

New England



Educational Opportunity Association
www.neoaonline.org

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It's Your Turn...

Every time someone stands in front of a group and asks for volunteers, most people avert their eyes! Our first thought is, "I'm Too Busy! I've already got enough on my plate!" Consider this: every day, we offer opportunities to our students and ask them to commit to one more thing.

Serving on the NEOA board as President -elect and President could be the best professional development experience that you may ever receive. It will allow you to participate on a national board, (COE), and travel to some interesting places! It gives you the opportunity to make connections with other professionals from around the country and beyond that can support you, your program and your students! IT'S YOUR TURN to serve on the board. It's your turn to serve as President Elect for NEOA! Don't dismiss the thought-just think about it!

Here are the expectations:

Position Summary: The President-elect serves as "President in Training".

Principal Responsibilities:

- Attend board orientation (September) and four (4) additional board meetings: November, January, April and June
- Serve on Finance Committee- (meets remotely)
- Attend three COE Board Meetings (September, December, May)
- Serve on COE Board subcommittees as assigned by COE Board Chair
- Select site for following year's conference and TRIO Day
- Represent the President as needed
- Assist President and committee chairs in achieving their goals
- Plan for up-coming year's activities
- Actively contribute to and participate in all board activities/discussions
- Contribute information to the NEOA newsletter as appropriate

Ceremonial Responsibilities

- Organize Past President's Dinner at Annual NEOA Conference
- Select gift for President

As President-Elect, you have an entire year to learn about the role of president and be supported by so many others! You also have the chance to meet a wide diversity of professionals and have fun! Please consider this opportunity! Don't wait for the perfect time because there is NO perfect time!

If you have questions or are interested, please reach out to Debbie McCann (Past President) dmccann@unh.edu, Lindsay Carpenter (current president Elect) Lindsay.carpenter@lyndoninstitute.org or Rob Pote (President), poter@wcsu.edu

Upcoming Events

COE Policy Seminar

March 19th – March 22

Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill- Washington, D.C.

www.coenet.org/policy-seminar

VEOP Annual Conference

March 27th – virtual

<https://www.veop.org/veop-conference>

NEOA April Board Meeting

April 4th

Portland, ME

NEOA 2023 Pre-Conference & Annual Conference

April 4th (Pre-Conference) April 5th- 7th (Annual Conference)

Westin Portland Harborview Hotel- Portland, ME

www.neoaonline.org/a_conference.php

NEOA June Board Meeting

June 1-2

Southbury, CT

NEOA Membership!

Renew your NEOA membership or join NEOA!

NEOA Members Benefits:

- ✓ Access to free or discounted Professional Development
- ✓ Can participate in the Arnold L. Mitchem Leadership Institute
- ✓ Can run for NEOA Office and vote for NEOA Officers
- ✓ Connect with state, regional and national professional organizations
- ✓ Network with your peers
- ✓ Receive discounted annual conference registration

Click here to [**Renew Membership or Join NEOA today!**](#)

NEOA annual membership year: September 1st – August 31st.

For membership questions, please contact Membership Co-Chairs Andrea/Jessica:
membership@neoaonline.org

NEOA Conference 2023

**April 5th- April 7th
Westin Hotel, Portland Maine
Pre-Conference held on April 4th**

Check out the [NEOA Conference Website](#) for more information

Want to make sure you use your time in Portland well? A little pre-planning never hurt! The [Visit Portland website](#) has a lot of great information about things to do while in the area.

For questions, please reach out to Conference Co-Chairs
Ginny Fowles-Ward - yfowles@bowdoin.edu &
Mary Sinclair - mary.sinclair@maine.edu

We Are All Somebody:



**Fostering Belonging in
College Attainment**

NEOA Conference 2023 Highlights

The 2023 NEOA Annual Conference is coming to Portland, Maine, April 5-7. We will be at the beautiful Westin Portland Harborview hotel again this year. Highlights of the event include:

- Our theme, We Are All Somebody, stems from the idea of "somebodiness", an idea rooted in teaching from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking to the "deep belief in your own dignity and worth. To always feel like you count and matter and are worth it. Throughout the conference we will look to affirm that sense of somebodiness in you and give you a renewed energy to take that back to the students you work with.
- Keynote address by Dr. Loretta Brady: Professor of Psychology at Saint Anselm College; author of *Technology Touchpoints: Parenting in the Digital Dystopia*, a TED Talk speaker, the 2011 NEOA Alumni Achiever, AND, an alumna of the McNair program at UNH! She brings her experiences as a woman from a multicultural background to her work and passions with psychology and technology and will address inclusivity for our students.
- Our plenary guests all practice inclusion in programs adjacent to TRIO, including President of the University of Southern Maine; Benje Douglas, Senior Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity at Bowdoin College; and Bonnie Tai, Director of the COA2 program at College of the Atlantic, moderated by Daniel Barton, Director of the Promise Scholars Program at USM and a former UB Advisor.
- Look forward to the annual awards presented to alumni and colleagues. These are guaranteed to inspire us all and give us cause for celebration.
- Our in-person alumni breakfast opens the conference on Wednesday morning.
- Maureen Hoyler will be joining us in her final year as President for the Council for Opportunity in Education and will be accompanied by incoming President Kimberly Jones.
- Participants always enjoy the Silent Auction and it is back again this year in full force along with the state gift baskets! Come prepared to bid!
- And finally, Portland will act as its own host! The Newcomer's Reception on Wednesday will be held at the Top of the East restaurant, overlooking the city and Casco Bay. A huge selection of incredible restaurants is within walking distance of the hotel. Amazing coffee and donuts wait to greet early risers, breweries abound, and walks along the waterfront can't be beat. If you want to stay a couple of extra nights, the Westin is offering to extend the conference rate through the weekend.

Our conference committee looks forward to welcoming you!

Calling All NEOA State Initiative Grantees!

We are putting together a short (45 minute) NEOA conference session showcasing some of the many excellent **NEOA State Initiative activities** funded over recent years. If you are interested in sharing your project and its outcomes and impact with conference attendees, please contact Sarah Morrell, NEOA Advocacy Chair (sarah.morrell@umb.edu). Thanks!

Silent Auction

The Silent Auction Needs YOU!

Interested in helping NEOA raise money for the new Jerry Ellis PD Fund? Like being with people? Want to help out at the conference in the easiest way possible? Like shopping? Then you are perfect to assist with the one time event Silent Auction that takes place at the upcoming annual conference!

Consider joining the Silent Auction Committee or just signing up for a shift.

Activities include one or more of the following:

- Helping to collect and record items for the auction
- Filling out Bid sheets for each item
- Setting up the auction/arranging items
- Staffing a shift or 2 during the auction: straightening up and encouraging people to bid
- Processing items and winners at the end of the auction and cashing the winners out
- Being available to assist before & after the banquet and the morning after the auction ends

This is a great and easy way to become involved! Please consider this great opportunity!

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP!](#)



Announcing!

The 2023 *Truly New England Online Auction*

Along with the onsite Silent Auction, NEOA also brings you the annual NEOA [Truly New England Auction](#)! The proceeds from the on-line auction also helps provide funds for the JEPD fund for those who need assistance funding their professional development goals. We currently have several online auction items but **we need your help** to by making a contribution and bidding, of course.

How it Works:

NEOA members are invited to contribute with the donation of a **gift card**.

- ✓ Suggested value \$25+
- ✓ From a business that is either a local favorite or a national chain (restaurant, drive-in movie theater, golf course, gift shop, etc). People from all over New England and the United States will participate, so don't feel limited.
- ✓ The gift card can be used online and in-person and may not have an expiration date or has one that is at least a year out.

- ✓ To donate a gift card or gift certificate, contact Reggie Jean at reggie@bu.edu or go to www.biddingforgood.com/neoa and click "Donate Now". Online items can be mailed or email to the committee in April.

The **Truly New England Auction** will open sometime in April and you will be notified through the list serve.

Please help make this portion of fund raising at the conference successful. Who knows... you or a colleague may benefit personally from the proceeds!!



Policy Seminar 2023

Registration is open for Policy Seminar 2023: Marching Towards One Million!



Be sure to register for COE's Policy Seminar, **March 19-22, 2023** in Washington D.C., to ensure TRIO continues to have a seat at the table. By *Marching Towards One Million*, we will continue to fight for our students and continue our progress to strengthen TRIO in FY24 and beyond.

[Register Here](#)

Know your Team Leaders!

Connecticut

Chelsea Cichocki (Chelsea.cichocki@uconn.edu)
Yara Zoccarato (zoccaratoy@wcsu.edu)

Maine

Terry Charlton (tcharlton@cmcc.edu)

Massachusetts

Craig Elkins (celkins@umassd.edu)
Mendrick Banzuela (mbanzuela@sevenhills.org)

Vermont

Elizabeth King (Elizabeth.king@ccv.edu)

Rhode Island

TBD

New Hampshire

Adam Howard (adam.howard@unh.edu)

Contact Your Team Leaders for Any Policy Seminar Questions

*** Tips for a Great Policy Seminar Experience***

For new COE Policy Seminar participants, or as a refresher for seasoned folks, here are some tips gathered from wise and intrepid New Englanders over the years:

- Share contact info with your team leaders, team members and regional President before you arrive.
- Keep your phone charged and stay in touch with your team leaders, team members and NEOA President
- Expect the unexpected. Appointments change at the last minute; teams may have to split up to cover a change in schedule, alums may have travel obstacles. Stay flexible and communicate often with your team.
- Designate roles on your team to do the following: kick off speaker/make introductions, alumni story, presentation of the current “ask”, (COE will coach), discussion of impact on state and local areas, offer of a visit back in the district, leave materials with the office, thank them for their support and time.
- Plan on about twenty minutes, unless they ask you to stay longer.
- Know your state data backwards and forwards. Be able to tell it in a few succinct sentences.
- Have a compelling story to tell to illustrate the power of TRIO in your area, and pepper it with a little local flavor. Be brief and positive, and be ready to share it in the elevator, in the meetings with aides and legislators, and anyone you meet in a coffee shop.
- Dress professionally for the Hill visits and carry a minimum of baggage. The security lines and detectors can be long, and are also sensitive enough to pick up on some TRIO pins, jewelry and miscellaneous metal. Travel light!
- Make sure to follow up after the visit with written (email) thanks, and an invitation to a campus in the district when they are back home.
- Wear comfortable shoes to your day on the Hill. The floors are marble and your feet will thank you at the end of the day!
- Compile all requested info and notes after each visit and get them to team leaders as soon as possible, who in turn will get them to our NEOA President for sharing at the final rally.
- Support our President and teams by participating in the rally! Enjoy!

Submitted by Sarah Morrell, the current chair of Advocacy and State Initiatives



Fair Share – Why it Matters!

For those who may not know, COE, The Council for Opportunity in Education, based in Washington, DC, is the organization that advocates for TRIO and GEAR UP programs and works directly on Capitol Hill to lobby Congress on behalf of our programs and students. Without COE, bipartisan support for TRIO in Congress wouldn't exist. The growth in TRIO funding we have enjoyed in recent years would not be possible! COE also provides a plethora of services and support to the TRIO community with emphasis on professional development and advocacy.

- **Fair Share** is the monetary donations COE receives from both individual contributions and institutional memberships. These donations help fund government relations and advocacy, professional development, research, and student leadership opportunities.
- The **FAIR SHARE PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS** are donations made by TRIO professionals, supporters and other college access professionals who usually belong to regional TRIO Associations. As a non-profit organization, COE is limited to what it can and can't use it's funding for and Fair Share contributions allow COE the flexibility to lobby and advocate on behalf of TRIO, as well as other college access programs.
- With personal contributions, when COE advocates on the "hill", they can share how much support they receive in individual contributions as a way to leverage the importance of TRIO programs and the support they receive.

It's not as much about the dollar amounts as the number of people who make personal contributions. Every little bit helps! Please give if you can! It doesn't matter how much-just give what you can afford but use this opportunity to show your support for this organization that keeps our programs funded! Here is the link to donate: https://access.coenet.org/COE/Donation_FairShare.aspx

Here is where we stand so far this year!



COUNCIL for OPPORTUNITY in EDUCATION

At the End of January 2023, NEOA reached 51% of the Fair Share goal.

State	Equality	Membership	Contributions	Sum	Budgeted	Difference	%
CT	\$0.00	\$11,475.00	\$1,860.00	\$13,335.00	\$40,564.00	\$27,229.00	33%
MA	\$0.00	\$37,100.00	\$2,804.48	\$39,904.48	\$87,420.00	\$47,515.52	46%
ME	\$0.00	\$26,375.00	\$6,562.00	\$32,937.00	\$43,740.00	\$10,803.00	75%
NH	\$0.00	\$3,425.00	\$2,200.00	\$5,625.00	\$9,528.00	\$3,903.00	59%
RI	\$0.00	\$5,025.00	\$550.00	\$5,575.00	\$6,533.00	\$958.00	85%
VT	\$0.00	\$7,525.00	\$1,049.00	\$8,574.00	\$21,689.00	\$13,115.00	40%
NEOA	\$0.00	\$90,925.00	\$15,025.48	\$105,950.48	\$209,474.00	\$103,523.52	51%

As of 1-31-2023

Last year at this time, we were at 79% as a region! Let's catch up!

Jerry Ellis Professional Development Fund (JEPD)

We are excited to officially roll out the JEPD Fund and invite you to apply if you need funds and meet the requirements! [Link to the application is below.](#)

- **Applicant Eligibility:**
 - Must be an NEOA member
 - Has worked in a TRIO/EOP program for at least 6 months
 - Must demonstrate need- why their program can't pay the cost
- **Suggested types of eligible professional development opportunities:**
 - The proposed training must relate to Educational Opportunity work, participants they serve, and the work an applicant currently performs or plans to perform in the near future.
 - The PD is offered by a legitimate/credible organization.
 - Types/topics that would be eligible:
 - **Direct Service:** Enhanced skills and knowledge serving the following: participants, parents, schools and partners
 - **Individual skill development** for professional/career goals: management and leadership, supervision, technology, grant writing, advocacy, etc.
 - **Program Development, Operations and Enhancement:** building/strengthening partners and stakeholders, PR, strategic planning, organizational structure and operations (record keeping, compliance, etc.).
 - AMLI or state/regional conference support IF their institution can't fund the cost. These events will only get funded in very **unusual** circumstances. These may include:
 - Frozen program funds by DOE or institution
 - Administrative specialists seeking technical training
 - Newly hired staff without program funds to support PD
- **Range of awards:**
 - Depending on how much the board allocates in a given year, the range is between \$500-\$1,500 per award.
- **Timeline/Process:**

For now, the application process will follow the NEOA fiscal year, will have no deadline and will be awarded on a rolling basis depending on available funds.

 - We suggest that applicants apply at least **2 months** before they need the funds.
- **Expectations:** Will be clearly articulated for Awardees to report back to the NEOA board on their outcomes from attending the PD event and how they can share their learnings.

[Click Here for Online Application!](#)

Introducing New NEOA Members & Program Staff



Rob Schadt is currently the Director of TRIO SSS, Washington County Community College (Calais, ME). Previously Rob worked as the Associate Dean of Students at Eastern Iowa Community Colleges. Rob has lived and worked in California, Washington State, Iowa, Illinois, and now Maine. He has three “exuberant” dogs and has run 6 marathons.



Danielle Hume started as Talent Search Counselor with VSAC in Northeast Vermont in November. She is an Upward Bound alum and was the 2021 VEOP Achiever Award recipient. She loves spending time with her family, reading and/or listening to audio books.



Kassidy Moore just started last month as GEAR UP counselor with VSAC with the Upper Valley of Vermont. She most recently worked in the counseling office at Lyndon Institute. She takes the place of Sara Vargo who was hired as Lead GEAR UP counselor. When she is not at work, you can find her participating in her local community Theatre and spending time outdoors.

Beth Clay started as a Talent Search counselor in with VSAC in Central Vermont and the Upper Valley at the end of August. She most recently worked in student affairs at Plymouth State. Beth’s hobbies include fostering and adventuring with her dogs, photography, being Auntie Best to the coolest kiddos and making a mess in the art studio as often possible!



Jimmy Clark started this fall as GEAR UP counselor with VSAC in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Jimmy came to VSAC from Sterling College where they served as an admissions counselor. Their hobbies include taking naps with their cat, Skeeter, and playing the accordion poorly, and baking bread.



Daniel Cliche recently accepted the position of Student Development Coordinator of the Northern Vermont University – Lyndon Upward Bound Program. Daniel attended Lyndon Institute in Lyndonville, joined the program as a student and then, once in college, became a summer residential counselor and tutor. He graduated from the University of Vermont in 2020 with a degree in Environmental Engineering but actively searched for a path back to TRIO. Dan loves to hike and camp and is now retrofitting an old school bus into a home. Welcome back Daniel!

Introducing the New NEOA Zoom Cast, “NEOA SPEAKS”

“NEOA SPEAKS” are monthly zoom cast meetings featuring NEOA members past and present. The cast will include many of the past presidents and current board members as well as alumni. The cast is designed to bring the Association a little closer during the times we are not meeting at our annual events through personal stories and moments of TRIO and GearUp triumph for those we serve.

The casts are recorded upon availability of the guests and will be announced once they are edited and posted on social media platforms. Links to the casts will also be made available through the NEOA listserv. Our audience is always welcome to submit topic or guest ideas. They can email Tony Staffiere, NEOA Public Relations Chair directly at tony.staffiere@thomas.edu

Did you know that we now have a **NEOA TRIO Store**?

Find us online and at the annual conference!



There is a new online store in town for all of the gear you need for your educational opportunity program. It is Northeast TRIO Gear (<https://netriogear.com>). We offer custom apparel, accessories, and home items. All proceeds for products sold will go to NEOA or the state association of your choosing. We will have some samples with us at the Annual Conference in Maine for you to examine and talk with us about options. Please use the contact page to reach out for bulk orders as all products are listed at single-item prices.



[Visit Our Northeast TRIO Store Here](#)

An Update from MEEOA ...

Central Maine Community College hosted the MEEOA Annual Conference Refilling the Well: Reenergizing TRIO in 2023 on January 5-6

TRIO professionals gathered in Maine fashion through snow and ice for our annual conference, which was generously hosted by Central Maine Community College (the institution of our President, Terry Charlton). Dan Belyea, the Keynote speaker and Chief Workforce Development Officer for the Maine Community College System, shared what he and his colleagues have been doing to assist the same populations that TRIO serves. Following the Keynote, attendees enjoyed multiple concurrent workshops throughout the day. After lunch, Jen Rudolph provided updates from COE, followed by opportunities for participants to meet alumni and mingle amongst one another. The evening Awards Banquet hosted at Auburn's Hilton Garden Inn celebrated past TRIO students who shared their profound stories, their gratitude for their respective TRIO programs, and their appreciation for the acknowledgment they received for their achievements. As always, hearing from our MEEOA award recipients moved the crowd and left professionals with a sense of purpose in this important work we do.

The final day of the conference was held at Central Maine Community College campus and started with NEOA updates offered by NEOA President Rob Pote, followed by one more session of concurrent workshops. A buffet-style brunch preceded MEEOA members business meeting, bringing the conference to a close. We look forward to gathering with our New England colleagues at the NEOA conference in April!



Keynote speaker Dan Belyea, Chief Workforce Development Officer for the Maine Community College System pictured with Terry Charlton, MEEOA President and Heather Douglass Workforce Communications Director.



Kelsey Bailey Conference Chair

MEEOA awarded COE Paul Spraggins grant and a NEOA State Initiative matching grant. MEEOA held a pre-conference workshop on January 4th at Central Maine Community College, in part due to the generosity of COE and NEOA grants. This afforded one additional hands-on workshop and training opportunity with take away materials for participants besides the regular offerings of the annual conference. It also was an important kick-off event to showcase the excellent professional development available through MEEOA/NEOA/COE and to encourage connection with these professional organizations. Because of this additional time together and the two-day conference that followed, we were able to gather more folks to join our board and various committees, allowing us to grow and develop more creative ideas for how we can serve our TRIO community. The pre-conference workshop was an exploration of a unique way to do a career card sort to engage students to pursue challenges they would like to solve. Pre-conference presenter, Jim Peacock emphasized the contrast of his approach versus the traditional approach of discovering a career path, and how the two appear to be opposites of each other. The MEEOA board is grateful to COE and NEOA for making it possible to bring this high-quality experience to our pre-conference participants.



Pictured workshop participants Kelsey Bailey, Katie Rose Gergosian, and Erin Nason engaged in a career challenge card sort.

On the lookout for Retirees...

If you happen to know of NEOA staff retiring from College Access work in the near future, please let us know so we can recognize them at the annual conference.

Please email Randy Schroeder at randy.schroeder@unh.edu or Linda Shiller Cormany at shilcorm88@gmail.com and provide their name, institution and contact info.

Many thanks!

Update from the NEOA AMLI

The Arnold L. Mitchem Leadership Institute (AMLI) held its second of three retreats, January 8-10, at Marie-Joseph Retreat Center in Biddeford Pool, Maine.

We had another very potent positive session following our first session in November. Our guest faculty member, Judy Ringer, was a big hit with the participants. She spent from 9:00 - 4:30 with us on Day 2, as we worked intensively with Conflict and Communication as well as Effective Presenting. Each participant delivered a brief presentation that was recorded and played back on a big screen - giving self-feedback and receiving feedback from each of their peers, and from Judy and me. While many had a few "jitters" starting out on these, every participant reported a very positive experience with much learning along the way.

We meet for our third and final session March 8-10, before our group presents a leadership-themed workshop at NEOA's conference in Portland, April 5-7.

Applications for the next biennial session of AMLI will open in the spring of 2024. Craig will be present and available to inform about that opportunity and answer any questions at this year's conference.



AMLI Leaders 2022-23: Patrick Greene, Adnane Adossama, Angela Ricciardi, Mary Cooper, Kate Luksha, Suamy Ventura, Anna Telensky, Sarah Vargo, Kelsey Bailey, Chelsea Cichocki McTigue, Natalie Lockhart, and Craig Werth (Director)

My Experience Serving on the COE Board...

Serving on the Council for Opportunity in Education Board of Directors was hands down, one of the best experiences of my TRIO career. For those who may not know, once a person is elected President of NEOA, they also become a member the national COE board as well. This can definitely seem like an intimidating undertaking! But, once that initial intimidation wears off, you soon realize that others from fellow associations are in the same position as you. This cohort of President-elects quickly becomes close and you get to enjoy the service together for the next three years. The board meets three times a year, with the December meetings held in a warm location (mine were in Florida). It's not all exotic travel a fun...real work definitely takes place!

You will be assigned positions on various committees to conduct the work of the organization. Working on these different committees allows you to understand the sheer size of the COE organization and how much it takes to keep things moving forward. You also realize how many high-level professionals we have among our ranks as college access and success professionals!

I fully enjoyed the opportunity to serve with other TRIO colleagues from all around the country. Sharing wisdom and insights from others in the field is such a great benefit. But my favorite piece was seeing the inner workings of COE. President Hoyler and President Emeritus Dr. Mitchem are absolute icons within the TRIO community and having the chance to work alongside them was very special. It also allowed me to see firsthand the amazing advocacy efforts the entire COE staff does every day on behalf of TRIO professionals and students alike.

To anyone who may be considering throwing their name in for President-Elect...go for it! It will definitely add more meetings to your calendar, but the experience will be well worth it.

~Brian Post, Past NEOA President



Alumni LinkedIn Page



Follow our Alumni LinkedIn Page!

**[Alumni of Educational Opportunity Programs
of New England!](#)**

Reflecting on NEOA Board Diversity & Inclusion

Recently Hakeem Jeffries, the newly elected Minority Leader and leader of the House Democratic Caucus, and the **First** African American to be elected to that position was asked how he felt about that milestone. He responded by saying that he was focusing more on the hard work that comes with the job rather than that marker. He added, *"It's important for Congress to "look like the American people. When we get an opportunity as diverse leaders to serve in positions of consequence, the most meaningful thing we can do in the space is do an incredibly good job — that hopefully will encourage others to think about public service and alleviate concerns that folks who are skeptical may have about the ability of every type of American to operate successfully at the highest levels."*

This made me think about the representation on our wonderful NEOA board. As I think about the 12+ years I have served over a span of a couple of decades, I have witnessed the tenacious and passionate leadership of presidents and board members, their dedication to the work, and the difficult task of recruiting new board members. Along with the comradery, satisfaction of accomplishments, networking and just plain fun we all have when we meet, I also experienced the difficulty of trying to create a solid representation of the New England population at large on the board. Not an easy task by any means.

NEOA is made up of a strong community of leaders who join to help lead the charge of creating equal educational opportunity for our youth and adults. However, we fall short of representing "all types of Americans" that encompass our New England demographics; specifically including race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. I thought, **How can we do better?** What do we need to do for all interested educational opportunity staff in our community to feel welcomed, to aspire to join the board and help lead this vital work across New England and ultimately the country by participating in policy making, advocacy, and opportunities for those we serve? I wish I had the answer.

Then I was struck by a comment recently made by Rep. Jason Crow, D-Colo., who told NPR: *"One thing I've learned in leadership is that you don't get to choose your moment. The moment presents itself, and it's up to you to decide how and when you're going to lead."*

This couldn't be truer. Years ago, I remember thinking that I would aspire to serve on the board after my last grant was written, then after I finished my Masters' degree and finally when my son was in high school. When approaching others to join the NEOA board, and especially to run for President-Elect, I heard the same valid reasons. Representative Crow's words really resonated. But.....We need you NOW. Your moment is NOW. And, you don't need to be invited. You can approach a board member, ask questions, attend meetings as a guest, and volunteer to serve!

If you are an AMLI student or alum, it's your turn to join us. If you have been part of a TRIO, GU or similar program for more than a few years, it's time to consider ways to participate. If you are an "old timer"(like me) with a long history of serving in a program in New England, or even a transplant from other parts, it's time. And finally, if you are retired- recent or long term, what are you waiting for? Currently 3 retirees serve on the board and that's a record!

Board members are elected at the NEOA annual conference in April. It's time to mobilize our diverse community to represent the board well and fully. We are open to your thoughts. Please submit them to shilcorm88@gmail.com and I will post in the next edition. Or, come to a board meeting! Let us know ahead of time so we can make room on the agenda. Our next meeting is Tuesday, April 12th, the day before our annual conference begins in Portland, Me. Join us if you can. Let's keep this conversation alive and productive.

Linda Shiller-Cormany
Co-editor, NEOA Newsletter

We need your input and submissions!

Got some input for the editors about newsletter content? We are looking for suggestions for how we can improve. We are all ears!

Please share your thoughts. We want to keep you informed (and awake)!



Do you have any of the following highlights to share with the NEOA membership?

Send it on (please) to shilcorm88@gmail.com

- Program, staff and student accomplishments or news
- Alumni news
- Upcoming opportunities (professional development, student events, etc.)
- Spotlight on students or staff members
- “NEWS BITES” (small but important info to share)
- Great practices from the field
- Student work: art, writing, poetry
- Help needed from the NEOA community
- New Staff & Retirees
- Burning issues related to your work!

We accept submissions anytime and will save for the next edition!

Your submissions help keep the NEOA community at large informed and connected!

With gratitude from Linda and Yara

