



Family Newsletter

What is GEAR UP Iowa?

GEAR UP (which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a program made possible through a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education aimed at preparing students and families academically, financially and inspirationally to enroll and succeed in college.

Beginning in Fall 2014, this seven-year project supports nearly 6,300 students beginning in 7th grade and follows them as they progress through school. GEAR UP Iowa is a long-term partnership between Iowa College Student Aid Commission, 12 school districts and nearly 40 institutions of higher education and community-based organizations.

For more information on GEAR UP Iowa, please
visit our website:
www.gearupiowa.gov

GEAR UP Scholarships

Congratulations!
**Your student has been selected to receive
the GEAR UP Iowa scholarship!**

Your student is one of the nearly 6,300 students at 12 Iowa school districts selected to participate in GEAR UP Iowa. This program helps students and families prepare for higher education through different services and activities, which include the GEAR UP Iowa scholarship. GEAR UP Iowa scholarships, for use toward postsecondary education, will be available for students upon graduation from high school in 2020.

All students identified as GEAR UP Iowa participants are eligible to receive the scholarship. Your student must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen in order to receive the scholarship or any other federal financial aid.

Your student will receive at least \$600 per year for up to 4 years (\$2,400 total). In order to receive the scholarship, the student needs to be enrolled at a community college or university and take out the first disbursement of the scholarship prior to the age of 22.

Economic limitations can prevent students from pursuing postsecondary education. The GEAR UP Iowa scholarships will help to overcome some of the financial barriers faced by many students and families. It is important to encourage your student to do well in school, participate in extracurricular activities and take advantage of all GEAR UP Iowa services.

Being a good student and becoming involved in the community could open opportunities for other scholarships for use toward postsecondary education. We will be working together to make sure more opportunities are available for your student!

In This Issue

What is GEAR UP Iowa? • Alumni
Success • GEAR UP Facilitators
Corner • School Spotlight • Advice
For Incoming 8th Graders • Parent
Tip • Myth vs. Reality



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Alumni Profile

Taylor Hills
Columbus Junction High School
GEAR UP Iowa Alum



Each issue, GEAR UP Iowa recognizes the success of program graduates and their accomplishments beyond high school.

College: St. Ambrose University
Major: Public Relations

First Year Highlights: Dean's List 1st and 2nd semesters and Cross Country and Track teams winning conference titles

College Activities: Cross Country/Track, KALA Radio Station (Campus Radio), Resident Assistant, Communications Club and Phi Eta Sigma honors program.

Words of Wisdom & Encouragement: "When making college decisions make sure you are listening to your heart. **Your decisions should be based on your wants/needs and these are different for everyone.** Visit as many colleges as you can in order to find your perfect fit! This is the easiest way to insure you will be happy with where you end up."

GEAR UP Facilitators Corner

GEAR UP Iowa Facilitators work with school districts to offer support for students, families and school staff working with GEAR UP Iowa. By assisting with programming at schools, the GEAR UP Iowa Facilitators help ensure students learn about their educational options, graduate from high school and move easily into their education beyond high school. Meet our team:



Flor Slowing, M.S. International Development, Iowa State University
Denison, Perry & Storm Lake

"My high school offered many volunteer opportunities. As I was volunteering in a local hospital, I realized how much I enjoy working with people and I started to develop a passion for health education and community outreach."

Nathan Svare, B.S. Psychology, Bemidji State University & M.S. Social Responsibility, St. Cloud State University
Fort Dodge, Clinton, Columbus Junction & Davenport

"As a first-generation college student, I had a lot of support from teachers, coaches, family and the community in my pursuit for a higher education. That support is what propelled me to excel. I've always wanted to pay it forward and now I have the opportunity to do that. I am so passionate about assisting students, in particular first-generation students, because **I want them to know that adults do care about their success and we are willing to assist.**"



Tiffany Berkenes, B.A. K-12 Art Education, Simpson College
Des Moines & Marshalltown

"When I was a child, I loved coloring and 'playing school.' Thankfully, both art and helping people aligned with my strengths, so **it made sense to combine the two passions and become an art teacher.** I stayed involved in both interests throughout school and eventually majored in art education. Following a year of teaching, I have since worked in education with a focus on another passion: empowering underrepresented students and families to succeed, and am an artist by hobby."



Denise Riley, B.S. Child, Adult & Family Services, Iowa State University
Cedar Rapids, Ottumwa and Sioux City

TK



School Spotlight: Fort Dodge Middle School

Approximately 25 GEAR UP Iowa 7th graders from Fort Dodge Middle School attended a two week summer program in June.

This summer program, provided using GEAR UP Iowa funds, allowed students to participate in hands-on STEM activities including constructing water rocket launchers and cardboard furniture, using 3-D computer modeling and experimenting with electric wiring to make a bug.

Students also had the opportunity to visit the Science Center. At the end of each day, students were given time to reflect on what they had learned and how they will apply their knowledge in the future.

The goal of this summer program was to help students see the value of getting a good education. John Newman, summer program coordinator and science teacher at FDMS said: "We hope that students will realize that a solid foundation in education will provide them with the skills needed to do things they don't realize they're capable of doing."



Parent Tip

Regularly discuss college and career dreams as early as possible. Be supportive and seek extracurricular activities, camps and classes that foster growth and exploration of your student's goals.

Many organizations offer scholarships and financial assistance for summer programs & extracurricular activities.

Turning Passions Into College & Career

With hundreds of college majors and career options, it can feel overwhelming for students to plan for the future. Together, we can help guide students along their path to discover what they love and enjoy. PASSION is at the heart of choosing what a person wants to do each day in their life after college. If a person truly loves what he or she does, it won't feel like work.

It's important for students to start recognizing those passions, in addition to their talents, skills and values early on so they can look for opportunities to further develop them through experience. Below are some ideas on how to help students discover their passions:

Myth vs. Reality

Myth:

You should know what you want to do for the rest of your life before choosing a major.

Reality:

While it is important to start exploring careers at an early age to fit your interests and talents, an estimated 20% to 50% of students enter college undecided on their major. Additionally, 75% of students will change their major at least once before graduation.

- Encourage your student to try a variety of extracurricular activities or volunteer experiences within the school or community, then reflect on what they liked or didn't like about each – these can also be included on scholarship and college resumes/applications!
- What makes them happy and what motivates them?
- What are their favorite classes and what about those classes do they like?
- Who do they look up to in their personal life, historical figures, classmates, or celebrities?
- What accomplishment has made them most proud and why?
- If they could do any job for a day, what would it be and why?
- Connect them with a college student or other adult mentor with similar passions.

If students have a passion for what they're doing and/or studying, they will stay involved, succeed more in school, and it will ultimately lead to a better chance of graduating college and finding a satisfying career!



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GET CONNECTED

Khan Academy

www.khanacademy.org
Twitter: @KhanAcademy
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This free service offers learning exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized dashboard for students and parents to study at their own pace in and outside of the classroom. You can practice subjects as math, science, computer programming, history, art history, economics, and more! Their math missions guide learners from kindergarten to calculus and have worked with NASA and the Museum of Modern Art for special features.



"You only have to know one thing: You can learn anything!" – Khan Academy

GEAR UP Iowa is an initiative of



IowaCollegeAid.gov

Because College Changes Everything

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from the U.S. Department of
Education.

Attention parents!

Please take a few minutes to take
our GEAR UP Iowa survey!

English: tinyurl.com/GUIParents2015

Spanish: tinyurl.com/GUIPadres2015