



News Release

September 11, 2019

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New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education Awarded \$35 Million To Continue Federal GEAR UP Grant

TRENTON, NJ – Today, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) announced that the department has been awarded the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant by the U.S. Department of Education. New Jersey will receive \$5 million in federal funds annually totaling to \$35 million over a period of seven years. The funds will be used to provide academic and enrichment support services to increase college attendance and success for economically disadvantaged students.

The NJ GEAR UP State Project will continue building on its longstanding success (1999 - 2017), which currently includes services to seven urban cities, each of which is served by a higher education partner: **Atlantic City** and **Pleasantville** (Stockton University); **Camden** (Rowan University); **Jersey City** (New Jersey City University); **Newark** (New Jersey Institute of Technology); **Paterson** (Passaic County Community College) and **Penns Grove/Carneys Point** (Salem Community College). The OSHE will seek to expand program services to additional cities in the out years of the grant cycle.

Partnering institutions will provide students beginning in the 7th through 12th grades at selected 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 obtain a college degree. The initiative will also extend services to participants in their first year of attendance at an institution of higher education. GEAR UP also provides benefits to teachers through enhanced professional development, as well as families of GEAR UP students through informational campaigns about postsecondary options.

“Education is a critical tool for building a stronger and fairer economy in New Jersey. While NJ’s K-12 education system leads the nation, higher education remains out of reach for too many residents,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “In New Jersey, we’re working to close gaps and expand opportunity through innovative partnerships between the State, school districts and higher education. The NJ GEAR UP grant will help us continue to build these strong partnerships and develop the State’s talent pipelines.”

“New Jersey students need early exposure to college and NJ GEAR UP does this by helping prepare students for their postsecondary pathways beginning in middle and high school. The program has a successful record in New Jersey over the past 20 years, with over 75% of student graduates enroll in college,” **said Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis**. “We are thrilled that we can continue – and even expand- this critical on-ramp to college.”

“Programs like this are having a positive effect on students by providing them with tools they need to help prepare them to earn a college degree,” **said Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, Commissioner of Education**. “This is one of the many options that we are providing to students to help better prepare them for a lifetime of success.”

“Young people know that higher education is one of the surest paths to economic security and prosperity and programs like GEAR UP help thousands of low-income New Jerseyans get there,” **said Senator Booker**. “This federal investment is great news for our state and I applaud the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for once again securing this funding.”

“Every New Jerseyan deserves the opportunity to pursue a college degree regardless of the circumstances they were born into,” **said Senator Menendez**. “GEAR UP has helped make higher education a reality for many New Jersey students who may not otherwise have had that chance by preparing them for that pathway early -- in middle school and high school. I am so pleased that the federal government will be partnering with the state of New Jersey to provide these critical services to low-income students.”

“Every child deserves a fair shot at a good education – regardless of their zip code or family’s finances,” **said Congressman Norcross, a member of the House Committee on Education and Labor**. “Grants like these will improve access to educational opportunities and help all students learn, obtain degrees and find success in good-paying careers. In New Jersey, we’re collaborating on all levels of government to make education more effective and less expensive, and the GEAR UP program will help us build on these positive outcomes.”

“This investment in Jersey from the U.S. Department of Education is a win for our children, our families, and for our community’s return on investment from the federal government,” **said Congressman Gottheimer**. “This investment in our schools will help more students prepare for and succeed in college, and to set them up for future success.”

“At a time in which working-class families are struggling to afford the benefits of higher education, programs like GEAR UP provide a pathway to opportunity and prosperity. I look forward to seeing the positive impact these grants will have in our communities for years to come,” **said Congressman Kim**.

“This news is a welcome development for New Jersey. The \$35 million GEAR Up program grant will provide low-income students with additional resources to prepare for success in their post-secondary education,” **said Congressman Pallone**. “When we provide New Jersey students with the chance to achieve in school, they will thrive after they graduate and make sure our communities remain examples of opportunity for everyone.”

“The GEAR UP program is an invaluable resource for helping more of our scholars make it to college and reach their full potential,” **said Representative Pascrell, a former teacher.** “The grant to Passaic County Community College will play a real growth role for so many in our community. I look forward to seeing GEAR UP continue to expand and positively impact more young lives.”

“New Jersey knows that investing in our students builds opportunity, strengthens our communities, and fuels our innovation economy. GEAR UP grants make sure that all students have a shot at higher education. I’m committed to work hard to support programs that move our innovation economy forward, and that’s why I support the \$395 million increase for the program’s funding for the next fiscal year. The \$35 million award for New Jersey announced today will help us deepen our commitment to high-quality education for every student” **said Congresswoman Sherrill.**

“I am very glad to hear that New Jersey has been awarded the State GEAR UP grant to help low-income students prepare for and succeed in postsecondary education. Much of New Jersey’s Second Congressional District is rural and low-income. These challenges make applying for colleges, which is already a hard process, even more difficult,” **said Congressman Van Drew.** “I look forward to seeing the successes of this program and thank the U.S. Department of Education for their contribution to the students of New Jersey.”

“As higher education becomes more and more necessary in order to get ahead, programs like GEAR UP become increasingly important. New Jersey has made a commitment to ensure our low-income students are not left behind in our changing economy. NJ GEAR UP will help to fulfill this commitment,” **said Congresswoman Watson Coleman.**

“We are very excited to continue building on our past success and looking forward to strengthening partnerships between our agency, participating NJ higher education institutions, school districts, target schools and the respective communities,” **said NJ GEAR UP State Director, Errol Bruce.** “The GEAR UP grant will allow us to enhance the state’s current pre-college initiative through the NJ College Bound grant, and expand its reach to many more students and their parents in these targeted communities.”

NJ GEAR UP is administered by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.