Dear Fellow Oregonians,

The latest data from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce estimate that in just seven years, 70% of jobs in Oregon will require postsecondary education. Meanwhile, only 60% of Oregon high school graduates went on to college in 2011. These facts underscore the importance of our state’s 40-40-20 goal: that all Oregonians will earn a high school diploma or its equivalent, 40 percent will go on to earn an associate’s degree or credential, and 40 percent will earn at least a bachelor’s degree.

I’d like to congratulate Oregon GEAR UP on over ten years of service across the state helping to transform schools and encouraging young adults on the path to college. Even before Oregon officially adopted the 40-40-20 goal, GEAR UP recognized the need to hold all students to high expectations while giving them the tools to prepare for and succeed after high school. Their enduring good work reaffirms my belief in equitable public education as a vehicle to the American Dream.

As our educational system continues to evolve, Oregon GEAR UP remains flexible and capable of bridging the gap between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions. It’s not just students who benefit from the increased rigor and readiness, either; it’s also educators, parents, communities, colleges, and the future of Oregon. Education and the economy are inextricably intertwined: an educated and engaged workforce is the key to reviving and reimagining our state.

I appreciate the continued efforts of Oregon GEAR UP and all educators, parents, students and organizations that aspire to higher education.

Sincerely,

John Kitzhaber, M.D.
Governor
Contents

1. A Message from the Director
2. What is GEAR UP?
3. Celebrating 10 Years
4. 5 “Rs” to College Readiness
5. Impact & Outcomes
6. Oregon GEAR UP Schools
7. School Promising Practices
8. College & University Partnerships
9. GEAR UP Statewide Activities
10. Student Programs & Star Students
11. Advocacy
12. Professional Development
13. Parent & Community Engagement
14. GEAR UP In The News
15. Contact Us
Greetings,

It is truly hard for me to fathom that Oregon GEAR UP has been in action for just a little over a decade. It seems like just yesterday that we were setting up shop in 16 communities around the state and working toward making college dreams a reality. Since that time more than 32,000 students have been served from 83 schools across the state. And those schools that were among the original group of GEAR UP schools continue to make strides in high school graduation and college enrollment rates. Overall, the college enrollment rates at those schools have climbed 3% from the year before the program began.

I’ve explored the hallways of many of the schools we’ve served and that is where I find my motivation. Watching teachers engage students in hands-on learning, hearing a counselor talk to a student about her college aspirations, and listening to students share their plans for the future are all truly inspiring. This annual report is one way for us to share those experiences with you, our supporters and stakeholders. It is not a replacement for seeing the gleam in the eyes of students or hearing the passion in a teacher’s voice, but I do think the stories that follow will give you a good sense of the amazing work being done in these schools.

As we enter the final year of our six-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the future of our program is somewhat unknown. We have the continuing commitment from The Ford Family Foundation to support the 10 communities funded by their generous grant through 2017 and we’re optimistic that the state will be awarded another federal grant in order for us to carry on this amazing program and bring resources to additional students and communities across Oregon.

On behalf of all the students who are planning for their dreams of great success, thank you for your continued support of Oregon GEAR UP. Here’s to ten more years of even greater success.

All my best,

Stephanie Carnahan,
Director, Oregon GEAR UP
What is GEAR UP?

COLLEGE. It’s not a dream, it’s a plan.
That’s our motto at Oregon GEAR UP, and it guides our work with middle and high schools around the state. Our goal is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary programs by working with school districts, colleges and universities, and a variety of partner organizations.

GEAR UP—which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs—is administered by the Oregon University System and began in 2002 with a six-year grant from the United States Department of Education. We received a second federal grant in 2008 that supports selected schools through 2014 and beginning in the fall of 2011, ten new districts brought GEAR UP to their schools thanks to supplementary funding from The Ford Family Foundation.

Our goal is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary programs.

A total of 22 Oregon school districts receive annual grants of $30,000 to $45,000 to support efforts that set high academic expectations, promote early awareness of college opportunities, and engage students in college and career planning. In addition to providing funds, Oregon GEAR UP provides the districts with technical assistance, professional development, and other resources to aid in their college readiness initiatives. Middle and high school staff in these districts design and carry out most of the GEAR UP program activities, while partner organizations offer curriculum support, mentoring programs, college campus-based events, and additional services to the schools.

Students who participate in their schools’ GEAR UP activities may be eligible for college scholarships, renewable for up to four years, and/or matched savings accounts. Thus, GEAR UP students receive both the knowledge and the capital necessary to fulfill their aspirations for higher education.
Celebrating 10 Years

2012-13 marked our tenth anniversary of creating college-going cultures; the first cohort of schools started with their 7th graders in 2002! To celebrate, we looked back at the big picture and the data trends in high school graduation and college enrollment in addition to checking in with a few key staff and students on their stories about the lasting impact of GEAR UP.

Erika Sanchez, a graduate of Chiloquin High School, first announced her plans to become a nurse as part of the “My Story” project in 8th grade. Eight years later, she’s well on her way!

“I will graduate as an RN in June 2014 from OHSU, and then I want to work in a rural community. One of the best things about college is that every day I’m learning something new.” – Erika Sanchez

“GEAR UP has given us a platform to pull together many resources in an attempt to provide better support for our students as they pursue higher education. We have been able to maintain almost all of the projects we started with the help of GEAR UP.”

Roger Berger, Business Education Teacher, Hermiston High School
Oregon GEAR UP begins with high expectations and emphasizes five key components of effective postsecondary preparation, delivered through the use of data, flexible resources, and professional development for teachers and staff while gaining support of leadership and key partnerships.

This research-based “5 R” model underpins all school-based and statewide GEAR UP activities. Schools create yearly plans that incorporate activities and services that address each area, customizing programs for their individual needs.

- **RAISING AWARENESS**: Students who are aware of college selection, financial aid and other critical steps are more likely to attend.
- **RIGOR**: Students who take challenging courses in high school are better prepared to succeed in college.
- **RELEVANCE**: Students who know that they need a college degree for the jobs that interest them are more likely to go to college.
- **RIGHT CLASSES**: Students who receive early guidance in class selection are better equipped for admission into college.
- **RELATIONSHIPS**: Students who have relationships with people who expect them to go to college are far more likely to attend.

Oregon GEAR UP begins with high expectations and emphasizes five key components of effective postsecondary preparation, delivered through the use of data, flexible resources, and professional development for teachers and staff while gaining support of leadership and key partnerships.

This research-based “5 R” model underpins all school-based and statewide GEAR UP activities. Schools create yearly plans that incorporate activities and services that address each area, customizing programs for their individual needs.
In 2012-13:

**students**
- 7843 served in 37 schools
- 90% believe they will complete some form of higher education
- 45% of seniors completed their FAFSA, a one year increase of 4%

**parents**
- 2,400+ interactions with GEAR UP services
- 93% believe their students will complete some form of higher education
- 94% talked to their student about attending college

**educators**
- 2,000+ hours of professional development
- 83% believe their students will complete some form of higher education
- 66% spent at least one hour/week on college readiness activities
GEAR UP helped get me excited about college!

Heaven Morgan, Student, North Douglas High School

It is my honor to support such a strong program for students!

Betty Komp, Oregon State Representative, HD-22

The bottom line is more students are going to college, and more students and parents are talking about college than ever before at Stanfield because of the GEAR UP program. There is now an expectation of postsecondary education and a marked collegiate culture. It is part of the school mission statement and district school board goals.

Bryan Johnson, Principal, Stanfield Secondary School

I’m going to college because I want to be able to get a good job. Because of GEAR UP I got to learn how to get scholarships and apply.

Alyssa Manes, Student, La Pine High School

When I look back over the past 5 years I can see the dramatic impact GEAR UP has had on this school district. There has been great buy-in by the teachers. It is exciting to witness all of the opportunities that have been made available for students to be ready to attend college emotionally, financially, and from first hand observation of colleges.

Gerry Livingston, Trio Specialist, Brookings-Harbor High School
Public schools around the state were selected to receive GEAR UP funding based on five criteria: demonstration of need, strong staff commitment to the program, sufficient partner involvement, readiness to engage in school-wide college readiness efforts, and a solid plan for sustaining those efforts beyond the life of the grant. All schools must have 50% or more of the student population eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education support twelve rural GEAR UP clusters from 2008 through 2014. With additional funding from The Ford Family Foundation, ten school districts in Coos, Curry and Douglas counties began GEAR UP activities and services with a cohort of 7th graders in the fall of 2011 continuing through 2017.

The selected middle and high schools began targeting students in the 7th grade. With each subsequent year, a new cohort of seventh graders joins the GEAR UP program so that a college-going culture becomes ingrained in the district.
WHO WE SERVE
The middle and high schools that comprise both cohorts yield a demographic profile that is fairly representative of rural Oregon. As reflected in the graphs below, the population served by these schools is lower-income and somewhat less ethnically diverse than the state’s population as a whole.

### Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2014</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011-2017</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Oregon Schools</td>
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</table>

### Percent Minority Student Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2014</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2017</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Oregon Schools</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The high school and middle school counselors worked together to provide an opportunity for 8th grade students to visit the high school before their transition to freshman year. Student-led sessions focused on academic and social support as well as understanding the rigor and systems of the high school. Eighth grade students forecasted for freshman elective classes, attended two classes with high school students, and experienced a typical high school day.

The bulk of the GEAR UP work takes place in our schools, implemented by coordinators and their teams according to local needs. These promising practices showcase a successful, unique activity which gives a sense of the creative ways that GEAR UP fosters a college-going culture.

The 2008-2014 cohort began new activities for the original GEAR UP students, now in their junior year of high school, as well as continued successful programs for the other grades.

2008-2014 Cohort

Aurora
North Marion Middle School
North Marion High School

The high school and middle school counselors worked together to provide an opportunity for 8th grade students to visit the high school before their transition to freshman year. Student-led sessions focused on academic and social support as well as understanding the rigor and systems of the high school. Eighth grade students forecasted for freshman elective classes, attended two classes with high school students, and experienced a typical high school day.
The conversation about increasing rigor is often confined to the core subjects: math, reading, writing. At Brookings-Harbor High School, this now includes art. Kathleen Dingle, the academic dean said, “The staff has worked hard to increase the rigor in core classes and it is quite telling that we are now able to reach out to the arts to do the same for our students dedicated to this field.” AP Art is slated to join the schedule and students have the opportunity to compete in regional art shows. There’s even cross-disciplinary work with art students pairing up with the robotics team to enter a kinetic sculpture race.

“Art is one of the few subjects that enable students to have a variety of resolutions to a given creative problem, each of them valid in their own right,” said Sheryl Tuttle, the BHHS art teacher. “With so many classes adhering to rigid testing schedules, I want to be the one class where creativity and open-ended problem solving is encouraged.”

The Cottage Grove School District took the next step forward in student learning by investing in an online course program for middle and high school students. The ODYSSEYWARE Online Program’s benefits are three-fold: increased rigor, especially for talented and gifted students; a convenient way to offer credit recovery for students who need to re-take a class; and a flexible option for students who need learning opportunities outside of the regular school day.

Although online options were available at all three schools, the program has been especially successful at Kennedy Alternative High School where students earned over 175 credits from 20 different class options. The district plans to pick up the tab for the program when GEAR UP funds are no longer available, especially after ironing out the details of how to implement the program.

“Lessons learned: The curriculum isn’t ‘easy’,” said Brian McCasline, the Cottage Grove GEAR UP Coordinator. “Although it can be accessed by individual students, it’s best delivered with regular check-ins and ‘adult supervision’.”
Fleming Middle School continued to refine a college and career unit for all 8th grade students as part of the Language Arts curriculum. Students read, discussed, and analyzed Careers magazine using active reading strategies; researched and wrote an expository paper on the pros and cons of their career and college choice; and finally practiced their public speaking skills with a group presentation on a college of their choice. “One of the best measurements of success when working with students on setting goals and planning for their futures is their attitude,” said GEAR UP coordinator Jerry Keeling. “Students began seeing how planning now they can make the ‘big bucks’ later.”

“There is an ever increasing percentage of our students headed to college, and an annual increase in the amount of scholarship and award dollars earned by our graduating seniors,” notes Sarah Miller, GEAR UP coordinator, “There are no silver bullets, but consistency is key.” The school holds a regular series of events, field trips and activities for students during the year, with college readiness a constant theme. “It’s such a part of our culture,” she says. “Our plan has, in many ways, become the way we do business with our students.”

The transition to high school can be a rocky road for incoming freshman. Therefore, La Pine High School implemented a mandatory High School 101 class covering study skills, support services, and how students’ high school class selection and performance may benefit their college and career path. The result? Increased attendance and higher grade point averages among ninth graders, which means this course is here to stay.

Students at Glendale Junior High School know what they want to be when they grow up - and what education they will need to get there. All students completed two visits to the Oregon Career Information System website to explore possible careers and the necessary education for success. “When doing the ‘reality check’, several students had eye opening experiences in determining what profession they would like to choose,” said Superintendent Lloyd Hartley.

Glendale
Glendale Junior/Senior High School

Irrigon
Irrigon Junior/Senior High School

La Pine
La Pine Middle School
La Pine High School

Grants Pass
Fleming Middle School
North Valley High School

“Students began seeing how planning now they can make the ‘big bucks’ later.”
“Everybody has a story.” So says Sierra Kennedy, a student at Taft 7-12 School and a reporter for the *Faces of Taft* project. “I knew this before, but this [project] made me recognize it.”

*Faces of Taft* is a new and on-going student-led effort to communicate the stories of the students, the teachers, and the school to the Lincoln City community. The goal is to help the community understand Taft so that they might become more engaged in helping students reach postsecondary education.

This project materialized in five components:

- A newspaper with in-depth profiles of a dozen Taft High School students and staff
- A documentary and introductory video highlighting the recorded newspaper interviews
- A book of memoirs and memories from students
- A graphic novel depicting one student’s harrowing story that brought her to Oregon
- A Facebook page where people can interact and tell their stories of Taft and comment on the other *Faces of Taft* media projects

As a first step towards a mutual understanding of Taft, these materials were distributed at no cost to business, community, student and parent groups - all people that can play a key role in helping sustain GEAR UP-based programs in the years to come.

“This process changed my reporters,” said Barton Howe, teacher and advisor on the project. “Even the ones that thought they knew this school, their peers – even their friends – realized that there was so much more going on than they could have ever guessed.”
Lost River Junior/Senior High School created a detailed writing plan with two goals: to make sure seniors graduate by passing the writing sample, and to prepare students for the upcoming Common Core Standards.

The process actually began at the end of the previous school year when teachers from across curriculum areas opted to join the writing team. With professional development and training in writing assessment provided by the Oregon Department of Education, STEP UP to Writing, and the Klamath County School District, the team broke down the Common Core State Standards into scope and sequence. Next, they trained and calibrated every teacher on the various writing techniques and strategies, developing a binder of tools to use to teach writing across the curriculum that included a common system of assessment.

Thanks to their deliberate efforts, proficiency checks are in place at the junior high school, and high school students are assessed using writing work samples in every subject area. The writing team will continue to work with all staff until 100% of junior high students are proficient on skill set assessments and all seniors can graduate having passed their state writing assessment.

Every Wednesday at Coffenberry Middle School students were treated to a hot breakfast and a short (and fun!) presentation about one of GEAR UP’s 5 R’s to college readiness. One week might be a college panel with current students, the next a skit about the importance of college in career goals. The regular repetition of the college-going message has paid off: in surveys, 91% of students stated that they planned to continue their education after high school and 100% of students reported that they were provided with information from their school about college.

Fact: high school students are more likely to listen to their peers than their parents or teachers. Stanfield Secondary School capitalized on this point by utilizing their own recent alumni (now current college students home on winter break) to speak about their post-high school experience and offer advice to middle and high school students. The alumni met with small groups of students so there was ample opportunity for the younger students to ask questions. In addition, the college students spoke to families during an evening event that also included information about financial aid and paying for college.
All good things must come to an end, which is why Sweet Home High School had been thinking about how to help sustain the GEAR UP program after grant funding ends in 2014. With generous support from the College Access Challenge Grant and The Ford Family Foundation, the school opened the Husky Den; a student-led frozen yogurt business that will help pay for the continuation of some college readiness activities.

GEAR UP students started the project in the spring of 2012, working with the College of Business from Oregon State University. Students performed a community needs assessment, collected data, created a business model, wrote a business plan, and developed a budget. The Husky Den fulfills two needs in the community: a retreat for teens and a frozen yogurt retail establishment. Through this project, the high school commons area was transformed into a relaxed atmosphere with new paint and seating, music, games and wireless internet. Frozen yogurt is sold to students during the day as well as to the public several nights a week.

Partnering with advisors from the Linn Benton Community College’s Small Business Development Center, GEAR UP students identified three major areas of the business: 1) Accounting and Financing, 2) Operations and 3) Sales and Marketing. Students split into three groups, identified tasks for each area and moved forward with assignments. They learned the basics of operating a business including inventory control, purchasing, tracking sales and expenses, creating job descriptions, profit and loss outcomes, facility maintenance and customer relations.

“This project in itself is one huge lesson of perseverance, patience, open communication and looking to others for support,” said Kristin Adams, GEAR UP coordinator and the original visionary of the Husky Den. “The students involved will gain plenty of skills, from the real-life math lessons of converting gallons to ounces to the work ethic and business savvy necessary for their economic future.”
Supported by The Ford Family Foundation, the 2011-2017 cohort primarily served 8th graders during their second year of the grant. However, many activities and services included high school students as well as teacher professional development.

Coquille Valley School joined forces with Myrtle Point and Powers middle schools to host a Career Fair that invited students into conversation with community professionals about their work, training, and job experience. 12 groups of 25 students each rotated among several different professionals including a veterinarian, a journeyman bricklayer, and a sports journalist. Over 96% of Coquille’s 7th and 8th graders attended the event!

“The great thing about this event is that it is already sustainable – very low overhead and fairly easy to secure presenters,” said Ken Smith, GEAR UP coordinator for Coquille. “There was great team effort between all the schools.”
For the second year, every 7th grader at Camas Valley Charter School took part in a GEAR UP class that included a wide variety of instruction and activities designed to prepare students for post-secondary education.

“My favorite example of the success of this class was when I took the 7th graders to the Douglas County Career Fair in Roseburg,” said Wendy Roque, the instructor for the class and the GEAR UP coordinator at the school. “At the conclusion of our visit I was approached by several of the employer representatives who raved about the students’ behavior and professionalism. Many of them also commented that the 7th graders asked great questions and were better prepared than most of the high school students!”

The high school mentors provided feedback and information to the middle school students on the college search and application process. “All of the mentors who are seniors have been actively applying to colleges and financial aid, so it was very helpful to have a real person sitting next to them saying, ‘Man, I wish I had not bombed that freshman photography class, it really killed my GPA,’” Janon Rogers, the GEAR UP coordinator said. “It’s all the same stuff the staff and adult mentors have been saying, but it’s even more effective to have someone who is going through the process real-time confirming it.”

An added advantage to the mentoring program: the mentors themselves get additional exposure to the same college and career-ready concepts!
March Madness at Myrtle Point Junior High School meant more than just basketball. Students studied postsecondary options through the 68 colleges competing in the NCAA tournament, learning about the number of undergraduate students who attend, the most popular majors and other information.

Pacific High School had an astounding 70% of seniors fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, thanks in part to workshops for students and parents that guided participants through the financial aid process. Workshops were held at various times during the school day, in the evening and by appointment to accommodate different schedules and provide support for this critical step for college entry.

“It is standard practice in the district,” said Dixi Howard, GEAR UP coordinator. “It encourages the family to be involved and provides support to the students and their parents.” These regular workshops contribute to the finding that 73% of Pacific High School parents believe their students will be able to afford a 4-year public university.

Who says there’s no such thing as a free lunch? 7th and 8th graders in Powers got the chance to dine AND ask a local professional about their career and educational background. Students could choose to meet with the professional of their choice, which at various times during the winter included a behavioral specialist, a fireman/EMT, a teacher, and various members of the US Forest Service. A low-cost activity, students engaged with the community while learning about potential future occupations.

7th graders and their parents were welcomed into high school for an evening designed to ease the transition, with an introduction to GEAR UP and its emphasis on college readiness. Students and parents worked as a team to complete a scavenger hunt: locating lockers and classrooms, getting ID cards and schedules, and meeting staff throughout the school. The dinner concluded with an overview of GEAR UP and the importance of planning for college starting in the 7th grade.
Both middle schools and the high school in Roseburg focused much of their GEAR UP funding on improving the quality of teaching and learning through professional development of teachers, aligning the curriculum between middle and high school to ensure an effective transition for students and refining the scope and sequence of subjects to meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The goal of the CCSS is to help all students become college- and career-ready by the time they leave high school so it’s a perfect complement to the GEAR UP mission.

Mathematics teachers from both middle schools met regularly with each other as well as with the teachers at Roseburg High School to ensure a seamless transition for students. Their professional learning community participated in regular professional development from the Teachers Development Group in order to fully align their courses. The content teams plan to meet each year to review the year and refine the scope and sequence of the content, resources to be used and assessments to be given.

Similarly, language arts teachers collaborated so that writing calibration and common assessments occurred at all levels. The work has already shown promising payoff with a 30% increase in writing skills in two years.

The idea sprung from necessity. Parent attendance at the spring conferences was dismal, so the staff at Yoncalla Elementary School brainstormed a creative way to engage both students and parents. The result: student-led conferences that brought in almost 100% of 7th and 8th grade parents.

The goal of the conference was to help students and parents transition smoothly to high school, college and career and the requisite rigor and readiness. The students’ reviewed their 6-year personal education plan and report card with their parents, which included a discussion on future class selection and requirements for high school graduation and college admission as well as career aspirations and what it takes to get there.

“I believe strongly in our spring conferences,” said Carrie Davis, the Business/Careers/Health teacher at Yoncalla High School and GEAR UP coordinator in her “spare” time. “The student-led parent conferences will continue to be a yearly event.”
Statewide Activities

GEAR UP thrives in large part due to our partnerships with universities, programs, and organizations that provide professional development, campus programs for students, and funding for low-income students and school staff across the state. In 2012-13 we instigated, continued and expanded many collaborations across the state.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

- Access to Student Assistance Programs In Reach of Everyone (ASPIRE)
- Camp Odyssey & Oregon Solutions
- Community and Shelter Assistance Corp. (CASA)
- Education Northwest
- Education Partnerships, Inc. (EPI)
- Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC)
- Gear Up for Excellence
- Hall Pass Tour
- National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP)
- NeighborWorks® Umpqua
- Oregon Career Information System
- Oregon College Access Challenge Grant
- Oregon College Access Network
- Oregon Community Foundation
- Oregon State University Precollege Programs
- Oregon Student Access Commission (OSAC)
- Path to Scholarships®
- Seeds Training
- Southern Oregon University Precollege Programs
- Student Paths
- The Ford Family Foundation
The Hall Pass Tour delivered a series of high energy music concerts designed to get youth excited about leveraging higher learning to pursue their dreams. The group stopped in five schools in five days, showcasing their talents and providing workshops that helped students identify their goals and discover resources to make them tangible.
Individual Development Accounts
We continued our partnership with CASA of Oregon and NeighborWorks® Umpqua to offer income-eligible students a matched college savings account, also known as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). Schools assisted students and families in the enrollment process, giving them the tools to begin investing in their future. Currently 87 students are enrolled, with every dollar a student saves matched up to five dollars.

College Application Week
Five current and former GEAR UP schools plus two community-based organizations piloted a College Application Week event at their school, with the support of the Oregon College Access Challenge Grant and The American Council on Education. Close to 400 students submitted more than 500 applications to colleges across the country.

Student Programs

Career Photo Booth
Budding nurses, marine biologists and video game designers learned about the education requirements for their future careers. The Photo Booth travelled to eight schools and served 240 students in 2012-13.
Star Students

Student of the Month
Oregon GEAR UP recognizes one student a month who has demonstrated determination, leadership, teamwork, or overcome adversity and is on track for college success. Teachers and administrators nominate outstanding students, like Goldie Miller (left), now a senior at Taft 7-12 School with plans to apply to the University of Oregon to major in journalism and business.

Other students recognized:

**Alyssa Harms**
Taft 7-12 School

**Colton Mullings**
La Pine High School

**Brandi Rodgers**
Brookings-Harbor High School

**Gracie Lyons**
Kacey Madsen
Elkton Charter School

**Taryn Lowes**
Yoncalla High School

National Youth Congress
Alyssa Harms from La Pine High School represented Oregon at the National Youth Congress in San Francisco during the National GEAR UP Conference. Alyssa learned leadership and communication skills that she will bring back to her school to further a college-going culture.

Success Stories
Lisandra Mesa Falcon is a graduate of Roosevelt High School in Portland and attends Western Oregon University where she is studying community health education and Spanish. She is just one of several Success Stories from the first cohort of GEAR UP schools (2002-2008) featured on our website and Facebook page.
College Success Camp

Oregon State University Precollege Programs’ led 30 rising seniors from ten GEAR UP high schools in an intensive week of hands-on science and engineering activities as well as step-by-step guidance in applying to college. Students participated in the application essay writing and editing process with additional help from the Office of Admissions and the Writing Center.

Camp M.D.

Future nurses, doctors, and dentists spent a week at Southern Oregon University learning about careers and majors in the medical field. The 17 high school students raved about their experiences in the dentistry lab at Rogue Community College, touring Mercy Flights, and participating in Oregon Health and Science University’s nursing lab simulations.
GEAR UP builds bridges between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions through field trips and summer programs on college campuses. In 2012-13, over 5,500 students benefitted from a college campus experience. Campus representatives also visited schools as part of college and career fairs to meet with students and parents.

**Engineering Camps**
Through a partnership with the Center for Outreach in Science and Engineering for Youth (COSEY) at Oregon State University, four engineering student instructors delivered two-day camps for middle school students in four GEAR UP communities. The students were busy with hands-on activities exploring wind power, building solar cars, experimenting with circuits and more.

**Student Leadership Event**
Over 100 middle and high school students from eleven GEAR UP clusters came to Western Oregon University for three days of activities focused on leadership, academic success, and personal growth led by a team from Gear Up for Excellence and Seeds Training. Students worked in groups with college student mentors on problem-solving and teamwork challenges that apply to real-life situations.
Advocacy

National GEAR UP Week
Oregon celebrated by highlighting current and former students in videos, infographics, blog posts and more. In addition, schools held a variety of GEAR UP kickoff events that included door decorating contests and postcard writing campaigns to be shared with elected officials and other stakeholders.

GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy
Elizabeth Gonzalez, a graduate of Madras High School and a junior at Oregon State University joined 29 other students from across the country for the inaugural leadership development program. It included a trip to Washington D.C. to receive training on grassroots advocacy, social media advocacy, and leadership skills during a week-long retreat. Elizabeth looks forward to applying these skills here at home during the 2013-14 year in order to create positive change in education policy for her younger peers.
Professional Development

Oregon GEAR UP continued to provide teachers and administrators with a broad range of professional development opportunities. GEAR UP coordinators and administrators attended the regional conference, GEAR UP West, in Seattle and the national NCCEP/GEAR UP Conference in San Francisco to present and learn promising practices from across the country. In addition, school teams were able to discuss ideas, brainstorm initiatives, and plan programs during statewide meetings.

SUCCESS Retreat
Once again, the three-day retreat for Supporting Unique Community Coalitions Engaged in Student Success (SUCCESS) was one of the most valuable and compelling professional development opportunities for GEAR UP clusters.

Co-organized with Education Northwest, schools were encouraged to bring a diverse team of constituents including coordinators, teachers, parents, administrators and even students to learn from regional experts and generate an outline for GEAR UP programs and services at their school in the year ahead.

Principals’ Leadership Program
For the fourth year in a row, GEAR UP school leaders benefitted from the expertise of school administrator consultants and each other. School principals received a personal education mentor, access to current research on school trends, workshops, and networking opportunities.

In addition to receiving research briefs on participant-generated topics, principals shared their own best practices in Principal Perspectives, a podcast series available on the GEAR UP website and iTunes.

School Visits
GEAR UP schools opened their doors to other school leaders to share best practices around student engagement and success.

La Pine Middle and High School shared their efforts on engaged learning, academic intervention strategies, and teacher observations. Cottage Grove High School covered topics such as writing across the curriculum, credit by proficiency, College Now/AP, and credit recovery. Visiting administrators and staff observed best practices in action with ample time to ask questions and get advice on how best to implement ideas in their own school.
Parent Newsletter
Recognizing the critical need to engage parents with information about postsecondary education and steps for college preparation, we continued to offer schools the GEAR UP Gazette, a customizable quarterly parent newsletter with timely information about financial aid, summer opportunities and more. Schools added their own events and important reminders and distributed the newsletter either electronically or in paper form.

Community Engagement Toolkit
Getting the word out about the importance of college to the community is imperative to sustain the services supported by GEAR UP. Therefore, Community Engagement Specialist Becky Wilson created a customizable toolkit to help schools build support for their GEAR UP goals, program and activities. “It’s all about utilizing key community assets, partners, and champions to support the sustainability of GEAR UP,” she said.
GEAR UP In the News

Taft students gear up for college success

Through funding from GEAR UP, Taft now not only brings kids to the colleges but the colleges to them through fairs and the like. Its involvement in the school’s ability to promote secondary education hardly stops there, however. GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is intent on encouraging young people to start planning for college in middle school by focusing on helping underserved students prepare for college and gain access to financial aid. “It provides the financial resources and the extra support for us to connect high school kids to college and how to get the most out of our kids to pursue secondary education,” Taft counselor Vicky Roller said.

The Newberry Eagle, 3.15.13, by Sandra Jones
Students focusing on college careers

Students responded to a survey about what they learned, what they liked, and what they decided about their future. A few of the responses reported are recorded (and shortened) here:

What I liked:
• I liked the fact that the people were so nice. Another thing is the people told us interesting things.
• We got to really think about our future.

What I learned:
• I learned that I need to keep going on my goals.
• I learned that jobs that don’t seem very fun actually are fun.
• Dream Big! Never stop. Just because you live in a small town doesn’t mean you can’t go to college.

What I decided about my future:
• It’s going to rock!
• I need to plan it wisely.
• I will be going to college because it assures me a better future and better jobs.
• I made a decision to save all my money for college.

Community Vitality, Fall 2012
Educating a better workforce

“We have a chicken-and-egg situation in rural communities: In order to grow local and attract outside businesses, we need a qualified workforce, but without local jobs, it’s hard to retain workers who flee to more populated areas,” says John Amoroso, program officer for The Ford Family Foundation. “I believe the solution lies in providing opportunities and access to training beyond high school for local students, while working with businesses to come up with programs that meet their needs locally.”

The first group of students doesn’t start graduating until June 2014, but results are already encouraging. “We are changing the culture of academic performance and increasing the number of students who have an expectation of going on after high school,” [Oregon GEAR UP Project Director Stephanie] Carnahan says. “We are seeing test scores increasing, and already high graduation rates are even higher.”

The Umpqua Post, 6.5.2013,
Grant helps class of ‘17 GEAR UP for college

“I’m so excited about the worlds of opportunity this grant opens up for our students,” said Smart. “And, this is just the beginning. The grant pays for daily afterschool tutoring and tutoring on Fridays for all students. I have more than $3,000 budgeted for eight summer camps that our students can attend, all paid for with GEAR UP funds. We will also have an engineering camp sponsored by Oregon State University here on our campus during June that will be completely free for our students. It’s just a fantastic opportunity for Reedsport students to be exposed to the unlimited possibilities that higher education has to offer them.”

Find us online!
The latest resources and information on college readiness is on our website and delivered weekly in our e-newsletter. And we’ve got you covered on social media: from Facebook to YouTube, Twitter to Pinterest, be sure to friend, follow, subscribe and like us to join the conversation.

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