



Family Newsletter

Welcome to the Team!

Your student is one of nearly 6,300 students at 28 schools in 12 Iowa school districts selected to be a part of GEAR UP Iowa, a program that helps students and families prepare for higher education as they progress from 7th grade through their first year of college. High academic expectations, learning strategies, financial education and other innovative programs will help increase college readiness for both students and parents.

GEAR UP Iowa facilitators will be with your student every step of the way, supporting students and schools with such services as:

Academic Tutoring and Mentoring

•
College Visits and Tours

•
After-School, Weekend and Summer Enrichment Programs

•
Job Shadowing, Career Fairs and Internships

•
Scholarships and Financial Literacy Education

•
College and Career Advising

•
Parent Nights

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

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@GEARUP_Iowa

Alumni Profile

Mikolina Lowe
Des Moines North High School
GEAR UP Iowa Alum



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

College: University of South Florida
Major: Microbiology

First Year Highlight: Volunteering at Camp Boggy Creek, which is a free, safe and medically-sound camp that enriches the lives of kids with serious illnesses & their families.

College Activities: Cellular Molecular & Microbiology Club, Surf Club, Microbiology Club, Marine Biology Club and Camp Boggy Creek USF Chapter

Words of Wisdom & Encouragement: "Don't be afraid to try something new! Try a new club, subject, reading book or sport. **When you try something new by stepping outside of your comfort zone you can learn a lot.** You might open up new opportunities. But you'll never know unless you try. Don't let anything get in your way of your own success. With determination, patience and perseverance you can and will be successful."

Meet the GEAR UP Iowa Facilitators

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 educational options, graduate from high school and move easily into their education beyond high school. Meet our team:

Denise Riley, B.S.
Child, Adult & Family Services, Iowa State University
Fort Dodge, Ottumwa & Sioux City

"I encourage students to discover their passions and how those can relate to a future career. They should use their passions and strengths to guide their choices in college and beyond."



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



"In college, I was able to pay for my room and board by applying to be a Resident Assistant in the Residence Halls. This is one example of a job on campus to help pay for college costs."

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

"I remember how my mother, who never went to college, was always encouraging me to keep going and do my best during my years of college. She was my best supporter."



Tiffany Berkenes, B.A. K-12 Art Education, Simpson College

Des Moines & Marshalltown

"One of my favorite things about my college experience was learning other skills and passions outside of the classroom through involvement in campus activities and organizations, service-learning trips and international travel. I encourage students to explore extracurricular activities and volunteer as early as middle school and throughout high school – it's not only fun, rewarding and makes a positive difference on others, but it's also important to include on college and scholarship applications."

School Spotlight: Miller Middle School

Architecture, carpentry, law enforcement, social work, journalism and photography are just a handful of the several careers GEAR UP Iowa 7th graders at [Marshalltown's Miller Middle School](#) were able to learn more about from over 80 professionals in the community!

Over a period of four days in March, Marshalltown students explored careers of their choice with fun, interactive presentations; learning the steps needed in school to reach those career goals.

Parents were also invited to attend sessions with their student. Thanks to the staff for the hard work they put in to organize the Career Days. It was a successful event that showed students that what they do today connects to what they can and will do in the future.

If you'd like to help your student explore possible careers and plan for their future, please visit I Have A Plan Iowa at www.ihaveaplaniowa.gov.



Parent Tip

Volunteer with your student at school events and help promote volunteerism around your community. This not only helps make a positive difference in your community, but looks good on college and scholarship applications.

Advice for Incoming 8th Graders

While it might seem early, incoming 8th graders can start preparing for college now. Students do not need to have a career path or major in mind yet, but by considering personal interests, they can start exploring different career opportunities. This will allow them to see how their education in middle and high school will help them achieve their goals.

Here are five tips for students to keep on pace for college:

Practice study skills. It is important to start learning how your student can best study for school. Suggest using a planner to help set aside study time for their classes. They should also find an ideal space that lacks distractions so they can focus.

Choose courses/classes wisely. Encourage your student to take courses that are challenging. If your student is able to take advanced courses now, it can help meet college and university application requirements in a few years.

Start saving for college. Every little bit you and your student save for college helps. 529 College Savings Plans through the State of Iowa allow you to start putting money toward your student's post-secondary education while also providing state income tax breaks.

Talk with their school counselor or college advisor. Your student's counselor or college advisor can offer advice on what classes to take, as well as which extracurricular activities to pursue. They'll also keep you both informed of any academic enrichment programs available through your school or local colleges.

Get involved with extracurricular activities. Many colleges and universities look at your student's involvement in high school extracurricular activities. Start now by exploring available extracurricular activities with your student.

Myth vs. Reality

Myth:

The best time to visit a college is after you have been accepted.

Reality:

It's best to visit potential colleges before you apply. Being on a college campus is the best way to get a feel for the college and help you decide if it's the right fit for you. If possible, visit again after you have been accepted. If you can only make one visit, make it before you apply.



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Welcome to GEAR UP Iowa!

Congratulations, your child is
a GEAR UP Iowa student!

Look inside this newsletter to learn how nearly
40 partnering institutions of higher education
and community-based organizations are
working to improve student success in 12
partner school districts in communities
including:

Cedar Rapids • Clinton
• Columbus Junction •
Davenport • Denison •
Des Moines • Fort Dodge •
Marshalltown • Ottumwa •
Perry • Sioux City •
Storm Lake

Si desea leer este boletín en español
puede visitar nuestro sitio web:
www.gearupiowa.gov



IowaCollegeAid.gov
Because College Changes Everything

GEAR UP Iowa is a program provided
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