



NEWS RELEASE

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New Jersey Commission on Higher Education Receives A \$21 Million Federal GEAR UP Grant

The U.S. Department of Education announced Wednesday that the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education has been awarded a grant under the GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) initiative. The state will receive a total of \$20.9 million over six years, with nearly \$3.5 million in the first year of the grant.

The NJ GEAR UP state project will provide academic support and college preparation activities to middle school and high school students in five Abbott school districts. It will build on the success of the first grant cycle (1999-2005), during which over 81 percent of student graduates enrolled in college.

“NJ GEAR UP improves student outcomes, increases access to college, and enables more students to achieve their maximum potential, as called for in the state’s long-range plan for higher education,” stated Dr. Jeanne Oswald, Executive Director, Commission on Higher Education. “We are grateful for the opportunity to continue the important collaborative work supported by this initiative.”

The Commission developed its proposal in collaboration with seven colleges and universities, the state Department of Education, and the state Higher Education Student Assistance Authority.

The NJ GEAR UP state project focuses its efforts on five urban centers, each of which is served by a higher education partner: **Camden** (Rowan University), **Jersey City** (New Jersey City University), **Newark** (the Consortium for Pre-College Education in Greater Newark, comprised of New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers University-Newark, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey), **Paterson** (Passaic County Community College), and **Trenton** (Mercer County Community College).

These institutions provide students at target middle and high schools with after-school and Saturday tutoring, summer programs, mentoring, counseling, test preparation, information about financial aid, and college visits to encourage them to seek a college degree. The initiative also emphasizes the importance of a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. Over \$6 million of the project's funding is for scholarships, which will help participating students pay for college.

NJ GEAR UP students are also eligible for participation in the state's Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program, which is administered by the Commission. EOF provides financial assistance and support services, including a summer program between high school and the freshman year in college.

Parents and teachers of NJ GEAR UP students benefit as well. Parents receive early information about postsecondary options and availability of financial aid, while teachers are provided with professional development in core content areas.

For additional information, visit www.nj.gov/highereducation/gearup.htm.

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