

## NEOA Board Pre-Training Survey Answers without Identifiers

“Dear New England Educational Opportunity Association Board Members,

We are looking forward to the opportunity to be in community, to hold space and present some training materials related to the topic of JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion with your NEOA Board.

We have created a brief survey to get your individual insights to better understand the strengths and needs of the NEOA Board from each of your perspectives. We will use this information to aid us in designing our trainings.

Please respond to as many of these questions as you feel comfortable answering. All responses will be kept confidential – Anastasia and Angélica, your co-facilitators, will be the only ones to see them, though we will report anonymous themes we notice during our time together.

We estimate that this will take approximately 20 - 30 minutes to fill out.

Thank you for your participation, openness and vulnerability; we appreciate your time and look forward to meeting you soon!

Sincerely,

Anastasia Morton, B.A. and Angélica Castro, M.A., PCC”

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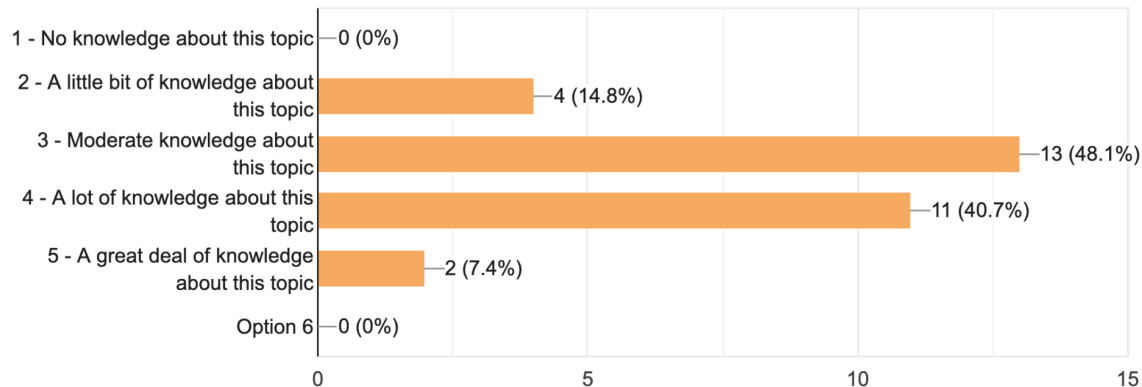
We stated to the NEOA Board that “all responses will be kept confidential...though we will report anonymous themes we notice during our time together.” Because of that, we have left the answers to the following questions out of this report because they contain personal identifiers:

1. What is your professional role, institution, and length of service with the NEOA Board?
2. What are your social identities (i.e. race, class, gender, religion, ability, sexuality, age, etc.) that impact the work you do and that you feel comfortable sharing in this survey?
3. When were you first introduced to the concept of social identities (i.e., race, class, gender, religion, ability, sexuality, age, etc.) and at what point did you become aware and recognize its significance?
4. Please describe a specific incident involving race, class, gender, religion, ability, sexuality, age, etc. that significantly impacted your understanding of the importance of these concepts?
5. What does JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion mean to you and what have been the major sources of your learning about these topics and concepts (i.e., lived experiences, undergraduate or graduate work, books, a particular podcast or host, movie or documentary, etc.)?

We have included “Selected Pre-Training Survey Answers without Identifiers” below:

5) How would you rate your knowledge about JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (as you understand it) from 1-5? (1- being no knowledge and 5- being a great deal)

27 responses



What do you see as the NEOA Board's greatest strengths when it comes to JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?

1. The work of the board benefits the members of the board, who are working with our students on all of these topics in their day to day work. The more we can learn and offer to NEOA members, the greater the work will be around New England.
2. Gender diversity
3. The willingness to learn something that may make those who were not born into a society that is willing to talk about these topics.
4. Openness to learn
5. Being aware that there is a need for it.
6. We have recently started focusing more efforts on JEDI issues with our members and with events that we sponsor, and we have established a DEI committee on our board to address JEDI topics and issues in our organization. We have board members and association members who are knowledgeable about JEDI issues and can help us with our efforts.
7. Caring, willing to work, and open to learning
8. The current board seems to be really energized and committed to working on improving our knowledge and actions around JEDI. This is the first year the DEI committee is actually a functioning committee and the current president is really focused on the goal of making DEI/JEDI a priority.

9. Our openness to learning and growing. The missions of our TRIO work.
10. That everyone is on board with wanting to do this work!
11. The work of TRIO programs are inherently equity-based, so having some understanding of at least the identities of students who are in our programs (first-gen, low income, have disabilities)
12. Knowing that we need to do better, learn more, and continue to grow
13. I feel NEOA is diverse in some aspects. We have people on the board from different generations, different sexual orientations, different nationalities, and different cultures. I believe we need more representation of color and even of TRIO programs - I believe we do not have a lot of representation from EOC programs. I think it is important to acknowledge the diversity we do have, while understanding areas we need to diversify.
14. It is also important to understand that MY experience is not my colleague's experience. My definition of diversity may be different than someone else's.
15. I want for us to be able to have conversations about diversity and the work we need to do without members feeling defensive or offended. And in a situation where someone says something that may offend someone, how can we learn to communicate our feelings and opinions in a productive and respectful manner for us to continue to work together for the good of our association and students?
16. If I am approached by a member who shares that another member made them feel uncomfortable or said something offensive, how do I best address the situation?
17. I also think it is important for individuals to understand that when we communicate our feelings or concerns with another person, a lot of times we may not change the other person's point of view. Sometimes we simply need to express ourselves to express ourselves, not to change someone's opinion (change does not happen overnight). But even if I am the other person listening to someone's experience, it is important for me to also acknowledge that even if my opinion is unchanged, that does not discredit the other person's feelings and experience.
18. I believe we share a common desire to deepen our understanding of JEDI. We are respectful, listen, and are definitely liberal and progressive leaning. We mostly agree on the big picture I think. I also think that most of us work with very diverse populations and can learn from each other.
19. I think there is a genuine desire to be more inclusive and to incorporate more JEDI practices on the Board to make the association more inclusive. Good intentions. Some

folks are more skilled and further along in their understanding of what that means than others, but I feel like most everyone wants to get better.

20. Folks on the NEOA board tend to be open to learning and listening to others. I think we want to take action on JEDI issues within our own structures
21. We all care so much about our students as individuals and want to understand them the best we can
22. Openness and willingness to ask questions and learn more.
23. To put it simply, the work that we do is rooted in JEDI. The programs that we all work for were some of the first programs that addressed these topics in education and higher education. So the work that we do on a daily basis originates from JEDI principles.
24. We work hard to keep it front and center when making decisions. We have a dedicated committee.
25. Openness to learning more.
26. We all come from different backgrounds and those can help us learn from each other to become more aware of ourself and the ones around us.
27. I think we try to have representation of all social identities on the NEOA board. We have a DEI committee and we have conversations around how we can do better with JEDI.
28. We want to be better.
29. Reflection, ability to listen to different perspectives, willingness to do the work.
30. Our willingness to acknowledge our shortcomings about JEDI, and educating ourselves and taking action at correcting our shortcomings.

What challenges do you face regarding JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in NEOA?

What are the most common challenges that arise among other board members?

What are the most common challenges that arise with the communities you serve?

1. My greatest challenge is to continue to learn and challenge myself to some of the preconceived notions I learned from an early age. Everyone has their own biases. It's uncomfortable to think that you do, but it can't be changed until it's acknowledged.
2. I feel that NEOA is split between the "old guard" - professionals that have been doing this work forever, and the "new guard" - newer professionals. To me, there is a clear divide between the old and the new. Older members are stuck in their ways, not giving newer members time to learn, grow, and spread their wings. When JEDI topics are brought up, people get too defensive about steps and actions they have taken in the

past, and not about the issues currently at hand. I believe people with different identities might not feel comfortable on the board because it is made up of a lot of white, heteronormative people. Not to say they all are, but as an outsider looking in, it can seem that way.

3. Our board does not represent our membership to its fullest potential.
4. Microaggressions
5. The most common is that we are not a diverse board. yes in age in region but not in race.
6. Working with different generations and our states are different from each other.
7. I am not quite sure. I think our membership is fairly diverse, but our board of directors may not be as diverse as it could be. Some of our communities we serve are more diverse than others.
8. Representation, sometimes thinking we know best and needing more time to be good listeners, mental health
9. It is really important to recognize that the board has 2 roles when it comes to JEDI work.
  1. We need to educate ourselves as a board and make sure we are all on the same page in our understanding and behaviors- as a board. 2. We need to present/prove a unified and clear message to the membership and walk the talk. What are we providing for membership around JEDI? How do we prove to membership that we are sincere and making JEDI a priority in terms of our own actions and what we offer to membership?
10. I can say that historically, there has been an ongoing issue around diversity and board representation. You will see the disparity. While we invite ALL to join the board, learn about the board, join a committee, attend meetings, very few BIPOC and others who are not WHITE, straight, etc. tend to step forward. So, the board is not successful in welcoming all who want to serve- yet we currently don't know what we can do to prove our sincerity and interest in welcoming all. We have to work harder at this but need help understanding how.
11. In the past, the southern part of NE, which had and still has a lot more diversity geographically, seemed to separate themselves from the northern part ( NH, VT, Maine, all of which used to be predominately white.) This caused some friction when board leadership mainly came from these states, and were often white. I'm not sure if this is still an issue but it may be worth asking others.
12. That our Board does not seem to be attracting diverse members. I also see a shift in how younger Black professionals (say 35 or younger) are less interested in collaboration and

more 'activist' in their approach. In general I feel big pressure to not say the 'wrong thing' even though I try extremely hard to be aware of language, non-verbal cues, etc. and ask questions of my Black Mentors who can help guide me.

13. Challenges in NEOA as a whole - no JEDI mission statement, what everyone does for JEDI work is sectorized, but nothing (or very little) across-the-board that all membership does or has access to - partly due to geographic constraints, different program areas, not enough time (many programs already are understaffed, no time to do prof dev)
14. Challenges in the board - identities of the membership are not represented on the board, it's not well known what the board does for JEDI work, balancing the need for this work to happen ASAP with knowing that work takes time
15. Challenges in communities served - fear of making mistakes, lack of time, feeling resigned (having tried so many times with no result, difficult to continue going and feel like it's going to have an impact, knowing that they will only be in school for a certain number of years - "I'll push on and then leave"), not knowing where to start
16. Lack of experience and knowledge surrounding JEDI. New England is very white - especially Maine, NH, and VT, so first hand experience can be minimal.
17. I feel that some members become defensive or offended when the conversation about diversifying the board arises. Diversity does not mean ONE thing, it has a broad definition. the inclusion of one group of people does mean the exclusion of another
18. I believe there has been a recent situation where members have expressed their opinions with one another and emotions were high, maybe someone's ego was hurt, and others felt uncomfortable with the other's utilized words or form of expression. How do we address such a scenario moving forward?
19. We are all friendly with each other and part of this TRIO family. I want to be professional but also let people know I care about them even if decisions that are made impact their role, and that it's not personal, it's a professional decision. How to best approach those situations?
20. I think the increasing hatred and political division makes this subject even more important. It's hard not to form an opinion of someone based on a bumper sticker. The challenge is that without conversation and collaboration, nothing will change. I also frequently think about the fact my students come from a very different place politically than my staff.
21. When I first began participating on the NEOA board the diversity was MUCH greater. If I'm remembering correctly, I was almost in the minority. I remember when the leadership

had the "luxury" of being conscious about making sure that the presidency was not dominated by white leaders. It's curious that there is such limited diversity now, when our students are more diverse. I hope it's just a random event. If it's not, and there is a reason, we need to figure it out!

22. I think in most groups there are good intentions but also I often feel an instant discomfort that arises when talking about JEDI- the vibe in the room immediately changes from friendly and relaxed to more tense, fearful, defensive. There is no joy in the conversation, just a sense of weight and dread. I know it's easy to feel like it will just be a conversation about everything we are doing wrong or not enough of and it's hard to know what to do about it. I think this is largely true in board conversations- that people care about it but also feel overwhelmed by the lift.
23. Our board is majority white people, and I think the most challenging areas are around race. There are a larger number of BIPOC professionals in our region than represented on the board. In my work in the mostly urban area of a mostly rural state, I see a lot of interesting intersections between the social identities of the students I serve. One of my coworkers who works in a school closeby experiences trans and homophobia daily in their work because of the population of their school. One of my schools serves a large population of new Americans, while the other is more rural, but there are challenges across both schools with discrimination based on race, both from a structural and interpersonal standpoint.
24. We are mostly white, Cis gendered individuals and therefore view our world through that lens. Working to see then through a different lens
25. I think sometimes my biggest challenge is feeling confident enough to speak up or share my thoughts because even though I have a lot of experience in TRIO, I'm relatively new to the board.
26. I think perhaps age differences and years of experience might be a common challenge among veteran and new board members alike... I'm not sure what others are experiencing though and am interested to learn more.
27. I think one of the challenges is that we all come from different areas of the northeast. In the communities that I serve, they are very diverse so it can be challenging to meet the needs of a diverse student body.
28. The challenges for NEOA are about keeping our information and resources current and always remembering to be inclusive in our language. I also think that often we forget that diversity is not just about race. Our low income students bring diversity to college



campuses but they are an invisible population. Also economic diversity is not often recognized and our rural students add to diversity as well.

29. Recruiting members from a diverse community.
30. If I'm being fully honest, I struggle with diversity/inclusion. I grew up in a predominantly white town and the majority of my class was white. I find it hard sometimes to extend invite to people I don't know or who don't come from the same background as me. I'm not a super social person and if someone doesn't come up to me to start talking, I don't seek out. I love learning about the different cultures and how people grow up, but I don't know how to start a conversation in a polite manner. I have found it so fascinating hearing about other cultures, trying different foods, and even learning different languages. Learning how to overcome differences would be helpful for other situations.
31. I just worry I'm not doing enough, especially as a white woman on the board. I also have so much learning and growing to do (and want to do) and I worry that I unknowingly make people feel unsupported, unseen, unheard, etc. I think the board as a whole can relate to how I am feeling as many of us are white and we want to address this, but don't know how to do so in a productive and non harmful way.
32. Understanding, seeing the world from another's point of view.
33. Encouraging people of color to join the board and creating a safe, welcoming space on our board that represents the various races and ethnicities of the students that we serve.
34. Common challenges are getting people of color to join the board.
35. Common challenges that arise in the community that I serve are motivating my students to demand a seat at the table. Also empowering my students to believe that they are worthy of the higher educational opportunities that we encourage them to pursue.
36. The lack of diversity amongst the association, the fact that we as an association primarily serve Black and Brown students but our board does not represent the diversity of the students we support.

What are some topic areas where you would like support or more information, or where do you feel other board members need support or more information related to JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?

1. Unconscious bias, creating an inclusive work environment.
2. The difference between sex and gender, Pronouns, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, microaggressions.



3. How can we be more mindful of the work we do on a higher level in order to report out to the membership that the work we are doing is for change and not just for show.
4. Microaggressions; power and privilege
5. What does it all really mean?
6. Strategies to practice JEDI
7. More learning and opportunities to speak openly and learn openly, exposure to differences and language that is inclusive and an understanding of the importance of how much we essentially need to all be working to bring in representation and that may mean stepping back and helping others step in (for me too).
8. It's hard as a board to get to know each other when many are only in the position for a year and we meet 4x a year. Often people attend remotely. Given this, it makes it difficult to become a cohesive group without the ability to check in with each other, provide a safe environment for feedback and share sincere concerns and feelings related to JEDI. A few board members have brought this up.
9. Sharing what we as individuals and a board need to learn and how to behave is a starting place. Understanding how what we say and how we act to each other can promote or inhibit how we function as a board and how we are perceived by membership. For me personally, I fear that I may not always be aware of how I come across and would want the feedback if I have offended or made a fellow board member feel uncomfortable in any way. This could have tremendous benefits for the current board and those who follow.
10. As a White male I feel the need to continually be aware of issues, trends, language since DEIB changes so much. An LGBTQA++ leader at my school was always open to me asking questions. Will never forget the time she told me many years ago (after I was asking what 'gender queer' meant) that everything is fluid!! It is challenging to stay on top of it all. I like the word 'tribe'. I use it with full positive intent and feel it is an excellent descriptor of a closely bonded group. I intellectually understand why it is, or might be, offensive, but I am sad that it is off the table now, and that list of words seems to be ever expanding. I am not a fan of announcing pronouns up front. I respect people who do. At my institution we could get called out if we didn't use pronouns when we introduced ourselves, or seen as 'not understanding the work'.
11. Tangible action items & to-dos , to bring the conceptual into concrete (and tools for being able to do that)

12. Checking my privilege, how to show folks can sympathize without having to talk about their "black" "latine" "LGBTQ+" (many people talk about how they have a "black" friend, how can white people explain without feeling they have to justify or talk about their experience without talking about their "token" friend or family member)
13. I'm not sure. Learning how to use the language, learning to have the difficult conversations, making sure our communications and events are inclusive.
14. I would like for us to feel more JOY in the work. Because even though it is hard to have these conversations, there should be JOY in creating spaces where everyone has a voice and belongs. It's powerful and important work. I think help identifying concrete practices we could implement to improve JEDI in the board and wider association would be helpful. What would that look like and how do we make those practices part of the fabric of our daily operations and WHO WE ARE, not just a "oh what about JEDI?" side-thought.
15. I would like to see us move beyond talking about these issues to taking action steps in our organization towards actually addressing JEDI issues
16. Really understanding the definition and our implicit bias.
17. I would like more info on all JEDI topics, and I think the board, as well as our general membership, would benefit from all as well.
18. For me, it's most important that we can understand why we need to have a JEDI lens in all that we do - our work, our policies, etc. It'd be ideal if we could come to understanding around vocabulary and create goals as a board that can guide us moving forward in terms on how we want to approach incorporating JEDI (in terms of any challenges, or incorporating our newly found knowledge into possibly reforming policies, procedures, etc.) in NEOA.
19. Ideas for growth.
20. I would say all of them. I have had some involvement in learning but more information on all would be beneficial to me. I know I need to get better at using pronouns. I don't care how people acknowledge me and sometimes forget to say my pronouns. To me, they don't matter a whole lot but to someone else they want to be sure they are being polite and want to know what I prefer.
21. I think we need to look at how we operate as a board and how we make decisions and ensure that we are in line with JEDI principles. And then on an individual level how we interact with others and ensure we are honoring one another's social identities.
22. I'm open to learning as much as I can.

23. Our board is united in our passion to serve our students. We support each other to a certain extent but it's very much an "out of sight out of mind" relationship for many of us and that saddens me. Aside from death announcements we know only surface things about each other.
24. I would welcome the opportunity to know more about my fellow board members' backgrounds.
25. We need a full JEDI overhaul in order to understand what motivates each of us and where our priorities lie.

What are your hopes and concerns about the upcoming JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion trainings and is there anything else you would like Anastasia Morton and Angélica Castro to know about you or the NEOA Board as we plan for our time together?

1. This is long overdue, and I'm looking forward to learning and growing.
2. My concern is that the older generation will feel attacked and become defensive. This has happened in the past. When the lack of current JEDI was addressed, people were quick to bring up BLM and other initiatives that have been supported in the past. That's all well and good, but what is being done RIGHT NOW to make our membership feel supported, validated, heard, and cared for? My hope is that we can make this clear to the newer, more diverse professionals. That they have a seat at the table. That they are welcome to participate, they are ENCOURAGED to participate.
3. I am so excited for this.
4. That people will remain open-minded
5. I am not sure, but I imagine the training will provide helpful ways to apply JEDI principles in various aspects of my job and life in general.
6. I am excited!
7. Hope we get a good start on the next step and can keep that going forward as a regional organization and a Board. Maybe framing what is most important for us to focus on since DEIB is a broad, broad field of practice and learning.
8. Honestly I'm not quite sure what to expect of this training, so hard to know what my hopes and concerns are!
9. We need a deep, facilitated discussion in which people feel safe and comfortable to ask uncomfortable questions.

10. I hope we learn to better communicate in a productive and respectful manner when we are sharing unpopular ideas or misunderstood emotions. I hope we can learn to become better listeners versus being reactive to comments out of defensiveness.
11. I'm really happy to be doing this. It's a first step and I'm hopeful that the professional development committee can organize a follow-up for the membership this spring.
12. I am excited for the coming conversations and the work. I am concerned about how to take the work we are embarking on and making it sustainable through changes in leadership and board membership. Each year is a different constellation of people- how do we make sure what we are doing now persists when any one of us is no longer serving?
13. I hope we can have some nuanced conversations and dive deeply into topics. It would be great to finish with some actionable steps for our the NEOA board to take
14. I hope to grow and learn personally and professionally. I have concerns about needing to speak/share publicly though, as I am more of a private, internal processor.
15. I have no concerns. I'm really just hoping that we can engage in this training and understand the importance of being open to discussing JEDI in our work and why it is important that we have a lens that includes JEDI in all that we do.
16. I just want to listen and learn. I look forward to our discussions.
17. Looking forward to it!
18. I don't think so. I'm just interested to see what I learn and what you two have planned for us!
19. I don't have real concerns. I know the conversations and topics will feel uncomfortable for some from time to time, but I think that when the learning can and does happen. I'm confident we will all be respectful of each other and the process and my hope is this work trickles down into membership and our programs/states as well. Thank you so much for leading us on this important journey.
20. We have a wide range of people, ages, and experiences. We all have one thing in common, we love our work and always want to be the best we can be.
21. Open-minded, may have questions on the other side of training.
22. I am thrilled about the upcoming, long overdue JEDI training. My concern is board members attending the training sharing personal information that may be shared during the training. My hope is that people on the board will be honest about their thoughts, actions, motivations and beliefs. I pray that we emerge from this training with a better

understanding and respect for each other. I also pray for a safe space for all of us to become more enlightened by this JEDI training.

23. My hope is that the entire board will be open to listening and learning about how to incorporate JEDI in our everyday lives and the work we do on a daily basis with our students.