

# NEACRAO

∨ VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

NOTES

## Reflections on My First Six Months in Management

Leadership Lessons from the Field

## The Ultimate Group Project

A Pragmatic Approach to Leading  
Your Institution's Comprehensive  
Reaccreditation Process

## NEACRAO 2026 Conference

A Sneak Peek!

The Pulse of Higher Education in New England

# Write for NEACRAO Notes

NEACRAO is full of talented higher education professionals leading transformational change, implementing exciting innovations, and mentoring the next generation of leaders. NEACRAO Notes is your platform to share the incredible work you are doing at your institution or an avenue to share your perspective on key trends emerging in this field or across the region.

## What is NEACRAO Notes?

NEACRAO Notes is a periodic publication opportunity through NEACRAO for members to share their stories from the field on a variety of topics including:

- Recent project successes and how the impact of the project transformed your work
- Research completed and the findings of your research
- Current or emerging topics or trends in higher education
- Lessons learned shared through a leadership lens

## Criteria for submission

- 500 words or less
- Submissions should include:
  - Topic
  - Executive Summary (3-4 sentences)
  - Copy of your article

## Why is NEACRAO offering this?

- An opportunity to elevate the voice of our members
- Provide regional opportunities for members who may not be comfortable submitting content nationally to AACRAO
- To share the amazing work and successes across the region

**Get more info today**





## Message from NEACRAO President

### Elect

## Joe Wolk

What an amazing NEACRAO 2025 conference it was this past November! We had over 120 members in attendance from institutions across the region. It was great seeing so many familiar faces while also welcoming first-time attendees. We had three full, action-packed days of sessions, received federal updates from our AACRAO colleague, Mike Bilfinger, and were joined by Alison Garner from NECHE, who spoke about the state of accreditation. For those who were able to join us, thank you! For members unable to attend this year, we'd love to see you in Burlington, VT for our NEACRAO 2026 conference!

I hope you enjoy our second issue of NEACRAO Notes which features articles on two important topics, leading the reaccreditation process at your institution and lessons learned from moving into a leadership position. Remember, NEACRAO Notes is a perfect avenue to tell your story, so please consider submitting an article for our Spring 2026 edition!

Happy Reading!

*Joe*

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# The Ultimate Group Project: A Pragmatic Approach to Leading your Institution's Comprehensive Reaccreditation process

By Dan O'Driscoll, Roger Williams University

In 2024, RWU's NECHE reaccreditation process was being led by two staff members. When one of the NECHE leaders left the University, I was asked to co-lead this process. A few months later, my co-lead also left the University and I found myself overseeing the University's comprehensive reaccreditation process on my own. I may have had a slight moment of panic, but thankfully my Type-A personality is task-oriented and especially effective in time-sensitive situations of high stress. I decided that the best way to embark on this journey, which entailed leading 57 faculty and staff members on 9 different committees, was to do so pragmatically.

The first step was to bring the chairs of these committees together in an in-person meeting and then to break this work into phases. For every required accreditation standard, I had the committees (1) create their descriptions, (2) develop their appraisals and (3) determine their projections. During this meeting I offered my assistance, ensured them that we are in this together as a team and provided them with their first deadline. A week before their descriptions were due, NECHE released new standards, collapsing 9 standards into 5, which we would be held to for our visit. Like Ross Geller trying to move a couch up the stairs, I had to pivot.

Once all of the committees submitted their initial descriptions, I asked the chairs how their committees were performing. Like any group project, I learned that the dynamics of these committees were complicated and some required gentle intervention. I then worked with each committee to restructure the groups to align with the new standards guided by their feedback. I also recruited new committee members that I knew would be successful in their roles and I asked the chairs to invite me to their committee meetings. To provide these new groups with concrete documents they could reference, I created templates and rubrics for each standard and provided committees with other institutions' publicly available self-study reports.

To ensure success of the process, I knew I had to communicate often, effectively, and honestly. To gain the trust of all of the committee members I had to meet folks where they were, empower them to make decisions and support them along the way. While this is one of the more challenging leadership roles I have taken on, I found it to be one of the most rewarding and I continue to learn from this experience.

# Reflections on My First Six Months in Management

By Walter Wrigley, Boston College

In 2025, after nine years working in higher education, including three at Boston College, I stepped into my first management role. As an Associate Registrar, I was responsible for hiring a net-new Assistant Registrar to help manage my portfolio of registration and grading. Six months later, here are my thoughts and observations on that transition.

A past manager of mine always echoed a simple management philosophy: “Hire good people, train them well, and let them do their jobs.” This became my roadmap.

## Hire Good People

During the hiring process, I looked beyond the resume. While experience matters, there is a learning curve to any new job regardless of how seasoned a candidate is. Instead, I prioritized looking for someone with a can-do attitude. I wanted someone eager to learn and capable of fostering relationships; I knew the technical expertise would come with time.

## Train Them Well

When training began, I wanted to do it right, even though I wasn't entirely sure what that looked like given my lack of experience. I focused on playing to my new hire's strengths, quickly identifying their aptitude for communication, technology (including the use of AI), and customer service. I moved away from simply showing them training documentation and instead had them create new materials as they learned—a method that reinforced their knowledge immediately. I also adapted my teaching style. We established that screen-recording complex processes for later review was a major success factor for them. Furthermore, acknowledging that I am not the expert in every aspect of our work allowed me to step back. Encouraging the Assistant Registrar to collaborate with others in the department not only filled knowledge gaps but promoted bonding between them and their new colleagues.

## Let Them Do Their Jobs

Now, six-months in, I am focusing on the final part of the philosophy. I strive to allow space for failure, encourage learning opportunities, and practice open communication. However, I've learned that meeting an employee's needs is not static. I realized that effective management requires fluidity; sometimes you need to be a stern manager, other times a laissez-faire manager, or a supportive coach. I am certainly not a perfect manager, but by striving to be the leader I would want to report to—and by sourcing techniques from my own mentors—I am finding a stride that works for me and my employee.

# NEACRAO 79th Annual Conference-Save the Date

November 4-6, 2026

[Hotel Champlain](#) Burlington, VT



**W**e are heading north for the NEACRAO 2026 Annual Conference! Our conference is one of the most affordable professional development opportunities in the region and has a little bit of everything whether you are looking for:

- Practical sessions related to your work
- Professional/personal development
- Networking with colleagues
- Engaging keynote speakers
- Opportunities to connect with industry vendors
- So much more!



[Interested in presenting a session? Submit a session proposal today!](#)

# Get Involved with NEACRAO

NEACRAO is a dynamic, volunteer-run organization that thrives because of the passion and expertise of higher education professionals like you. By getting involved, you're not just joining a network, you are helping shape the future of admissions, enrollment management, and student services across New England. Whether you are looking to grow your skills, expand your professional network, or make a difference in the higher education community, NEACRAO is the perfect place to engage, learn, and lead.

## Why get involved?

- Professional Development
- Networking Opportunities
- Knowledge Sharing
- Advocacy & Representation

## Ways to get involved

- Attend a planning meeting
- Present at the Annual Conference
- Present a webinar
- Write for NEACRAO Notes
- Join the board
- Join a committee

## Open Leadership Positions

- Vice President for Professional Development

## Open Committee Positions

- Conference & Meeting Committee
- Event Registration Committee
- Local Arrangements Committee
- Vendor Committee

All position descriptions can be found on the [NEACRAO Website](#).

To nominate yourself or someone else for one of the leadership positions above, please click [here](#). If you are not interested in a leadership position but would like to volunteer for a committee, please click [here](#).

If you are interested in learning more about NEACRAO and these opportunities, please email [communications@neacrao.org](mailto:communications@neacrao.org) to schedule a 15-minute Zoom meeting and a board member will be in touch.