



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Denison High School Students Participate in ‘Heart of a Student’**  
*Rap, hip-hop and social media elements get students excited about college*

**Des Moines, IA., March 12, 2013** – Denison High School students will have the opportunity to experience a one-of-a-kind high school assembly that incorporates rap, hip-hop and social media elements to engage students and get them thinking about higher education. The event, which will be held at Denison High School on Wednesday, March 13, 2013 at 1:00 p.m., is made possible through GEAR UP Iowa, a federally-funded grant program administered by the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid).

Heart of a Student was founded by Dante Means, a former admissions counselor for Iowa State University and University of Northern Iowa. The program engages students through music and social media to get them to look beyond high school and encourages them to invest their energy into positive activities that support their future aspirations. Unique in its approach, Heart of a Student provides a fun, energetic and exciting atmosphere while incorporating educational and college planning content.

“The mission of GEAR UP Iowa is to significantly increase the number of students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education,” explained John Gilman, GEAR UP Iowa Project Coordinator for Iowa College Aid. “We are excited to partner with Heart of a Student and to bring this experience to the students at Denison High School,” stated Gilman. “Heart of a Student aligns with GEAR UP Iowa’s mission and promotes the importance of higher education in a format that is highly engaging and relatable to high school students.”

The GEAR UP Iowa program began serving a cohort of seventh grade students during the 2008-2009 academic year at partner schools in 18 Iowa communities with greater than 50 percent of their student population participating in the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program. The approximately 7,000 GEAR UP Iowa students, now high school juniors, many of whom are from economically disadvantaged and/or academically at-risk backgrounds, are in more than 150 high schools across the state. GEAR UP Iowa has worked with partner schools over the past five years to help prepare students for success in postsecondary education.

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The majority of GEAR UP Iowa cohort students attend high school in one of the following communities: Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Columbus Junction, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Denison, Des Moines, Diagonal, Jefferson, Keokuk, Marshalltown, Ottumwa, Perry, Sioux City, Storm Lake, Walnut and Waterloo.

More information on GEAR UP Iowa can be found on its website, [www.gearupiowa.gov](http://www.gearupiowa.gov). Information regarding Heart of a Student can be found at [www.heartofastudent.com](http://www.heartofastudent.com). In addition, information to help Iowa families plan, prepare and pay for college is available on Iowa College Aid's website at [www.IowaCollegeAid.gov](http://www.IowaCollegeAid.gov).

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***About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission***

*Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they plan, prepare and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$60.0 million annually; provides I Have A Plan Iowa™, the state-designated career information system, free to all Iowans; partners with financial institutions in the state to offer an online financial literacy platform free to all Iowa high schools; conducts research and distributes higher education data; and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being used to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education's College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Iowa College Aid is also responsible for registering postsecondary institutions and other instructional schools under Iowa Code Chapter 261B and sections of Chapter 714. More information is available at [www.IowaCollegeAid.gov](http://www.IowaCollegeAid.gov).*