



Section 1: Program Information

GEAR UP National Program Overview

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a federally funded college access grant program. GEAR UP was authorized by Title IV of the 1998 Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965. The purpose of GEAR UP is to increase the number of low-income and first generation students who are prepared to enter and succeed in college.

To meet this goal, legislation enables GEAR UP programs to provide:

- Financial assistance, academic support, counseling, mentoring, outreach and supportive services to secondary school students to reduce the risk of students dropping out of school or the need for remedial education at the postsecondary level.
- Information to students and their families about the advantages of postsecondary education and information about college financing options.

The U.S. Department of Education provides six or seven year GEAR UP grants to states and partnerships to provide college access services at high-poverty middle and high schools. Partnerships consisting of one or more local education agencies and one or more higher education institutions and community organizations may apply for GEAR UP partnership grants. The governor of each state may designate only one agency to apply for and administer a GEAR UP state grant.

The federally-required GEAR UP program objectives are:

1. Increase student academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education;
2. Increase rates of high school graduation and enrollment; and
3. Increase student and family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation and financing.



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GEAR UP Iowa Program Overview

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded a second GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant to the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid) beginning in fall 2014. The program is a long-term partnership between Iowa College Aid, 12 partner school districts, and nearly 40 partnering institutions for higher education and community-based organizations. This seven year project will support a cohort of about 6,300 students in identified middle schools, beginning in the 7th grade, and will follow them as they progress through school. The students and their parents will receive a variety of services aimed at preparing them academically, financially, and inspirationally to enroll and succeed in college. Upon enrollment in a college, GEAR UP students will receive a modest scholarship for up to four years.

Iowa College Aid will work with identified school districts and other partners to achieve the GEAR UP objectives through four main strategies:

1. Collaborative alignment with college and career readiness efforts;
2. Increase the capacity of counselors and advisement;
3. Develop, implement and assess a non-cognitive skills curriculum; and
4. Create early, varied and effective college exploration experiences.

GEAR UP Iowa Program Goals:

Student Achievement

Increase the number of minority and low-income students in GEAR UP Iowa partner schools who graduate from high school prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Support High School Programs

Support GEAR UP Iowa partner high schools in implementing educational programs to ensure students successfully complete rigorous college-preparation curricula, graduate from high school, and easily transition from K-12 into higher education programs.

Student and Family Support

Foster a statewide "college going" culture among low-income, minority, and first-generation students and increase knowledge and support as students and families plan, prepare and pay for postsecondary education beyond high school.

Seamless Education System

Partner with the Iowa Department of Education and other organizations with similar missions to support systems and curricula that increase higher education access and student preparedness.

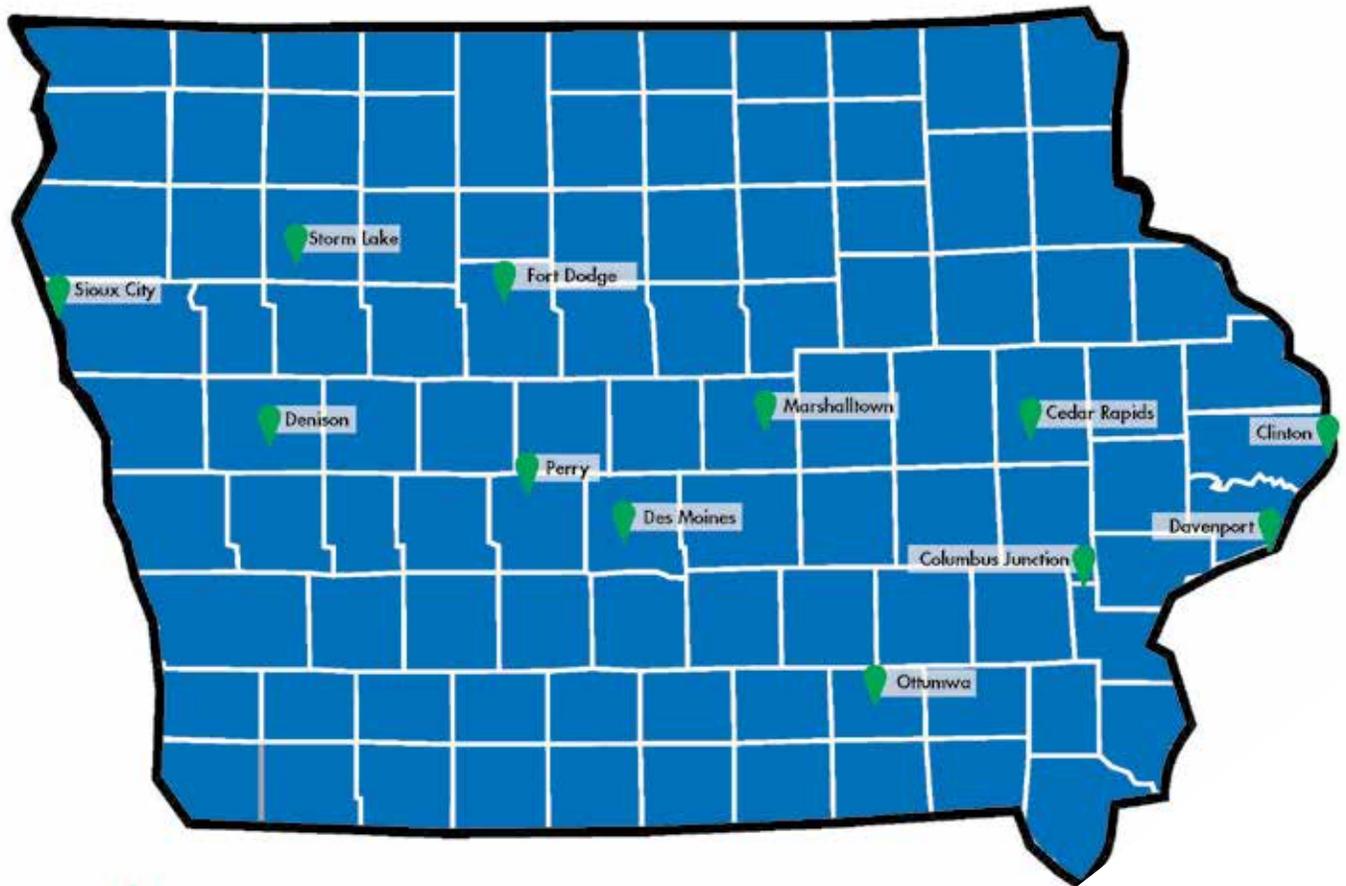
Implementation of GEAR UP Iowa at the local level will help schools:

- Diagnose student barriers to higher education.
- Facilitate the completion of a rigorous college preparatory curriculum.
- Provide intensive academic and social support to students.
- Guide students and families through the college search, application and enrollment processes.

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GEAR UP Iowa Partner School Districts

GEAR UP Iowa represents a growth in our approach, built to be data-driven, district and school focused, and with an end goal of sustainable, coordinated, community college access coalitions to serve students and families. The project will seek to support local collaborative efforts to more effectively use student data to drive responsive and timely interventions, embedding GEAR UP objectives as essential school improvement processes under the auspices of the implementation of the Iowa Core. Successfully doing so will help to underscore college and career readiness as the ultimate cumulative achievement of these districts' quality K-12 education efforts.



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

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GEAR UP Iowa and College-Going Facts

The Benefits of Higher Education

- A college degree is the key to economic opportunity.
- Iowans with higher levels of education earn more and are less likely to be unemployed and living in poverty.
- It has been estimated that the average lifetime earnings of a person with a bachelor's degree is \$2.8 million - 84 percent more than that earned by individuals with only a high school degree.
- In addition, as educational attainment increases, not only does income increase, but the percent of the population living in poverty decreases.
- For Iowans with only a high school degree, the poverty rate is three times higher than for those with a bachelor's degree or higher. For Iowans with less than a high school education, the poverty rate is nearly seven times higher.

The benefits of increasing educational attainment extend beyond that of the individual.

- An educated workforce is vital for the continued economic prosperity of Iowa communities.
- Employers in all industries have an increasing need for skilled and educated workers.
- However, less than 40 percent of Iowa's nearly 1.6 million working-age adults (age 25 - 64) have at least an associate's degree while more than six in ten jobs in the state will require postsecondary credentials by 2018.

College participation rates of low-income students lag behind those from more affluent families.

- Increases in college costs have outpaced increases in household income and appropriations for state financial aid programs.
- Iowa's statewide four-year graduation rate for the class of 2013 was 89.68 percent, an increase from 89.26 percent in 2012 and 88.32 percent in 2011.
- Less than half of high school students who enroll in college immediately following graduation are academically prepared.
- Of the 2013 graduating seniors in Iowa who took the ACT as sophomores, juniors or seniors and indicated they were scheduled to graduate in 2013, only 32 percent met all four ACT College Readiness.

