Please see the NEOA website for more details on the opportunities covered.

HOW MUCH WILL JEPD OFFER?

- Depending on how much the board allocates in a given year, the range is between \$500-\$1,500 per award.
- Will be considered on a rolling basis, depending on funds available.
- Should be requested at least two months before funds are needed.

For more information and the application, please go to the
[NEOA Website.](#)

Jerry Ellis Professional Development Recipient Experience

With support from the UMaine Farmington Upward Bound program and the Jerry Ellis Professional Development fund, this spring I was able to attend a session with the School of the Alternative (SotA) in Black Mountain, NC. SotA is a volunteer-run project modeled on the principles of the historic Black Mountain College (and held on the same campus!). Those principles hold that learning should be self-directed, accessible, and a lifelong practice. SotA holds two week-long sessions each spring and offers classes on topics as diverse as car repair, printmaking, improvised music, creative writing, and fundraising. The pedagogy is nonhierarchical: while each session features a set roster of classes, students are also invited to propose and teach their own classes, which the teachers are invited to attend as students. During morning work shifts, both students and teachers perform upkeep by doing meal prep, daily housekeeping, harvesting from the garden, and designing signage for the day's activities.

Attending SotA allowed me to experience alternative education firsthand. Though I've had many experiences as both a student and a teacher, this was my first time in an educational setting where those roles were flexible and where educational labor was balanced with the responsibility of space maintenance. I took classes in topics I knew (creative writing) and in topics I had no experience with (performance and experimental music). I got a taste of the overwhelming feeling that many Upward Bound students feel stepping onto campus for their summer programs, and as a result of that feeling, I also learned many strategies for welcoming people into a new space and fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment over one's education. SotA is welcome to anyone who seeks this form of alternative learning, but particularly people who have been marginalized within traditional educational institutions. I highly recommend the experience to those who are interested! www.schoolofthealternative.com

-Noelle Dubay





Annual Conference
April 9 - 11, 2025

MIRRORS & WINDOWS

Reflecting on Yesterday and Framing Tomorrow

The call for workshop proposals is now open! Share what you know! Your community wants to hear from you! Submit proposals that relate to this year's theme here: <https://forms.office.com/r/pggubdfNpa>

Deadline: January 31, 2025

For more information, email Stephanie Cruz at scruz@ccri.edu!

A Message from our Conference Chair

Professional development is essential for staying current, growing your skills, and finding new ways to better serve students. Personally, it's been a way to challenge myself continually and make meaningful connections.

Being this year's NEOA Vice President and Annual Conference Committee Chair has been an amazing experience so far. Chairing the conference committee has given me the chance to work with an incredible team of people. Along the way, I've learned so much about leadership, teamwork, and what it takes to pull off an event like this. It's been an opportunity to grow my skills while making an impact in a space that I care deeply about.

My experience last year, when I joined the Technology Committee, was just as rewarding. Being a part of a NEOA committee is a chance to really get involved, connect with other professionals, and help shape the direction of NEOA. You gain so much insight into the behind-the-scenes work that supports our association and the programs across our region. It's also a fantastic way to challenge yourself, learn new skills, and make lasting professional and personal connections.

If you've thought about getting more involved with NEOA, I really encourage you to jump in! One way to get started is by applying to present at the annual conference. Presenting is a great way to share your knowledge or showcase the amazing work happening in your program. It's also a chance to connect with others who share your passion for educational opportunity, spark meaningful conversations, and inspire new ideas.

Whether it's through presenting at the conference, joining a committee, or serving on the board, getting involved with NEOA is an incredible way to invest in your own professional development. These experiences help you grow your skills, expand your network, and make a real difference—not just for our association but for the students and programs we all work so hard to support. I hope you'll consider taking that next step in your journey!

-Heather Bacchiocchi

Advocacy Forum & Achiever Award Nominations

We are excited to invite you to an important Advocacy Forum that will focus on strengthening our collective efforts in advocating for TRIO programs and policies that support our students and communities. This forum will provide valuable insights and resources for engaging with legislators and advancing our advocacy work!

This forum is a great opportunity to learn about the tools and resources available to us, engage with our Advocacy Co-Chairs, and ask questions to deepen your understanding of how we can collectively support and advance the goals of TRIO programs.

Be sure to mark your calendars for Wednesday December 4th @ 10:00am!!!

Zoom link below and in your emails from Yara on the NEOA ListServ.

Meeting ID: 864 1894 9504

Passcode: 679757



New England Opportunity Association

NEOA: Advocacy Forum

Strengthening our Voice for Educational Opportunity

Join Us
December 4th, 2024
10:00 am - 11:00 am

Link is in e-mail

Featuring Advocacy Co-Chairs:
Sarah Morrell & Lindsay Carpenter

Please contact NEOA President, Yara Zoccarato, for questions
zoccaratoy@wcsu.edu
(Yara Zoccarato)

<https://www.neoaonline.org/>



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

Nominations for NEOA 2025
Achiever Award are open!

Important Dates

Board Meetings:

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 in person or through Zoom! Please contact Yara at zoccaratoy@wcsu.edu.

Coming in January 2025

Half-Day Virtual
Mini-Retreat:

**Recharging
Ourselves Post-
Inauguration**



Membership & Thank You!

Thank you to those who have renewed their membership!

Don't have one yet? No problem!

Join or renew today: https://www.neoaonline.org/m_main.php

The membership year began Sept 1, so don't delay!

Stay tuned for our next Newsletter after the 1st of the year. Have something to share? We're happy to help! Want to submit information? A Success Story? An upcoming event? Share a staff or program accomplishment? Recap an event? Send it on! Please email Linda Shiller-Cormany shilcorm88@gmail.com

While you are at it, be sure to tag @NEOA24_ on Social Media for a feature on our pages! We love to showcase the amazing work you are doing.

And.... a word of thanks to all of you - our NEOA membership, the board, and leadership for the hard work you do every day to promote college access and success and keep our programs and state organizations healthy and vibrant! Thanks for all you do. We have a lot to be grateful for!

Best Wishes This Season.

Until 2025,

**The NEOA Professional
Development and Public
Relations Committees**

