

Access

Affordability

Achievement



*“GEAR UP means hope, hope of maybe having a better life than the one I have. With the jobs that my parents have we can barely make it through with rent and bills. They never had an education past middle school, which would make it an honor for me to be the first one in my family to go to college.”*

— GEAR UP Alumni  
Vancouver, WA

## Washington State GEAR UP

### Background

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a competitive federal program that provides six- and seven-year grants to education/community partnerships and states to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Washington was awarded its third consecutive state GEAR UP grant in September 2011. The six-year, \$27 million award will be used to provide direct services to 6,000 students in 28 high-poverty school districts statewide. With the program’s dollar-for-dollar cost share requirement, the total program investment will be \$54 million.

### Program purpose

GEAR UP provides the direct services necessary to create a college-going culture and increase educational attainment for students from high-poverty schools.

GEAR UP’s programmatic goals call for increasing efforts to make college more affordable and accessible for all students statewide.

Washington State GEAR UP targets its services in high-poverty districts lacking structured college awareness and readiness programs.

Each district has demonstrated the ability and willingness to collaborate with the state’s higher education institutions, businesses, and community-based organizations to address the needs of its student population.



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Washington GEAR UP partners include the Governor's Office, the University of Washington, College Success Foundation, Washington State Employees Credit Union, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Northwest Education Loan Association.



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## Benefits to students

GEAR UP provides several key enrichment activities for participating students. GEAR UP continues to enjoy very high student and family participation rates.

For the most recent grant cycle, which served the Class of 2011, the following outcomes document the success of the program:

- 100% of GEAR UP students attended information sessions related to college admissions, financing, and scholarship opportunities during their junior year of high school.
- 97% of GEAR UP students took the ACT or SAT.
- 98% of GEAR UP students completed the FAFSA.

## Benefits to the state

In 2007, Washington became the first state in the country with state-funded support for the GEAR UP program. The Legislature approved \$2.5 million for the 2011–13 biennium. This funding, combined with other private, partner, and school district resources, allows the state to meet the federal GEAR UP grant's required dollar-for-dollar cost share, and brings the total value of GEAR UP services to \$9 million per year.

## Emerging issues

If Congress is unable to reach a budgetary agreement and sequestration goes into effect, GEAR UP would lose an estimated \$756,000, resulting in a loss of direct GEAR UP services for about 500 students.

## Program results

Compared with other low-income students, GEAR UP participants had more positive outcomes on virtually all measures of enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment, a study by Washington State University found.\* For example, first year college attendance for GEAR UP participants was 68 percent higher than in the comparison group—including 117 percent higher for four-year college attendance.

## For more information contact:

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