

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness
for Undergraduate Programs
(GEAR UP)

FY 2006 Project Abstracts for
State Grants

Arizona Board of Regents
Northern Arizona University

Arizona ranks 49th in the nation in high school drop out rates, while state public education expenditures per pupil are among the lowest (2005 *Kids Count*, Annie E. Casey Foundation). To address this, 1,673 students (81 percent minority; 78 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch) attending schools in some of the most severely depressed, economically needy areas within Arizona will become the beneficiaries of a GEAR UP State project proposed by Northern Arizona University (NAU). The promise of significant interventions, combined with a scholarship fund, is in response to identified service gaps and infrastructure weaknesses. This project, an alliance of multiple public/private sector partners and 11 originating schools, addresses seven overarching goals: (1) improve low-academic student achievement; (2) strengthen classroom instruction; (3) create a college-bound culture; (4) intensify student aspirations for postsecondary education; (5) institute college and career counseling services; (6) educate parents and students regarding college requirements, costs, and benefits; and (7) provide scholarship funds for students to attend post-secondary institutions.

This project utilizes multiple strategies to ensure adequate breadth and duration of the following services: tutoring; test preparation workshops; professional development; academic, career, and personal counseling; summer college programs; mentoring; college planning sessions and visits; guest speakers; job shadowing; and admission and financial aid workshops for parents and students.

Comprehensive evaluation strategies are used to measure increases in: (1) completion of rigorous courses; (2) standardized test scores; (3) graduation rates; and (4) educational expectations of students and parents. Ultimately, based on NAU's prior GEAR UP experience, the college-going rate of graduating seniors benefiting from the enrichments and interventions provided through this project is expected to double the rate for the state.

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Idaho State Board of Education

Idaho is one of the fastest growing states in the country with a projected growth in population of more than 25 percent over the next ten years. Idaho ranks among the top fifteen states in rates of postsecondary attendance. The state has a significant number of low-income communities both in rural and metropolitan areas. Many of the low-income communities tend to be areas with lower high school graduation rates and lower postsecondary attendance rates. GEAR UP Idaho is designed to increase the number of students in low-income schools who graduate from high school and go on to attend and succeed in postsecondary programs. The goal of GEAR UP Idaho is to provide a comprehensive early intervention program for middle school students, high school students, and parents that will not only inform the participants of postsecondary opportunities but will also prepare students to succeed in secondary school and in postsecondary programs. GEAR UP will provide regional coordinators and postsecondary coordinators to help participating school teams implement early intervention activities such as mentoring, academic help and tutoring, college preparatory curriculum, study skills programs, goal setting programs and postsecondary awareness programs. GEAR UP will provide an element of local control, allowing schools to create teams that will work with the regional coordinators and postsecondary coordinators to design a program that will meet the needs of the participating school. Pilot schools and partner postsecondary institutions have been identified. These schools have very high poverty levels and have agreed to work with the state to implement GEAR UP activities this year due to their high level of need. Participating schools will utilize existing community and state resources and GEAR UP-funded resources to achieve the goals of the program. GEAR UP students will be eligible to receive a renewable scholarship once they have completed the GEAR UP program.

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State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth

The state of Michigan will provide educational preparedness and college awareness to 13,267 low-income, underrepresented students in 38 target school districts and 77 school buildings throughout the state. This GEAR UP (GU) project will supplement and expand an existing state-funded initiative, the Martin Luther King-Caesar Chavez-Rosa Parks College Day Program. Both initiatives share the mission to significantly increase the number of low-income, underrepresented students who complete high school and are prepared to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. A strong partnership includes all of Michigan's 15 public universities, Partnership for Learning, the University of Michigan School of Social Work and the Michigan Department of Treasury Bureau of Student Financial Assistance.

The Michigan GEAR UP/College Day Program is a statewide, sustained and collaborative effort that provides early intervention services and a scholarship component to low-income, underrepresented students and parents. Professional development opportunities for educators will be provided to enhance their skills and abilities when working with target students. The project will produce, support and disseminate college preparation and planning publications to low-income students and their families throughout the state. Additional services will include academic advising, mentoring, financial aid information, career exploration, college visitations, test preparation, educational transitions workshops, and an introduction to technology.

Students who are the most at risk for educational failure will benefit from the Michigan GEAR UP/College Day Program's early intervention and scholarship opportunities. The partnerships and services will assist them to be admitted, retained and to graduate from postsecondary institutions. As a result, the target students will possess the skills and knowledge required to be competitive in today's workforce.

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New Mexico Higher Education Division

The New Mexico Higher Education Department's State GEAR UP project will serve 6,000 low-income students who are below state and national proficiencies in reading, math and science. Residing mostly in rural regions of the state, these students and their families have insufficient knowledge of the courses necessary for college readiness and financial aid tools.

New Mexico GEAR UP students will enroll in the New Mexico college preparation curriculum. Academic and career planning will begin in seventh grade with the completion of Next Step Plans to define and track student progress toward goals. The New Mexico Math, Engineering and Science Academy (MESA) model will be extended to provide services to improve students' math and science proficiency levels using proven MESA interventions such as tutoring, mentoring, hands-on projects, field trips and individualized student support. Summer enrichment camps will supplement these intensive academic interventions. Families will be assisted with college planning through workshops, state conferences and publications. Teachers will participate in professional development to teach New Mexico standards of instruction.

Intended outcomes are improved academic achievement as evidenced by increased student levels of proficiency in reading, math and science, and readiness for success in postsecondary education as demonstrated by performance on the ACT. Increased family knowledge of postsecondary options, requirements, and financing will result in higher levels of educational attainment for students and their families. New Mexico GEAR UP will support and advance New Mexico P-20 policy and practice reforms for long-term effectiveness.

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Nevada Department of Education
Changing the Culture by Raising Expectations

Nevada's GEAR UP application is a collaborative effort between the Nevada Governor's office, Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and stakeholders, including parents, students, business and agency representatives. NDE, as lead agency and fiscal agent, will direct project implementation with the other partners.

Nevada's vision is to change the culture of low academically achieving schools located in economically disadvantaged communities to ensure that students are academically prepared and have the resources to attend and succeed in college. Nevada has a tremendous education need due to its very transient population.

Nevada's program has four goals -- (1) Competency: To increase basic academic skills to enable students to succeed in postsecondary education. (2) Systemic Change: To raise expectations of middle school personnel to help provide all students with the tools necessary to apply for and succeed in postsecondary education. (3) System Building: To increase a common understanding of P-16 articulation issues among Nevada middle schools. (4) Access: To increase GEAR UP student access to postsecondary education options and financing. The service delivery model will be based upon a combination "cohort group" to directly provide services to students and, of equal importance, strategic staff development to make systematic transformation of the involved middle schools. The federal government and Nevada will each invest over \$18 million over six years. This combination is designed to make sustainable improvements in teaching and learning for as many under-served students in Nevada as possible.

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Texas Education Agency

For many minority and low-income students and their families in Texas, the pathway to higher education presents a number of complex challenges. At present, the proportion of Texans enrolled in higher education is declining. The participation in higher education is even lower in areas of the state that serve primarily low-income minority students.

The Texas GEAR UP Project, Students Training for Academic Readiness (STAR), is designed to provide services and support to reach low-income minority school districts to ensure that students are academically prepared for higher education, graduate from high school, and have access to higher education opportunities. In addition, the project focuses on increasing the family's knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation and financing. The Texas Education Agency will partner with the College Board, P-16 Partnerships for Student Success with the College of Education at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, the National Hispanic Institute, and Fathers Active in Communities & Education to implement project activities and ensure that project objectives and performance targets are successfully accomplished.

The STAR Project builds upon the GEAR UP performance targets and focuses on the underserved student population most at risk in Texas in disadvantaged areas and where a college education seems almost impossible. STAR meets not only the goals of the GEAR UP Program, but assures that students of Texas have the educational capabilities to bring themselves, and their future, out of poverty and into the economic mainstream of this nation.

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State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

The school divisions selected for participation in the 2006-2012 GEAR UP program meet the following criteria: (i) high percentage of students who qualify for federal free and reduced lunch programs; (ii) significant achievement gaps between minority students (African American and Hispanic) and white students; (iii) lower retention rates for students who enroll in ninth grade and fail to remain in school for their senior year (roughly 12 percent below the state average of 78 percent); and (iv) substantial percentage of students whose postsecondary plans do not include college. Of the target schools, 37 are rural and ten (10) are located in urban settings.

GEAR UP/ACCESS Virginia will work collaboratively with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and its college and business partners to close achievement gaps among all student groups and increase math, history, science, English, and computer technology scores among students from low-income families. Hispanic students who are hindered by language barriers will receive materials in both English and Spanish. Further, GEAR UP and its college and business partners will educate students and parents about the value of completing high school, and of enrolling in postsecondary school as a means of acquiring the skills necessary for success in a changing world economy. College field trips, career awareness activities, tutoring, mentoring, and summer enrichment programs will be coordinated with input from public and private partners to insure that maximum resources are utilized to send the message that each student is worthy, capable, and expected to succeed in school and beyond.

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