

1. **Question:** What is GEAR UP?

**Answer:** GEAR UP is a competitive federal grant program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, that provides six- and seven-year grants to education and community partnerships to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

2. **Question:** What is the purpose of GEAR UP?

**Answer:** GEAR UP's vision is that all students are academically, socially, and financially prepared to enter and complete the postsecondary program or institution of their choice.

GEAR UP's three objectives are:

- Increase academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education.
- Increase high school graduation and postsecondary participation rates.
- Increase students' and their families' knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation, and finances.

3. **Question:** What does the Washington State GEAR UP program do?

**Answer:** Washington State GEAR UP, administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), provides funding to 27 high-poverty school districts across the state, serving over 8,600 students and their families annually. Funds are used to provide early college awareness and preparation activities such as visits to college campuses, homework assistance, family events, and mentoring and counseling services.

4. **Question:** What is the program's funding level?

**Answer:** WSAC has received three consecutive six-year grants, most recently in 2011. The six-year funding total is \$27 million. With the program's mandatory dollar-for-dollar cost-share requirement, the total program investment is \$54 million. Since 2007, the Legislature has contributed funds toward the match requirement, which is currently \$1 million per year.

5. **Question:** Does GEAR UP work?

**Answer:** In a study conducted by Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, which compared 2011 GEAR UP graduates with other low-income students, GEAR UP participants had more positive outcomes on virtually all measures of enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment:

- 69 percent of GEAR UP students attended either a two- or four-year college in the first year after high school, versus 41 percent in the comparison group.
- 26 percent of GEAR UP students enrolled at a four-year college directly from high school, versus 12 percent of the comparison group.

6. **Question:** How can my school get a GEAR UP grant?

**Answer:** The next competitive grant cycle will be in 2017. Eligible school districts (those with at least 50 percent free and reduced price lunch eligibility) will be invited to apply to participate at that time. Notification will go to school superintendents and principals.