

OREGON GEAR UP

RESULTS FROM A RIGOROUS IMPACT STUDY

NOVEMBER 2021

CONTEXT: According to data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, the COVID 19 pandemic had a substantial, detrimental impact on fall 2020 college enrollment rates, affecting impoverished communities disproportionately. Nationwide, high poverty schools showed a decline in college enrollment from 29% for the Class of 2019 to 19.7% for the Class of 2020. Given the strong and direct impact of COVID on college enrollment, results from the rigorous study should be interpreted with caution, as the effects of COVID may have been more substantial than the effects of the intervention being studied; therefore diluting potential impact.

To examine the impact of GEAR UP on high school graduation and college enrollment, **Metis conducted a rigorous quasi-experimental design (QED) study in 2021** using three analytical samples of GEAR UP students based on their GEAR UP exposure (across years). The samples were:

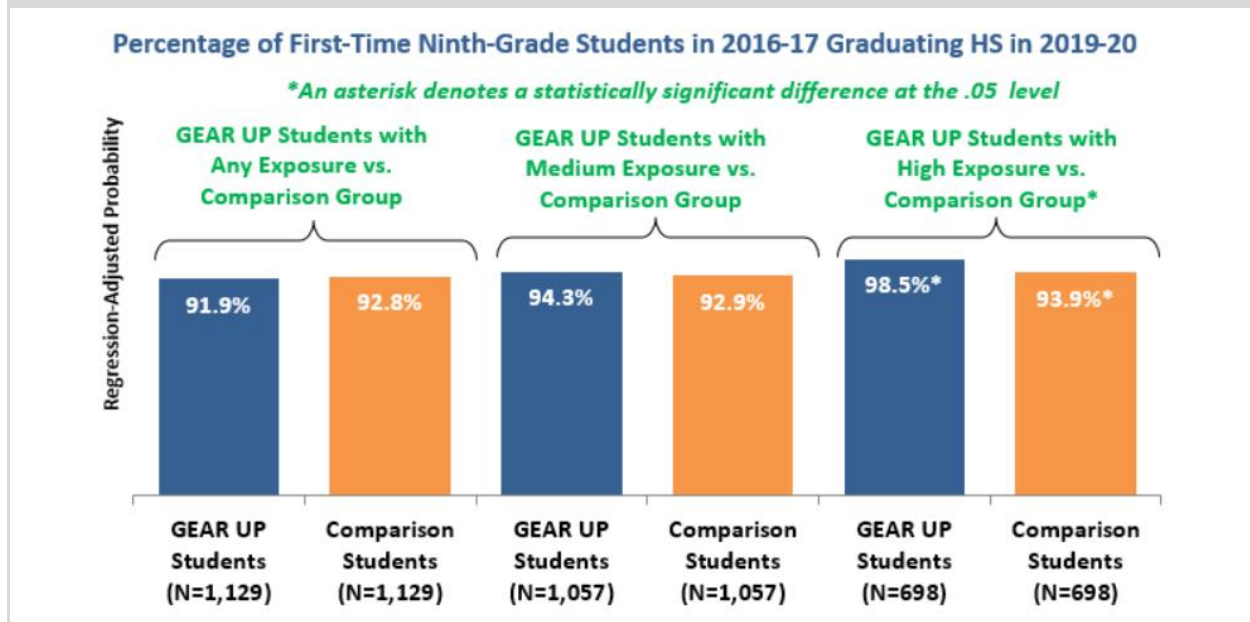
1. **Any exposure** – students who were first-time ninth-graders in 2016–17 and were enrolled in a GEAR UP high school for any length of time;
2. **Medium exposure** – students who were first-time ninth-graders in 2016–17 and were enrolled at a GEAR UP high school for at least two years; and.
3. **High exposure** – students who were first-time ninth-graders in 2016–17 and were enrolled at a GEAR UP school for all six years of the grant.

Outcomes for these three groups were compared to those of students in similar non-GEAR UP schools (i.e., schools in rural areas that had 50% or more of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch). GEAR UP students were matched to comparison group students using propensity score matching based on a number of important baseline characteristics, including gender, race/ethnicity, ELL status, special education status, free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) eligibility, school attendance, and academic performance on the 8th-grade standardized state tests. Key findings are summarized next and presented in more detail in a Technical Appendix.

Results show that GEAR UP students with high program exposure had significantly greater high school graduation rates than the comparison group ($p < .01$), and the differences were substantively important (effect size of 0.559).

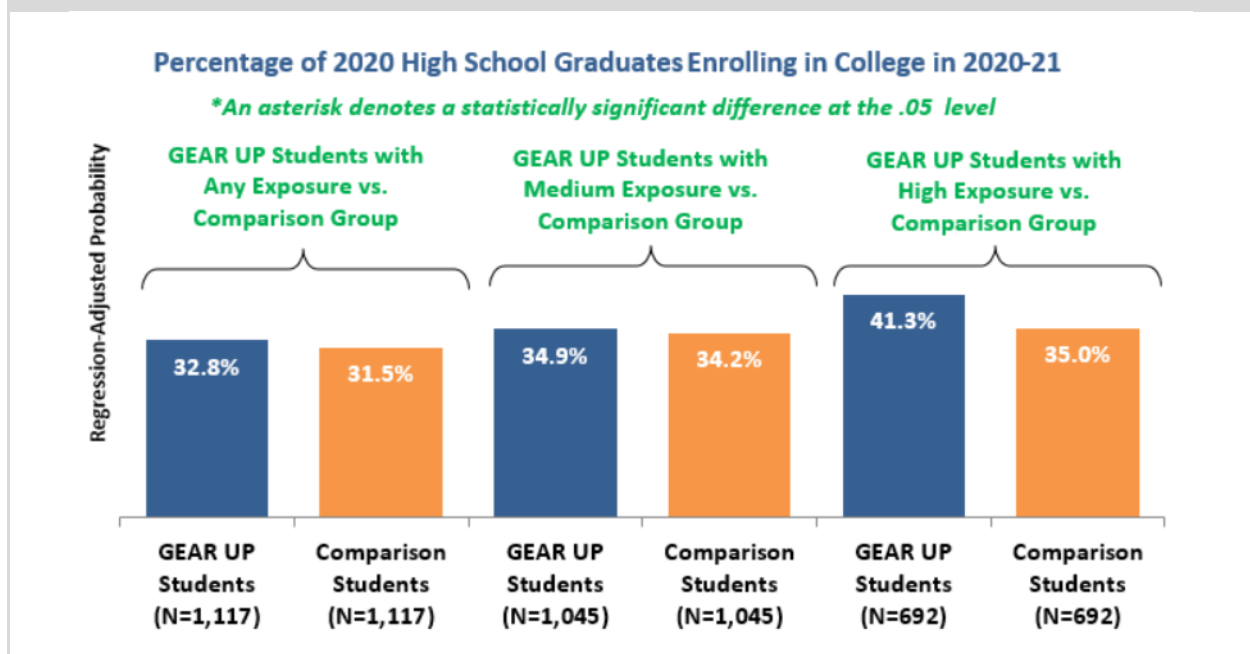
As shown below, GEAR UP students with high program exposure had greater on-time high school graduation rates than students in the comparison group (98.5% compared to 93.9%, respectively). The difference was statistically significant ($p < .01$) with a moderate effect size (0.559). Differences between GEAR UP students with medium exposure and any exposure and the matched comparison groups were not statistically significant.

Figure 1. Impact of GEAR UP on High School Graduation Outcomes



There were no significant differences between GEAR UP and comparison students in college enrollment rates. When looking at college enrollment (defined as anytime enrollment in 2020–21), results presented below show that GEAR UP students with any, medium, and high exposure had higher college enrollment rates than students in the respective comparison groups; however, the differences were not statistically significant ($p < .01$) and did not have a substantial effect size.

Figure 2. Impact of GEAR UP on College Enrollment Outcomes



There were no significant differences between GEAR UP and comparison students in college retention rates. When looking at college retention (defined as retention from fall 2020 to spring 2021), results presented below show that GEAR UP students with any, medium, and high exposure had higher fall to spring retention rates than students in the respective comparison groups; however, the differences were not statistically significant ($p < .01$) and did not have a substantial effect size.

