

Former NH Listens Program Manager Now Serving as NH Public K-12 District Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

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Andres Mejia, MCD Graduate and NH Listens Fellow

A longtime University of New Hampshire employee was recently named the first Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) for a New Hampshire K-12 public school district.

[Andres Mejia](#), who most recently served as a program manager with the [Carsey School of Public Policy's New Hampshire Listens](#), began his new role as Director of DEIJ with the [Exeter Regional Cooperative School District](#) on Aug. 2. He continues to serve as a [Fellow with NH Listens](#) and will provide guidance to the civic engagement group on its school- and youth-based programs. Mejia is also a 2018 graduate from the Carsey School's [Master in Community Development program](#).

"The work around diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice is very important and will create a community where every student, educator, parent, guardian, and community member feels like they belong," describes Mejia. "When I first got involved in DEIJ work 11 years ago, it was for survival. I realized that I had to learn and continuously involve myself in DEIJ work so that I can feel like I can be part of New Hampshire."

Being part of the UNH community helped me turn my DEIJ work into my passion, that then quickly became my career," he added. "Now, I enjoy working with people from across the state to make New Hampshire a state where everyone can feel like they are heard, seen, and know that they belong. People who know me, know that I bring my full heart into this work. I lead with love, vulnerability, and my whole self in everything I do.

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In his new role with the Exeter school district, SAU 16, Mejia will organize and implement diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice programs across the district's 12 schools, including DEIJ initiatives having to do with curriculum, organizational cultural competency, faculty and staff recruitment and retention, and professional learning. SAU 16 established the new director role to lead its DEIJ Team. The position is the first of its kind with a public K-12 school district in New Hampshire.

Andres has a long history of working on social justice issues at UNH. He built the [Treat Student Fellowship program](#) where students deepen their skills in facilitating conversations across differences. He has made so many great contributions and we are excited about his opportunity to have an impact in the Exeter community.

“Andres has a long history of working on social justice issues at UNH,” said Michele Holt-Shannon, Director of NH Listens. “He built the [Treat Student Fellowship program](#) where students deepen their skills in facilitating conversations across differences. He has made so many great contributions and we are excited about his opportunity to have an impact in the Exeter community.”

Mejia earned his Bachelor of Science in Social Work – with minors in Women’s Studies and Race, Culture, and Power – from UNH before working on many university-wide initiatives aimed at supporting under-represented students and helping campus leaders to become more culturally competent. Prior to joining NH Listens, he served as an Admissions Counselor at UNH and worked as coordinator of the [UNH Connect Program](#), where he advised students of color, multicultural, and first-generation college students.

During his time at UNH, Mejia also served on the UNH President’s Commission on the Status of People of Color, and the [University Commission on Community, Equity & Diversity](#), as well as a staff advisor to multiple UNH student support groups, including the [Black Student Union](#), MOS:DEF (Men of Strength, Education and Family), and Queer and Trans People of Color. Among his achievements in the DEI space, he was inducted into the 2019 UNH Alumni Diversity Hall of Fame, awarded the Pink Triangle and Mover & Shakers accolades in 2014, and the MUB Community Spirit Award in 2013 and 2014.

Within the NH community, Mejia serves on the board for Black Lives Matter’s Seacoast Chapter, the leadership team for the Equity Leaders Fellowship, and the advisory board to the [Endowment for Health, Race and Equity in NH Series](#).

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