



*Northeast Association of Advisors for the Health Professions*

## **Membership Newsletter**

**January 2026**

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### **Message from the President**

Happy 2026!!

I hope each of you had a wonderful break. I know I enjoyed time with my family, friends, and my grandson. Nana really is the best job.

I just returned from the NAAHP Board's annual retreat. We visited Harrisburg, site of our 2027 NEAAHP Regional Conference. The conference co-planners have a lot of ideas for how to make it a successful meeting filled with education and fellowship. Be sure to fill out the survey circulating through our membership looking at future conferences.

I'm preparing for the next semester. Since my primary teaching responsibility is organic chemistry, my students see the past few weeks as a well-deserved pause in the year-long course. I received emails from several students who wanted to spend the weeks gearing up their spring studies. This plus the inquiries and responses from applicants already considering and preparing their packets makes me hopeful that our future is in good hands. Of course, there are also the students and applicants who will need more guidance and coaxing, but they're also making progress and sometimes completely changing their path. It really is a joy to watch a student over time, affirm that their path is the correct one forward or decide on a new career to explore.

NAAHP should soon be announcing the schedule for the June conference in NOLA. I hope to see you there. In preparation for our business meeting, the Board has been updating the policies and procedures for the Association. One change is the addition of an Assistant Treasurer who will assist with our budget and finances. We are also looking at the Constitution and By-Laws to determine if any updates are needed.

In addition to finding out who's interested in the Assistant Treasurer position, we will soon be reaching out for volunteers for the Board positions, for more assistance with the conference, and to serve on our committees. I thank the many people who already volunteer for the important work of NEAAHP.

Have a great winter/spring. I hope you all make it to NOLA!

Best,

Patti

Patti Kreke, Ph.D.

NEAAHP President



Happy winter, NEAAHP Members!

You want NEAAHP conferences designed with you in mind? Good news! We WANT to design conferences with you in mind!! And you can help us do that right now.

By answering this survey, you will be contributing directly to how to pick and plan future conferences. And, if you don't answer it, we're planning conferences based on what everyone except you wants.

[https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV\\_cVhFxJyUcLzYoAK](https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV_cVhFxJyUcLzYoAK)

For example, we already have 116 responses (thank you to everyone who answered it during the 2025 NEAAHP conference in Baltimore), and THEY tell us...

- In ranking preference of which months to have the conference during....**June is winning with May a distant second and July in third!**
- In considering a 4-day span preference, **Tuesday-Friday is narrowing ahead of Monday-Thursday mathematically, although more members ranked M-Th as 1st than any other option.**

- In exploring characteristics that are “Deal Breakers,” “Want to Have,” “Not Necessary but a Bonus,” and “Don’t Care about This,” your colleagues **Ranked “ease of travel (close to airports, available shuttles, etc.)” below having “scheduled time (in program) to socialize with colleagues”**
- In considering whether members would prefer or be open to a shorter conference (shorter than 4 days, which is our typical format), **26.2% of your colleagues prefer a shorter conference with the same number of conference sessions; 9.7% of your colleagues prefer a shorter conference with less conference sessions and preserving social aspects and free time during the conference.**

Do you want others to speak for you? We don’t. We want to hear your voice.

We get it. We know you answer these dumb surveys over and over, and nothing ever seems to come of it. But we’ve already shared some data with you (above), and we plan to share the summary data with you once we’re done. We know that it’s frustrating to spend time on these things when it never seems to matter, but it does.

So, do you want us to make decisions based on everyone else’s opinions or do you want yours to count?

[https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV\\_cVhFxJyUcLzzyoAK](https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV_cVhFxJyUcLzzyoAK)

Don’t remember if you answered it? If the kinds of questions above doesn’t jog your memory, we’d rather you answer again. Thank you for answering. We know your time is valuable!!



## NEAAHP New Advisor Profile

Meet Yashoda Sharma, Health Professions & Life Sciences Career Advisor  
Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT



1. What professional roles did you have prior to joining Wesleyan and what drew you to this position?

I received my PhD from the University of Iowa. After conducting research in molecular biology and genetics, I transitioned to managing large genetics and

genomics programs: the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Program (Yale and Mount Sinai Schools of Medicine) and the All of Us Research Program (Weitzman Center, Community Health Center). I also served as a program director for digital medicine (DiMe) and as an adjunct biology professor (Quinnipiac University). Through these roles, I worked intimately with researchers and physicians and managed all aspects of basic, translational, and clinical research projects. Additionally, I managed and mentored staff with different educational training, from undergrads to MDs. I always found this to be incredibly rewarding and inspiring and I loved guiding young professionals as they figured out their career paths. This is what drew me to my current role, the ability to do the thing I love and have an immediate impact on students' lives.

2. What has most surprised you about working with pre-health students?

One thing that has surprised me is how focused many of the pre-health students already are. I have many first-year students and sophomores who know exactly what type of medicine they want to practice. They come in with plans for serving rural or underserved communities or focusing on women's health, and they are actively engaging in work to support these passions. My first-year students are also operating with a great sense of urgency. They want to know everything about the pre-health journey from day 1, and many have checked in several times throughout their (and my) first semester to confirm their progress. My project management skills are coming in handy with these students.

3. Are there any tips or guidance you share with your students?

My favorite tip for students, regardless of what year they are, is to take advantage of Wesleyan's liberal arts education. I encourage them to take different, seemingly random courses and join several different types of clubs. They know they want to be pre-health, but I remind them that this journey does not have to be straight and narrow. I don't want my students to get so focused on the pre-health path that they miss the great things that come with being in college, especially at a liberal arts school. I also encourage all my students to reflect on everything they do. I want them to see the value each experience brings to their journey and how these can set their future selves up for success.

4. How do you like to spend your time outside of work?

Outside of work, I enjoy relaxing with my family. We spend much of our time playing board games and indoor rock climbing. We have a new hobby of traveling to different towns to try different climbing gyms. Whenever we travel, we bring our climbing shoes. It's a great way to strengthen your relationship and communication skills and challenge yourself physically and mentally. We are hoping to graduate to outdoor climbing soon.



## **At the University of New England, Medicine and its Allies Unite to Transform the Future of Health Care Education**

*In much-praised Portland, Maine's only medical school joins its peers in the health professions on one single campus, empowering a culture of team-based care for a region in need*

Located in Portland, Maine, the University of New England (UNE) is home to the state's only medical school and New England's sole osteopathic medical college. The Portland Campus for the Health Sciences features the College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNE COM) situated in the Harold and Bibby Alford Center for Health Sciences, fostering interdisciplinary education across multiple health disciplines including medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, physician assistant studies, physical and occupational therapy, and social work. This collaborative environment enhances team-based patient care, crucial for Maine's rural and coastal communities. Here are some highlights of the program:

### **A Regional Health Care Hub**

Relocating UNE COM from Biddeford to Portland enhances access to hospitals, clinical affiliates, and specialty practices, enriching hands-on learning and research opportunities. The campus also hosts Maine's only School of Pharmacy and physician assistant program, alongside Northern New England's sole College of Dental Medicine.

### **Interprofessional Collaboration**

Interprofessional education (IPE) is a cornerstone at UNE, with students engaging in collaborative coursework and simulation experiences. The Harold and Bibby Alford Center, equipped with advanced simulation labs, supports this initiative. Remarkably, 81% of IPE graduates work in interprofessional settings, greatly influencing their professional practice.

## **Residency Placement and Workforce Impact**

UNE COM excels in residency placements with a 99% Match Rate in 2025, outperforming peer institutions. Over half of the 2025 graduates entered primary care specialties, addressing both regional and national needs. Notably, 57% of students completing clerkships in Maine eventually practice in the state.

## **Comprehensive Health Sciences Portfolio**

The Portland Campus offers diverse programs in nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, dental hygiene, and applied exercise science, including Maine's only one-year Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. This integrated educational model ensures frequent interdisciplinary interactions, preparing students for coordinated care.

## **Vibrant Urban Campus**

The Portland Campus blends historic architecture with modern facilities in a vibrant coastal neighborhood. The city's robust health care infrastructure provides students with extensive clinical and experiential learning opportunities.

## **Educating Health Professionals for the Future**

Since 1995, UNE has awarded over 16,000 health sciences degrees, with a significant impact on Maine's healthcare landscape. UNE's approach to medical education, emphasizing collaborative practice and research, equips graduates to enhance patient outcomes and address healthcare challenges in Maine and beyond.

For pre-health advisors, the Portland Campus for the Health Sciences offers a compelling model for student preparation. It combines the strengths of an osteopathic medical education with the advantages of a truly interprofessional campus, a strong research presence, and access to a clinical landscape that reflects the needs of the region. UNE's approach equips graduates not only to succeed in residency and practice, but to contribute meaningfully to the health and vitality of Maine and the greater New England community.



University of New England - Portland Campus for Health Sciences



Ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Health Sciences Center, including President James Herbert (center); Harold Alfond Foundation President and CEO Greg Powell (third from right); and University trustees and senior leadership.

## **Serving as NAAHP's ACC Ambassador: Connecting Advisors and Chiropractic Education**

**Building bridges between NAAHP and the chiropractic education community**

By Eugene Rubin,  
Career Counselor and Pre-Health Advisor, Marymount Manhattan College

I was recently appointed as a volunteer Ambassador to the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) by NAAHP. As a dedicated and active member of NAAHP who strongly believes in the organization's mission and goals, this opportunity represents a meaningful way for me to contribute to our shared commitment to informed, ethical, and student-centered health professions advising.

The ACC represents accredited chiropractic colleges and programs across North America and serves as a vital voice for chiropractic education, research, and collaboration. As an ACC Ambassador, my role is to act as a liaison between NAAHP advisors and the chiropractic education community—helping to strengthen communication, improve understanding of the

profession, and ensure advisors have accurate, current information to support students considering chiropractic careers.

One of the most important aspects of this role is education and clarification. Chiropractic medicine is sometimes misunderstood or underrepresented in health professions advising conversations. Through my work as an Ambassador, I aim to help advisors better understand chiropractic education pathways, admissions requirements, scope of practice, licensure, and the evolving role of chiropractors within today's interprofessional healthcare teams. When advisors are well-informed, students are empowered to make thoughtful decisions aligned with their interests, values, and goals.

As part of my Ambassador activities, I recently attended a working group with admissions officers from ACC member colleges. This meeting was extremely helpful in deepening my understanding of the goals, priorities, and challenges chiropractic colleges face—particularly in increasing awareness of chiropractic as a viable and rewarding healthcare career. Hearing directly from admissions professionals highlighted the importance of early, accurate advising and the critical role NAAHP members play in shaping students' perceptions and career exploration.

These conversations also reinforced how chiropractic education continues to evolve alongside broader changes in healthcare, with growing emphasis on evidence-based practice, patient-centered care, research literacy, and collaboration within interprofessional healthcare teams. Sharing these insights with NAAHP members is a key component of my advocacy and outreach as an ACC Ambassador.

Equally important is listening. The Ambassador role is not only about sharing information from the ACC, but also about bringing advisor perspectives, questions, and concerns back to the chiropractic education community. Advisors are often the first point of contact for students exploring health careers, and their insights are invaluable in shaping how professional organizations communicate, recruit, and support future applicants.

To support advisors in their work with students, please see the accompanying flyer on chiropractic education, created by the ACC in collaboration with its member colleges. This resource is designed to provide clear, accurate, and student-friendly information and may be shared freely with students who are exploring health professions options. I am also happy to serve as a resource—feel free to contact me for additional information or resources related to chiropractic education and careers.

I am grateful to NAAHP for this appointment and to the ACC for its openness and collaboration. I look forward to continuing to engage with fellow members and to supporting advisors as we work together to provide students with comprehensive, accurate guidance across the full spectrum of health professions.

- Visit <https://discoverchiropractic.org/> to learn about chiropractic education.
- Contact [info@chirocolleges.org](mailto:info@chirocolleges.org) for additional resources or questions about the field of chiropractic

## **It's All About the AI: The 2026 Philly LAN**

by Debi Swarner, Dickinson College Pre-Health Advisor

Engaging with at least three LANs (Local Area Networks) within NEAAHP has provided me with useful information and professional connections. Every year, I am excited to attend the Philly LAN, hosted by a different medical school annually. While my drive normally leads me on I-76 to Center City Philly, this year's adventure took me north on I-81 to Scranton and the Geisinger College of Health Sciences. Special thanks to the Geisinger team led by Michelle Schmude, Ed.D., MBA, for their hospitality, planning, and program. Every attendee was grateful for the complimentary coffee and morning setup, followed by an excellent networking lunch with a continuing AI focus from HAL and the Geisinger School of Nursing faculty members.

Michelle Schmude, Ed.D., MBA, and David Vawdrey, Ph.D., kicked off the day with a session introducing their guests to the artificial intelligence incorporated into Geisinger programs from both educational and clinical perspectives. There may even have been some interactive engagement to keep the audience engaged with their program and to incorporate learning skills. That session was followed by a panel focusing on deploying AI in a large, integrated health system. Panelists included Dr. Morgan Jeffries, Medical Director for AI; Monisha Veerapaneni, M.S.H.I., M.H.A., L.S.S.B.B., AI Operations Manager; and Biplab Bhattacharya, Ph.D., Program Director for AI. After lunch, the program's focus turned to using AI to recruit health professions education students who meet workforce and community needs. In the last session, we learned that AI programs were developed to enhance the screening and selection of medical school applicants. We were grateful to engage in discussions with questions at each session so that attendees could clarify lessons learned throughout the day.

As with the annual Philly LAN tradition, each medical school presenting received a limited time to share its school and program updates. Conveying so much useful information in the allotted time can be challenging. Our attending members were grateful to learn such insights to share with students and colleagues on their campuses.

The NEAAHP attendees were also appreciative of the planning time and hosting provided by our dedicated Philly LAN co-chairs, Bob Rarig, Program Director from the Temple University College of Science and Technology Postbaccalaureate Pre-Health Program, and Brianna Metzger, Pre-Health Advisor from Rowan University. Our membership appreciates their dedication to the NEAAHP organization and the Philly LAN program. Thanks for your time shared both in preparation for the program and on the day of our regional event.

Here is a link to a video Geisinger put together on the LAN:

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/cailincordon\\_medicalschool-healthprofessions-ugcPost-7422068543707385857-](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/cailincordon_medicalschool-healthprofessions-ugcPost-7422068543707385857-)



Attendees enjoy camaraderie at the Philly LAN

Meet the Philly LAN 2026 co-planners:  
(L to R) Bob Rarig, Temple University  
Post-Bacc Program; Brianna Metzger,  
Rowan University; Michelle Schmude,  
Geisinger School of Medicine



## Upcoming LANs

- ❖ Boston LAN- Friday, May 1, 2026 hosted by University of New England at their new Portland campus
- ❖ Western New York LAN- Friday, March 13th, 2026, hosted by the University of Rochester School of Medicine, registration is LIVE  
[https://canisius.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9MM0Ofk4aWzs3Fc](https://canisius.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9MM0Ofk4aWzs3Fc)
- ❖ NYC LAN- Friday, March 6, 2026 hosted by Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (123 Metro Boulevard. Nutley, NJ 07110).



The NAAHP [Conference Planning Committee](#) has been hard at work preparing for the 2026 conference in June in New Orleans! Some highlights:

- Keynote speaker [Justin Jones-Fosu](#) will kick off the conference with passion and energy.
- Timely concurrent sessions and posters chosen from a record-breaking number of proposals, with speakers from diverse institutions and professions.
- Built-in networking opportunities, including conference buddies, meals, and the NAAHP regional business meeting.
- The “Feed Your Mind, Feed Your Soul” theme embraces the importance of both professional development and time to recharge and enjoy [everything the Crescent City has to offer](#).

Registration will open in mid-February! Questions or suggestions? Email Kate Fukawa-Connelly, conference co-chair, at [katef@princeton.edu](mailto:katef@princeton.edu).

## New NEAAHP Board Position

If you're interested in getting more involved with the Regional Association, the NEAAHP Board is adding a new appointed position: Assistant Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer will work closely with the Treasurer to help manage the Association's finances and serve as a backup to ensure smooth operations. This role is ideal for someone eager to learn more about how our organization operates. We hope to appoint someone to this role soon. If you want to learn more about the position please fill out this brief interest form. One of our Board members will contact you. [forms.gle/y4DfLuBL2uDk1uQe7](https://forms.gle/y4DfLuBL2uDk1uQe7)



Would you like to invite pre-health advisors to join NEAAHP and reap the many benefits of membership? Feel free to share the flyer on the next page with interested pre-health advisors.

If you are interested in joining the NEAAHP Membership Committee, we would love to hear from you. We also welcome any ideas, comments, questions, or concerns you may have regarding NEAAHP membership.

To communicate with the membership committee, please click on this link:

<https://forms.gle/HDxkMMwDTEbegyr39>



The **Northeast Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NEAAHP)**—a regional affiliate of the **National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP)**—advances undergraduate health professions advising by serving as a leading professional resource for Pre-Health advisors throughout the Northeast region of the United States.

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### **Why Choose NEAAHP?**

A NEAAHP membership provides Pre-Health advisors with access to current information, a collaborative professional community, and meaningful opportunities for networking and professional growth.

#### **Access to Up-to-Date Information**

Stay informed with timely, accurate insights on advising trends, healthcare education, and best practices through regional and national discussion boards.

#### **Networking with Advisors and Health Professional Schools**

Build relationships with advisors and admissions representatives from diverse institutions. Exchange ideas and resources in a highly collegial environment that benefits your students.

#### **Supportive Professional Community**

Connect with dedicated peers who inspire, energize, and provide ongoing professional support.

#### **Access to National Resources**

Enjoy NAAHP member benefits, including national professional development opportunities, educational resources, exclusive online communities, special events, and reduced rates for conferences and advertising.

#### **Professional Development**

Enhance advising skills through conferences, workshops, webinars, and leadership programs.

#### **Leadership Opportunities**

Develop as a leader by serving on the NEAAHP Board, presenting at conferences, or assuming leadership roles within the association.

#### **Regional and Local Collaboration**

Participate in Local Area Network (LAN) meetings and regional events for accessible, localized professional engagement.

#### **Advocacy and Representation**

Advocate for the advising profession and gain insight into healthcare education trends through engagement with organizations such as **AAMC, PAEA, and ADEA**.

**Join [NEAAHP](#) to be part of a vibrant professional community, dedicated to excellence in Pre-Health advising.**

## **NEAAHP Membership Committee**

Megan Dailey, Syracuse University **(Co-Chair)**

Emily Henderson, Northeastern University

Denis Laroche, Clark University

Monica Maldari, Fitchburg State University

Kristin McJunkins, Yale University

Eugene Rubin, Marymount Manhattan College

Debi Swarner, Dickinson College **(Co-Chair)**