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Press Contact
Cecilia.Williams@oshe.nj.gov

New Jersey Marks 25 Years of GEAR UP College Readiness Programs

Middle and High School Students in 12 Urban Centers Served as GEAR UP Partner Network Expands in 2024 to Include Schools in Asbury Park, Elizabeth, and New Brunswick

TRENTON – Today, during [National GEAR UP Week](#), the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) is proud to mark 25 years of impact through [Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs](#) (“GEAR UP”). Since New Jersey received its [first award](#) of the federal grant in 1999, the statewide reach of college readiness programs has grown from four to 12 urban centers. Today, GEAR UP in New Jersey serves over 2,000 low-income middle and high school students each academic year, helping to expose them to college and financial aid opportunities.

Among the academic and enrichment support services offered are after-school and Saturday tutoring, 6-week summer programming, mentoring, academic counseling, test preparation, information sessions about financial aid, college visits, and support to GEAR UP students during their first year in college. For the 2022-23 academic year, 96 percent of participating New Jersey students graduated from high school with 79 percent enrolling in college. In addition to student-focused support, GEAR UP provides families with college-going information and resources, empowering them to become active partners in their child's academic and career journey.

“The GEAR UP grant plays an important role in educating and engaging students and families about their higher education options in New Jersey, ensuring that students from all backgrounds have access to these opportunities,” **said New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education Brian K. Bridges**. “As a first-generation college student myself, I understand the profound impact that discussions about college can have on broadening one's aspirations. This year's expansion with new institutional partners has allowed us to offer even broader

support. We are thankful to our New Jersey congressional delegation for their advocacy in securing this federal funding and are optimistic about future investments to ensure students from underrepresented backgrounds continue to realize their potential through postsecondary paths.”

“We are thrilled to be partnering with Brookdale CC, Kean University, and Rutgers to expand GEAR UP services to students and their parents in select target schools in Asbury Park, Elizabeth, and New Brunswick,” **said New Jersey GEAR UP State Director Errol Bruce Jr.** “Through our expansion efforts, we will continue our mission of increasing the number of New Jersey youth prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. We are excited to continue having a positive impact on many communities and grateful for the support of our institutional partners, their staffs, and the continued engagement of GEAR UP alumni.”

New partnerships with three institutions of higher education this year have expanded GEAR UP’s reach in New Jersey to students in grade 7 through 12 at the following schools:

Institutional Partners	Target Schools
Brookdale Community College	Asbury Park Middle School Asbury Park High School
Kean University	Benjamin Franklin School No. 13 George Washington Academy School No. 1 Mabel G. Homes School No. 5 Nicholas Murray Butler Academy School No. 23 Toussaint Louverture-Marquis de Lafayette School No. 6 Winfield Scott School No. 2 Elizabeth High School Frank J. Cicarell Academy J. Christian Bollwage Finance Academy John Dwyer Technology Academy
Rutgers University – New Brunswick	Lincoln Annex School New Brunswick Middle School McKinley Community School Paul Robeson Community School for the Art Woodrow Wilson Elementary School New Brunswick High School

The expansion adds to the GEAR UP network of eight partner institutions of higher education in New Jersey that are providing services in schools across nine of the state’s urban centers. These are Mercer County Community College (Trenton), New Jersey City University (Jersey City), New Jersey Institute of Technology (Newark), Passaic County Community College (Paterson), Rowan College of South Jersey (Bridgeton), Rowan University (Camden), Stockton University (Atlantic City and Pleasantville) and Salem Community College (Penns

Grove Carneys Point). For more information about GEAR UP in New Jersey and to locate programs, visit: <https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/gearup/index.shtml>.

Currently, GEAR UP is supported by a seven-year, \$35 million federal grant [awarded](#) to New Jersey in 2019 by the U.S. Department of Education. The grant is administered by OSHE.

About New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education: The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) is the leading state agency for higher education policy development and statewide program coordination in New Jersey. Under the leadership of Secretary Brian Bridges, Ph.D., the office works to enhance postsecondary opportunity with a focus on equity, access and affordability for students from all backgrounds. OSHE is dedicated to shaping a strong and inclusive higher education landscape and strategically collaborates with a diverse array of partners to inform best practice, student-centered strategies that empower success. Learn more at nj.gov/highereducation.

