

GEAR UP programs focus on college access and success

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a college access and success program.

GEAR UP helps middle- and high school students from low-income school districts prepare for and realize their dream of attaining a college education.

GEAR UP programs in Washington fall into three general categories.

GEAR UP Scholars Project

The *GEAR UP Scholars Project* in Washington, part of the Washington State GEAR UP Program, was established in 1999 under a six-year, \$19 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

A second six-year federal grant of \$21 million was awarded to Washington in 2006. The Scholars Project currently serves 700 students in the 11th grade in 12 predominately low-income school districts.

GEAR UP for Student Success

The Washington State GEAR UP Program also is home to *GEAR UP for Student Success* - the only state-funded GEAR UP program. A State appropriation of \$2.5 million in 2007-2009 established the program, which serves 3,400 students in 25 low-income school districts.



WASHINGTON STATE

GEAR UP stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs.

The Washington Legislature provided an additional \$3 million in 2009-11 to continue to program, which focuses on school districts in which more than 40% of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunches.

GEAR UP Partnership Grants

There are 10 GEAR UP Partnership Grants funded by the U.S. Department of Education in Washington. These grants serve 24,000 students in low-income districts throughout the state.

Partnership Grant administrators are:

- *The University of Washington*
- *Central Washington University*
- *Washington State University*
- *Eastern Washington University*
- *The Evergreen State College*
- *The Wenatchee and Yakima school districts*

GEAR UP targets under-served communities

The GEAR UP program was founded on the belief that, with the right tools and support, any student can go to college and succeed.

GEAR UP helps middle and high school students from low-income and under-served com-

munities build academic skills and life experiences.

GEAR UP programs guide young people through the early years of college preparation by making sure they have access to people, information, resources, and services. GEAR UP programs serve more than 33,000 students in Washington annually. Many are the first in their families to seek post-

secondary education.

Forty-seven states receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education for GEAR UP programs.

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“Being a minority and living on a small Indian reservation, you think that your life will be limited to the reservation. But GEAR UP has proven to me that statements like that are wrong—because I am college bound.

“When I complete college I intend to return to work from my tribe, to give back to my community and to encourage other tribal youth to explore the amazing opportunities the world *has to offer*.”

Thomas—Neah Bay High School

GEAR UP activities, successes

College awareness, preparation

- Nearly 5,000 GEAR UP students have attended annual Summer Institutes at the University of Washington Seattle.
- 250 college visits, career exploration activities, cultural and educational experiences are conducted each year.
- 79 school-based staff provide tutoring, summer school, mentoring, AP instruction, and college and career exploration activities.
- 6 graduation specialists serve students in districts lacking counseling services.
- 12 GEAR UP Coaches mentor and support schools seeking to create a college-going culture.

Under-represented students served

- 53 percent of Washington State GEAR UP participants are from minority families, with the

majority (43.8 percent) from the Latino community. Four GEAR UP schools are on reservations.

Improved college enrollment

- About 74 percent of successful GEAR UP participants continue directly to college compared with a 56 percent college-going rate among all high school graduates.
- The GEAR UP program has paid for 2,500 PSAT, PLAN, and college placement test fees.
- 200 family activities are held annually, including financial aid events, the college application process, and more.

Professional development

- Washington State GEAR UP coordinates and hosts the annual GEAR UP Northwest Regional Conference.
- More than 150 school staff have participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development opportunities.

State support for GEAR UP

- Washington’s GEAR UP for Student Success program provides services for about 3,400 students in 25 school districts.
- The Legislature provided \$2.5 million for the program in 2007-09 and \$3 million for the 2009-11 biennium.
- Washington has the only state-funded expansion of GEAR UP services in the nation.
- GEAR UP supports school district staff and

teachers through added professional development opportunities.

- Encourages parent and family engagement in academics and the college planning process.
- Provides academic support to students through intensive tutoring and mentoring services.
- Supports sustainable and proven programming in low-income schools to ensure students are prepared to enter college.
- Provides holistic programming that focuses on early intervention.