

6/22/2021

TO: UniServ Managers and Urban Local Executive Directors
FROM: Tom Israel, Program Director, NEA Center for Organizing

RE: NEA UniServ Training Program 2021-2022

The NEA Center for Organizing is pleased to announce our tentative schedule for in-person UniServ Trainings for the coming year. We are providing these dates to you for planning purposes with your field staff. Our final approval of in-person programming depends on the timing of NEA's lifting of travel restrictions.

In addition to our planned in-person programs, we will also be offering a wide-range of shorter, online modules on other content. We will begin publicizing those later this summer.

When we return to in-person programming, we will again be offering two types of UniServ Academy experiences: Foundation Academies (for new UniServ staff) and Focus Academies (for experienced UniServ staff). Locations will not be finalized until closer to the event dates. Staff should register for sessions based on their availability and content needs.

Highlights

- The NEA UniServ Guidelines state that new UniServ staff attend the **Foundation Academy** within their first two (2) years of employment. Based on our experience, UD's who wait beyond their first two years have a more difficult time building the basic organizing skills into their routines.
- In response to feedback from affiliates, we will also be offering the following **Focus Academies**:
 - Advancing Racial Justice through UniServ Work** (Levels II and III)
 - Organizing Through Advocacy** (Level II) *NEW*
 - Teacher Unions and Social Justice** (Level II) *NEW*
 - Organizing Strategies for ESP Members** (Level II) *NEW*
 - Effective Leadership Structures & Strong Worksite Systems** (Level II)
- We differentiate Academies based on skills and experience, to ensure that participants are matched to trainings that meet their needs.

Level I - Foundational At this level the competencies represent a basic knowledge and skills professionals may use to begin their practice in staff work.	Level II - Transitional At this level the competencies represent a broad view of the knowledge and skills professionals use to develop their practice in staff work.	Level III - Refining At this level the competencies represent a focused view of the knowledge and skills professionals may apply to refining their practice in staff work.
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Registration Process

STEP 1: As the Manager, complete the **Manager's Recommendation Form**. [There are separate forms for the Foundations Academies and the Focus Academies.]

Please note, the form must be completed by the manager by the deadlines listed below for the Academy sessions that you approve your staff to attend.

STEP 2: Participants are recorded as “accepted” unless it is noted on the form that there is a waiting list. Please let your UD's know that they have been approved and should save the dates on their calendars.

STEP 3: Approximately two (2) months in advance of the program, participants will receive a separate email with the formal, individual Registration Form for them to complete.

STEP 4: Once they register, they will be provided with instructions to make their travel arrangements through NEA's travel agency - FCmTravel Solutions. (*NOTE: NEA will not reimburse for travel arrangements made independently of FCm.*)

Detailed information about each Academy will be sent to all participants approximately one month prior to each session.

The number of participants for each Academy is capped at **35 per session**. Therefore, forms should be submitted as early as possible, and no later than the appropriate deadlines. Additional applicants can be placed on waiting lists. Managers interested in sending more than five (5) UniServ Directors to any single Academy should talk with our UniServ Training coordinator (Ellen Holmes, eholmes@nea.org) in advance to review expectations.

FOUNDATIONS ACADEMIES are designed for UniServ Directors in their first and second years of UniServ staff work. Foundations Academies are five full days – Monday through Friday, beginning at 9:00 AM, with travel being on Sunday and late Friday evening. All Foundations Academies include a field experience, and focus on supporting new staff in their work of building high functioning locals that can recruit and engage members, organize around issues that our members care about, and develop emerging leaders. (*All locations are TBD, pending final approval from the NEA Travel Office*).

Session I: January 24 – 28, 2022

Session II: March 21 – 25, 2022

Session II: May 16 – 20, 2022

Managers Recommendation Form for FOUNDATIONS Academies:

<https://forms.office.com/r/TKmqYDapnm>

FOCUS ACADEMIES are designed for experienced UniServ Directors and are on topics that are timely across our organization. Focus Academies are identified at the “Transitional Level,” or “Refining Level” of UniServ work. These levels are context specific – you may be Refining in one topic area, but Transitional in another. Those who choose Transitional Level Focus Academies are working with locals that are just beginning to move from basic membership recruitment and servicing towards leadership and team development for the purposes of organizing and building power. Those who choose the Refining Level Focus Academies are typically working with affiliates that already have strong leadership, effective structures and a track record for using power to make meaningful change. Each Focus Academy will begin on a Tuesday morning, last for two and a half days, with travel out late on Thursday. Participants can expect to leave with a thorough understanding of the topic and gain applicable tools, resources and skills as a result.

2020-2021 FOCUS ACADEMIES

(All locations are TBD, pending final approval from the NEA Travel Office)

Advancing Racial Justice through UniServ Work (Level II)
December 7-9, 2021

New! Organizing through Advocacy (Level II)
January 11-13, 2022

New! Teacher Unions and Social Justice (Level III)
February 8-10, 2022

New! Organizing Strategies for ESP Members (Level II)
March 8-10, 2022

Effective Leadership Structures & Strong Worksites Systems (Level II)
April 12 – 14, 2022

Advancing Racial Justice through UniServ Work (Level III)
May 10-12, 2022

Managers Recommendation Form for FOCUS Academies:

<https://forms.office.com/r/HVLtsZ27E5>

We ask that managers ensure staff schedules are adjusted so their staff can attend all portions of the Academies and participate in the entire program. Staff should also understand that there will be an organizing field activity for the FOUNDATIONS ACADEMIES in which all attendees are required to participate. You are encouraged to have conversations with your staff in advance, so that the attendance expectations and time commitments are understood. Participants are expected to be present and engaged for the full time. Any schedule adjustments should be discussed with NEA staff in advance.

Technology

Staff will be required to use their laptops and smartphones to support their learning during Academies. Participants will use One Drive to access a number of documents. Participants will be using conference facility Wi-Fi and these are often not secure. Please inform your appropriate IT personnel to ensure that participants can either access this type of Wi-Fi or are equipped with appropriate hotspot devices. We will not be able to troubleshoot significant issues once on-site.

Costs

NEA funds the related travel and training expenses for UniServ staff to attend (*in accord with NEA's Travel Policies*), provided they attend for the full time. If they arrive late or leave early, the costs of their participation may be charged back to the affiliate. All flight reservations must be completed at least 21 days prior to the first date of travel. Any not made within this window will be at the cost of the affiliate. NEA will not reimburse for travel arrangements made independently of NEA's FCm travel agency. For each Academy a reasonable rate for getting from the airport to the conference site will be researched and provided. Any costs that are unusually over this threshold will not be reimbursed by NEA.

NEA may incur considerable cost for individuals who cancel. Therefore in the event of cancellation, the UniServ Director's employer agrees to reimburse NEA for the full cost of direct-billed airline tickets and/or change fees that cannot be recovered. This may also include the cost of hotel rooms if NEA is unable to cancel the room without penalty. All cancellations must be in writing from the staff person with a copy to their manager. Any cancellations must be emailed to Ashley Spencer (aspencer@nea.org) with a copy to me (tisrael@nea.org).

Please make note of the upcoming Academy deadlines below:

UniServ Academy Dates	DEADLINE FOR MANAGER RECOMMENDATIONS
Advancing Racial Justice Through UniServ Work: Transitional <i>December 7-9, 2021</i> (NOTE: If you have attended Advancing Racial Justice Level 1 in the past, this is primarily the same program.)	November 1, 2021
Organizing through Advocacy: Transitional <i>January 11-13, 2022</i>	December 6, 2021
FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY <i>January 24-28, 2022</i>	December 13, 2021
Teacher Unions and social Justice: Refining <i>February 8-10, 2022</i>	January 3, 2022
Organizing Strategies for ESP Members: Transitional <i>March 8 – 10, 2022</i>	January 24, 2022
FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY <i>March 21 – 25, 2022</i>	February 14, 2022

Effective Leadership Structures & Strong Worksites: <i>Transitional</i> <i>April 12 – 14, 2022</i>	March 14, 2022
Advancing Racial Justice Through UniServ Work: <i>Refining</i> <i>May 10 – 12, 2022</i>	April 11, 2022
FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY <i>May 16 – May 20, 2022</i>	April 18, 2022

2021-2022 Focus Academy Summaries

Advancing Racial Justice through UniServ Work

December 7 – 9, 2021

Transitional Level - UniServ Directors work with members, supporters and partners in many settings and have to be highly skilled in leading, coaching and organizing across racial differences. The NEA Center for Organizing and the NEA Center for Social Justice partner to provide a training designed to build participants' skills through awareness of implicit bias, interpersonal racism and institutional racism. Participants learn how to deepen this awareness in others, how to navigate issues of race that surface in our work, and how to access valuable resources on addressing racism. UniServ Directors learn how to help themselves and others:

- **Establish a common language for talking explicitly about race**
- **Develop a shared understanding of the levels of racism and its impact**
- **Develop a common toolset for next steps in applying an equity lens to our work**
- **Build and deepen awareness of implicit bias, micro-aggressions and stereotypes**
- **Identify skills and strategies to confront implicit bias, micro-aggressions and stereotypes**

While this is not a “training of trainers”, participants should leave with a level of confidence, knowledge, processes and resources allowing them to lead this work with our members. This would be appropriate for any UniServ Director that wants to improve their skills in this area of their work.

Organizing through Advocacy

January 11 – 13, 2022

Transitional Level –UniServ Directors are the first line of contact between the workers in our public schools and the state and national affiliates. The challenges of workload, shifting priorities and having an organizing mindset in the face of overwhelming requests for service make the job a challenging and complex one. This training will help you refocus the following areas of advocacy through a member-engaged, organizing lens -

- **General representation - interrupting the one-person one-problem model**
- **Grievance processing - interrupting the process and paper tiger approach**
- **Representing a member to a school board - interrupting the super hero model**
- **Letter writing - interrupting the staff only brief**
- **Organizing around advocacy issues - moving from problems to issues for building power**

This training is appropriate for any UniServ Director that are working to balance their work with a focus on organizing.

Teachers Unions and Social Justice

February 8 – 10, 2022

Refining Level - UniServ in a growing number of affiliates support a movement that creates multiracial alliances with communities and the importance of centering social justice in their unions.

Social Justice Unionizing seeks to expand how we think about issue identification, power building, bargaining, partnerships, and the wins we achieve. The NEA Center for Organizing has designed a training that builds understanding around four key areas of the book, *Teachers Unions and Social Justice*, 1) defining what social justice unionism is and what it takes to achieve this; 2) broadening union leadership and expectations for what the union can win; 3) developing and testing leaders, structures, and tactics that result in power building; and 4) using internal and external structures to fight systems of injustice. Participants explore case studies where these concepts and practices are being applied at varying levels – introductory, developing and advanced. UniServ Directors learn how to help themselves and others:

- **Assess affiliate readiness and capacity to focus on social justice work**
- **Develop a shared understanding of institutionalized and structural systems of oppression**
- **Establish community partnerships with allies sharing common interests**
- **Build and practice the skills of social justice demands, narrative development, communication and campaign planning**

This is most beneficial for UniServ Directors who work with affiliates already moving into a social justice focused frame for their union work AND that have established leadership and organizing capacity. This is not for affiliates who are focused primarily on membership recruitment or are not yet ready to pursue authentic partnerships with external organizations and communities.

Organizing Strategies for ESP Members

March 8 – 10, 2022

Transitional Level - UniServ Directors who represent ESP locals are responsible for identifying and developing leaders, organizing issue campaigns, and understanding and advocating for the unique needs of ESP members. Strong ESP affiliates have a high ratio of engaged leaders to rank and file members and structures that allow for rapid response, relationship development and collective action. This NEA Center for Organizing training is designed to build skills around ESP leadership identification and development. They will learn how to establish differentiated and innovative structures that can increase member engagement and union presence within and across worksites of the various job families within ESP. UniServ Directors will learn how to help themselves and others:

- **Identify and develop potential ESP leaders**
- **Develop a shared understanding of ESP leadership structures**
- **Explore a number of successful affiliates that have focused on ESP leadership development and engagement structures**
- **Identify relevant resources available for ESP led career and leadership development**
- **Build and deepen skills for working with ESP leaders and growing potential leaders**

This would be appropriate for any UniServ Director that wants to improve their skills in working with ESP members and affiliates.

Effective Leadership Structures & Strong Worksites

April 12 – 14, 2022

Transitional Level - UniServ Directors are responsible for supporting the growth and development of strong local affiliates. Strong affiliates have a high ratio of engaged leaders to rank and file members, and structures that allow for rapid response, relationship development and collective action. This NEA Center for Organizing training is designed to build participants' skills around leadership identification and development. They will learn how to establish differentiated and innovative structures that can increase member engagement and union presence within and across worksites. UniServ Directors will learn how to help themselves and others:

- **Identify and develop potential leaders**
- **Develop a shared understanding of leadership structures**
- **Explore a number of successful affiliates that have focused on leadership development and engagement structures**
- **Build and deepen skills for working with leaders and growing potential leaders**

This would be appropriate for any UniServ Director that wants to improve their skills in this area of their work.

Advancing Racial Justice through UniServ Work

May 10 – 12, 2022

Refining Level - UniServ Directors work with members, supporters and partners to address white supremacy culture in many settings. They have to be highly skilled in leading, coaching and organizing across racial differences and especially in dealing with white fragility and interpersonal oppressions. UniServ also support the organizing efforts of members and leaders who are working to dismantle systemic racism. The NEA Center for Organizing and the NEA Center for Social Justice are partnering to provide a training designed to build participants' skills through awareness of white supremacy culture, interpersonal racism and systemic racism. Participants will learn how to deepen this awareness in others, how to navigate issues of race that surface in their work, and how to access valuable resources for support. UniServ Directors will learn how to help themselves and others:

- **Establish a common language for talking explicitly about white supremacy culture**
- **Develop a shared understanding of the levels of racism with a focus on system examples**
- **Develop a common toolset for dismantling systems of privilege and oppression**
- **Deepen skills and strategies to confront implicit bias, micro-aggressions and stereotypes**

This is open only to UniServ staff who have already participated in Advancing Racial Justice – Transitional Level, and are engaged in Racial Justice work with their affiliates. This is not a “trainer of trainers” however, participants should leave with a level of confidence, knowledge, processes and resources allowing them to lead this work with our members.