West Virginia GEARUP Evaluation

2010-2011 Evaluation Summary

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Introduction

The West Virginia Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (West Virginia GEAR UP) project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is designed to increase the number of low-income students in southwestern, central, and southern regions of West Virginia prepare to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The West Virginia GEAR UP project contracts with Edvantia to conduct an evaluation of the program. This report is a formative evaluation report based on data collected throughout the third full implementation year of the West Virginia GEAR UP project (August 1, 2010 to July 31, 2011). For more information about the evaluation participant groups, the data collected, and the evaluation questions, refer to Appendices A and B.

Summary of Activities

During the 2010-2011 school year, the West Virginia GEAR UP program delivered services to students, parents, and personnel in 17 participating high schools. Due to the long-planned structural changes in the program, this is the first school year that services were delivered only at the high school level rather than at high schools and middle schools. Site coordinators continued to plan and implement services at GEAR UP schools for students and parents in the GEAR UP Cohort (Grade 9, the graduating class of 2014) and students in the Priority Cohort (Grades 11 and 12). In addition to ongoing communication with West Virginia GEAR UP staff throughout the third year, Edvantia staff engaged in various planning, data collection, and data analysis activities.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for the third year of the West Virginia GEAR UP evaluation were collected from a variety of sources including extant data, stakeholder surveys, and group interviews. For more information about the participant groups, please refer to the table in Appendix A.

Student and Parent Surveys. In collaboration with GEAR UP staff at the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC), the Edvantia evaluation team made some refinements to the student and parent surveys in 2010. Some response options were revised slightly, and a new set of questions pertaining to the College Foundation of West Virginia web portal (cfwv.com) were added. Survey packets for students and parents were distributed in November 2010; data collection began shortly thereafter and concluded in March 2011. Students in the GEAR UP and Priority Cohorts and students in the comparison group were surveyed, as were parents of students in the GEAR UP Cohort and comparison group. Data from the long-form surveys[1] were entered into

> **Companion Reports**
>
> For more detailed information about methods and findings from Year 3 of the GEAR UP evaluation, refer to the following reports that serve as companions to this overall summary:
>
> *Year 3 Student and Parent Surveys: Summary of Results* (Updated November 2011)
>
> *Year 3 School Personnel Survey: Summary of Results* (Updated November 2011)
>
> *Year 3 Site Coordinator Group Interviews: Summary of Findings* (Updated November 2011)

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[1] As part of the Year 3 efforts to meet federal expectations for survey response rates, evaluators offered students and parents an opportunity to complete a shortened version of the survey that included only the questions required for the federal evaluation. Evaluators distinguish between the surveys by referring to the original research survey as the "long-form" version and the shortened survey as the "short-form" version. In reporting data for the annual performance report (APR) required by the U.S. Department of Education, evaluators used the required questions from both the long- and short-form versions of the survey to calculate response rates and determine Year 3 findings. However, this summary report, as part of the local project evaluation, uses data only from the long-form survey. Therefore, response rates and findings may be slightly different than those reported in the APR.

electronic databases via scanning using Remark software, and data files were converted to SPSS format for cleaning and analysis. The evaluation team summarized the survey data by creating profiles for each school and county, as well as the overall program level. Completed profiles were shared with West Virginia GEAR UP staff in May 2011. In all, 2,958 long-form student surveys (2,198 from GEAR UP Cohort [$n = 846$] and Priority [$n = 1,352$] students and 760 from comparison students) and 1,602 long-form parent surveys (570 from GEAR UP parents and 1,032 from comparison parents) were collected, entered, and analyzed.

School Personnel Survey. The Edvantia evaluation team refined the School Personnel Survey used in previous years to capture the perceptions of school administrators, teachers, and counselors on the implementation and impact of the GEAR UP program in their schools. School personnel were asked about the quality of various GEAR UP services and resources; whether GEAR UP provided necessary, relevant, and useful professional development; and their perceptions of student academic development, and college and career awareness. In Year 3, they were also asked about the extent to which GEAR UP project goals aligned with the goals of their own schools and counties. The 34-item Year 3 survey was administered online during May and June of 2011. A total of 372 participants representing 58% of all GEAR UP school personnel completed the School Personnel Survey.

Site Coordinators Focus Group Interview. The Edvantia evaluation team used a slightly revised version of the focus group interview protocol used in previous years to guide the Year 3 discussions with site coordinators[2] at the close of the project's third year. Evaluators conducted group interviews with site coordinators following their monthly meeting on June 14, 2010. Three groups of site coordinators, with four to six site coordinators per group, spoke with evaluators about the reach of GEAR UP services, dissemination of information, perceptions of service quality, challenges in implementation, and other topics aligned with relevant foci of the evaluation. Each group interview had four to six participants and lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded, and transcripts produced from those recordings formed the basis for thematic analyses.

SCRIBE. The evaluation team also monitored data entered by site coordinators into the online data management system maintained by Xcalibur: Standardized Collection and Reporting of Information Benefiting Education (SCRIBE). These service data, relevant to the examination of project implementation, were downloaded from the online system for analysis to provide project staff with a comprehensive picture of services delivered during the third year of implementation. The federal reporting year (March 16 through March 15) does not align with the academic year (mid-August through early June). Because the data for the federal reporting year have been presented in the project's Annual Performance Report (APR), evaluation staff have chosen to present data for the academic year (2010-2011), encompassing the dates of August 1, 2010 through July 31, 2011.

Summary of Implementation Data

The GEAR UP services provided to students, parents, and teachers in participating schools were continuously recorded in the SCRIBE system by the site coordinators. The categories of services included in county and school work plans encompassed several kinds of events and activities:

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[2] GEAR UP site coordinators are hired by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission to plan, implement, monitor, and track program services and activities at each participating school. Site coordinators can be teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, or others who apply for the position (although most are staff members at the school for which they coordinate services). In Year 3, most site coordinators had served in the role during the previous school year.

- in-state college visits
- welcome back to GEAR UP family event
- end of the year family event
- parent/guardian events
- student events
- in-class and out-of-class events
- on-site and off-site professional development for teachers
- tutoring and academic enrichment activities
- college application week activities
- College Goal Sunday event
- in-state cultural event or job site visit
- HEROs (Higher Education Resource Officer) student activities

Services During the Academic Year

Using service and activity data recorded in SCRIBE, evaluators examined service delivery and participation for students, parents, and teachers during the third year of the West Virginia GEAR UP program. SCRIBE provides reports detailing statistics related to service delivery in each of the federally-defined service categories as well as instances of service delivery by participating site. Using those reports, evaluators calculated the total instances of GEAR UP services delivery, the total number of service hours, and the average hours per instance of service delivery for each of the three groups served. Table 1 displays these statistics.

Table 1. Total Instances and Hours of GEAR UP Service Delivery

Group	Instances of Service Delivery			Total Service Hours			Average Hours Per Service Instance		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Students	9,675	111,098	69,738	31,086	171,248	103,952	3.21	1.54	1.49
Parents	784	4,177	3,226	2,132	10,344	8,269	2.72	2.48	2.56
Teachers	416	2,189	987	1,362	6,584	2,579	3.27	3.01	2.61
Total	10,875	117,464	73,951	34,579	188,176	114,799	3.18	1.60	1.55

During Year 3, services were delivered to students almost 70,000 times through the West Virginia GEAR UP program, for a total of 103,952 hours of service. The total instances of GEAR UP service delivery grew from more than 9,600 during Year 1 (the 2008-2009 school year) to more than 111,000 in Year 2 (the 2009-2010 school year). The number of service instances and total hours of service in Year 3 were lower than the previous year's offerings; Year 3 service provision represented about 63% of the Year 2 instances and 61% of the Year 2 hours. However, this finding was not entirely unexpected, given that program services were offered only at the high schools rather than at both high schools and middle schools. The consolidation of the program to one school level may have led to greater efficiencies in service provision and less need to provide identical services in more than one location or on more than one occasion.

Service delivery to teachers and parents declined in Year 3 as well. The total number of GEAR UP services provided for parents was 3,226 in Year 3 (or 77% of the parent service instances in Year 2). The total hours of service offered to parents also declined from a little more than 10,300 in Year 2 to just less than 8,300 in Year 3 (or about 80% of the Year 2 hours offered). In Year 3, the total number of GEAR UP services offered to teachers declined by more than half, with the 987 service instances

represented about 45% of the service instances and about 39% of the hours delivered in Year 2. Again, the decline in teacher service delivery was not unexpected, given the consolidation of the program to the high school level only. In Year 3, there were fewer teachers eligible for services than in either of the previous years.

Table 2 presents participation in GEAR UP services by service category. Data presented in the table represent the total number of students, parents, or teachers who participated in each type of service during the school year (defined, in this report, as August 1 through July 31).

Table 2. Average and Total Hours Students and Parents Received GEAR UP Services

GEAR UP Services	# of Participants			Average Service Hours			Total Service Hours		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Services for Students									
College visit/college student shadowing	1,268	2,395	2,385	4.12	4.44	3.62	5,225.00	10,634.00	8,630.25
Counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling	1,168	3,887	3,864	2.78	4.84	4.61	3,243.25	18,817.66	17,799.05
Educational field trips	91	537	224	13.05	5.74	4.38	1,188.00	3,082.53	982.00
Family/cultural events	933	2,667	2,807	5.01	3.73	4.23	4,673.75	9,990.48	11,857.00
Financial aid counseling/advising	17	771	988	1.71	1.60	1.57	29.00	1,234.89	1,547.86
Job site visit/job shadowing	49	19	502	3.14	1.63	3.01	154.00	31.00	1,512.25
Mentoring	67	990	1,911	2.26	2.58	2.16	151.50	2,552.37	4,126.30
Rigorous academic curricula	0	259	223	0	91.75	63.91	0.00	23,763.00	14,507.00
Summer programs	96	134	57	86.15	69.22	52.89	8,270.11	9,275.50	3,014.50
Tutoring/homework assistance/academic enrichment	849	3,275	2,830	9.55	27.45	14.13	8,105.95	89,911.57	39,975.49
Workshops	33	1,058	0	1.36	1.85	0	45.00	1,955.07	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services for Parents									
College visits	43	132	65	4.69	2.90	2.89	201.50	383.00	187.75
Counseling/advising	326	1,491	888	2.80	3.44	2.92	911.81	5,134.58	2,591.00
Family events	353	1,574	1,561	2.81	2.72	3.19	992.75	4,281.25	4,984.50
Workshops on college preparation/financial aid	25	268	247	1.04	2.03	2.05	26.00	545.00	505.50
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services for Teachers									
Curriculum development	33	29	32	11.42	6.49	8.03	377.00	188.25	257.00
School reform efforts	216	601	317	4.56	10.64	7.32	984.50	6,396.10	2,321.50
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

During Year 3, the greatest number of students participated in counseling services (counseling, advising, academic counseling, and/or career planning), with 3,864 students participating in those services at least one time during the year. Students spent the greatest amount of time—almost 40,000 hours—participating in tutoring services; services included in the tutoring category accounted for about 39% of all student service hours offered during Year 3. Participation in counseling services, family and cultural events, and college visits remained fairly steady from Year 2 to Year 3. Although increases in Year 3 participation were observed for financial aid counseling (128% of Year 2 participation) and mentoring (193% of Year 2 participation), the greatest relative increase in participation was in the category of job shadowing. In Year 3, 502 students participated in job shadowing—a total more than 2600% larger than the 19 participants in Year 2. The largest declines in participation in Year 3 were observed for the categories of educational field trips (42% of Year 2 participation) and summer programs (43% of Year 2 participation). No students participated in workshops during Year 3; however, changes in federal reporting categories and requirements may mean that services previously identified as "workshops" are now included in other reporting categories.

As in previous years, parents tended to participate most in family events and counseling or advising services. Services in the family events category accounted for 60% of all service hours provided to parents; counseling and advising services accounted for 31% of all parent service hours offered. Participation rates in family events and workshops on college preparation or financial aid were relatively stable from Year 2 to Year 3. However, parent participation in college visits declined by about half relative to Year 2, and Year 3 participation in counseling and advising services represented only 60% of participation the previous year. See Table 2 for more information about parent participation by GEAR UP service category.

During Year 3, teachers participated most often in GEAR UP services related to school reform efforts. These kinds of services accounted for 90% of total service hours offered to teachers in Year 3. Participation in these services declined relative to Year 2 (by about half) due to the consolidation of the program to the high school level only. The number of teachers eligible to participate in GEAR UP services during Year 3 was about half the number eligible in Year 2; therefore, the decline in participation is about commensurate with the decrease in eligibility. Teacher participation in curriculum development services increased relative to Year 2, however, both in number of teachers participating and in hours of participation. Table 2 presents the details of service participation for teachers in each of the two service categories.

Table 3 presents the instances of service delivery by participating school for each of the three years of the West Virginia GEAR UP program. These data represent the total number of services and activities provided to students, parents, and teachers at each site. For example, at Matewan High School, the program offered GEAR UP services for students 12,360 times during the 2010-2011 school year—a total representing about 18% of all student service instances for the year. The 547 instances of GEAR UP parent services at Westside High School account for 17% of all parent services during the year, and the 190 instances of service delivery for teachers at Clay County High School represent about 19% of all teacher services during the year.

Table 3. Instances of GEAR UP Service Delivery by Participating School

County	School[a]	Service Delivery to Students			Service Delivery to Parents			Service Delivery to Teachers		
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y1	Y2	Y3
Boone	Madison Middle School	149	1,785	—	12	126	—	2	69	—
Boone	Scott High School	—	—	3,498	—	—	161	—	—	82
Boone	Sherman High School	25	4,025	1,612	33	131	175	1	32	42
Boone	Sherman Junior High School	128	785	—	22	60	—	4	25	—
Clay	Clay County High School	221	1,714	3,705	58	111	283	0	43	190
Clay	Clay Middle School	582	1,304	—	35	127	—	114	257	—
Lincoln	Duval PK-8 School	149	2,867	—	33	52	—	18	26	—
Lincoln	Guyan Valley Middle School	1,248	9,186	—	50	82	—	27	55	—
Lincoln	Hamlin PK-8 School	150	365	—	11	69	—	12	16	—
Lincoln	Harts Intermediate School	70	1,005	—	2	27	—	9	18	—
Lincoln	Lincoln County High School	437	3,749	4,288	45	354	392	34	68	87
McDowell	Big Creek High School	27	695	—	4	65	—	1	24	—
McDowell	Iaeger High School	67	475	—	12	24	—	5	23	—
McDowell	Mount View High School	31	1,603	634	13	7	81	7	27	23
McDowell	Mount View Middle School	44	1,967	—	0	41	—	0	15	—
McDowell	River View High School[b]	—	—	789	—	—	10	—	—	68
McDowell	Sandy River Middle School	48	4,659	—	15	136	—	1	24	—
McDowell	Southside K-8 School	117	1,079	—	3	74	—	2	69	—
Mingo	Burch High School	402	5,099	9,336	25	168	292	18	50	24
Mingo	Gilbert High School	416	6,662	1,814	33	52	57	0	17	36
Mingo	Kermit Area School	171	299	—	11	15	—	0	29	—
Mingo	Lenore K-8 School	111	7,943	—	19	142	—	0	38	—
Mingo	Matewan High School	73	4,657	12,360	16	42	102	0	35	28
Mingo	Matewan Middle School	41	2,483	—	0	49	—	0	27	—
Mingo	Mingo Co. Career and Tech Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	27	—
Mingo	Tug Valley High School	95	506	1,234	14	61	106	0	32	27
Mingo	Williamson High School	25	427	1,500	12	6	28	0	29	26
Mingo	Williamson Middle School	288	2,600	—	10	14	—	0	81	—
Roane	Geary Elementary/Middle School	39	120	—	10	10	—	3	14	—
Roane	Roane County High School	130	718	3,662	39	137	291	17	118	63
Roane	Spencer Middle School	507	16,207	—	17	116	—	20	54	—
Roane	Walton Elementary/Middle School	203	820	—	30	66	—	6	21	—
Summers	Summers County High School	51	1,329	8,304	28	90	81	0	42	46
Summers	Summers Middle School	1,120	7,358	—	0	299	—	0	49	—
Webster	Diana Elementary School	53	21	—	0	2	—	1	1	—
Webster	Glade Middle School	28	544	—	3	65	—	11	57	—
Webster	Hacker Valley Elementary School	21	199	—	0	8	—	4	7	—
Webster	Webster County High School	52	575	7,335	23	99	327	12	55	86
Webster	Webster Springs Elementary School	129	330	—	0	32	—	0	18	—
Wirt	Wirt County Middle School	1,181	6,163	—	0	191	—	0	24	—
Wirt	Wirt High School	—	—	3,083	—	—	69	—	—	21
Wyoming	Baileysville Elementary/Middle School	23	362	—	0	22	—	0	22	—
Wyoming	Glen Fork Elementary/Middle School	17	433	—	9	62	—	4	15	—
Wyoming	Herndon Consolidated School	34	427	—	10	28	—	0	28	—
Wyoming	Huff Consolidated School	24	537	—	8	153	—	7	100	—
Wyoming	Mullens Middle School	62	2,076	—	0	150	—	14	181	—

County	School[a]	Service Delivery to Students			Service Delivery to Parents			Service Delivery to Teachers		
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y1	Y2	Y3
Wyoming	Oceana Middle School	42	507	—	6	122	—	5	22	—
Wyoming	Pineville Middle School	78	1,149	—	50	134	—	7	17	—
Wyoming	Road Branch Elementary/Middle School	54	818	—	11	80	—	7	66	—
Wyoming	Westside High School	301	1,160	2,956	34	144	547	13	76	54
Wyoming	Wyoming Co. Career and Tech Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Wyoming	Wyoming County East High School	411	1,306	3,628	18	132	224	26	45	84
		9,675	111,098	69,738	784	4,177	3,226	416	2,189	987

a. In Year 3, the West Virginia GEAR UP program transitioned from serving both middle and high schools to serving high schools only. Schools not receiving services in a year are indicated with a dash (—).
b. The 2010-2011 school year marked the first year of operation for River View High School, created from the consolidation of Big Creek and Iaeger High Schools.

During Year 3, 343 teachers received professional development sponsored by the GEAR UP program. Although fewer teachers received professional development in Year 3 than in Year 2, the decrease was expected, given the program's planned transition out of middle schools and into high schools only. Although the raw number is smaller, a much larger percentage of teachers in GEAR UP schools participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development during Year 3 (56%) compared to Year 2 (49%) and Year 1 (25%). Table 4 lists the rates with which teachers at GEAR UP schools participated in professional development offered by the program.

Table 4. Number of Teachers Participating in GEAR UP Professional Development (PD) by School

County	School	# of teachers of GEAR UP students	# of teachers participating in PD	Participation Rate
Boone	Scott High School	52	40	76.9%
Boone	Sherman High School	36	24	66.7%
Clay	Clay County High School	38	38	100.0%
Lincoln	Lincoln County High School	65	20	30.8%
McDowell	Mount View High School	28	3	10.7%
McDowell	River View High School	42	28	66.7%
Mingo	Burch High School	30	5	16.7%
Mingo	Gilbert High School	25	23	92.0%
Mingo	Matewan High School	19	4	21.1%
Mingo	Mingo Co. Career and Tech Center	2	2	100.0%
Mingo	Tug Valley High School	33	6	18.2%
Mingo	Williamson High School	13	8	61.5%
Roane	Roane County High School	48	23	47.9%
Summers	Summers High School	33	16	48.5%
Webster	Webster County High School	40	39	97.5%
Wirt	Wirt High School	23	4	17.4%
Wyoming	Westside High School	41	29	70.7%
Wyoming	Wyoming Co. Career and Tech Center	0	--	--
Wyoming	Wyoming County East High School	42	31	73.8%
	Total	610	343	56.2%

Summary of Outcome Data

Student and Parent Surveys

Findings from the student and parent surveys present a promising picture of continuing successes and a few persistent challenges for the West Virginia GEAR UP program. Highlights of the progress reported by students and parents include the following:

- High percentages of GEAR UP Cohort and Priority Cohort students continued to report discussing college entrance requirements and financial aid opportunities with school staff or GEAR UP representatives (79-81% for the GEAR UP Cohort and 74-75% for the Priority Cohort). Although these figures represent stable or slightly increased rates for the GEAR UP Cohort (compared to Year 2), rates of these discussions appear to have declined slightly among the Priority Cohort.

- The percentage of parents who had conversations about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid with someone from their child's school or GEAR UP continued to increase in Year 3. About two fifths of GEAR UP parents reported having these conversations.

- The majority of students in both the GEAR UP and Priority Cohorts expected that they would earn at least a four-year college degree (74% and 63%, respectively). These rates were stable from Year 2 to Year 3.

- Nearly all parents (96%) reported talking with their children about attending college. About two thirds of GEAR UP parents also reported expecting that their child would earn at least a four-year college degree, which represents a higher percentage holding that expectation than in either of the two previous years.

- Perceptions of college affordability also remained stable from Year 2 to Year 3, with about two thirds of students in each cohort and about two thirds of parents believing that they (or their child) "definitely" or "probably" could afford to attend a public four-year college. Slightly fewer than 25% of students in each cohort and only 20% of parents reported definite confidence in their ability to afford college, however.

- About 40% of GEAR UP Cohort students reported that their postsecondary plans had changed as a result of participating in the West Virginia GEAR UP program. About two thirds also reported that the program had helped them become more academically prepared. About 20% of Priority Cohort students reported changes in postsecondary plans, and almost half reported improvements in their academic preparation as a result of participating in GEAR UP.

- Satisfaction with the West Virginia GEAR UP program remains high among students and parents, with overall satisfaction rates exceeding 90% in all groups of students and parents served. Participants in specific GEAR UP services tended to be satisfied or very satisfied with the services in which they participated. College visits tended to have the highest rates of both participation and satisfaction among both student cohorts and among parent survey respondents.

- Student aspirations, as measured by the four scales included in the survey, remained stable from Year 2 to Year 3. Students tend to rate themselves highest in the area of *achiever orientation*, indicating that they have high expectations for themselves and their abilities to improve and succeed. Among the student groups, GEAR UP Cohort students gave the highest overall rating in the area of *positive environment*, and Priority Cohort students gave the highest rating in the area of their *leader orientation*.

With few exceptions, comparison students offered survey responses very similar to those of students in the GEAR UP Cohort. Notably, far fewer of them reported having conversations about college entrance requirements (47-52%) or the availability of financial aid (36-51%). Among the two classes within the comparison group, students in the Class of 2013 (10th grade students during Year 3) reported higher rates of these conversations, which is perhaps understandable given their enrollment in high school where such conversations may be more common than they are at the middle school level. Students in the Class of 2015, however, were more accurate in their estimation of the cost of one year's tuition than any other student group.

Parents of students in the GEAR UP Cohort and parents of students in the comparison group were fairly similar on most indicators measured by the survey. Like their children, parents in the comparison group were much less likely than GEAR UP parents to report having conversations about college entrance requirements or financial aid. Unlike their children, however, parents of students in the Class of 2013 were less likely than Class of 2015 parents to report having such conversations.

However, the student and parent surveys also revealed some continuing challenges to the GEAR UP program:

- Although students served by GEAR UP were slightly more likely to estimate tuition costs correctly in Year 3 compared to Year 1, most students in both the GEAR UP and Priority Cohorts still are not able to accurately estimate the cost of one year's tuition at a public four-year college or university in West Virginia. Almost one third of GEAR UP Cohort students and just more than one fifth of Priority Cohort students reported that they did not know the cost. About half of the GEAR UP Cohort students and 57% of Priority Cohort students overestimated tuition costs.

- Like their children, parents also continued to overestimate tuition costs, although compared both to their students and to estimates given in Year 1, a slightly higher percentage of Year 3 GEAR UP parents correctly estimated the cost. Although only about one fifth of parents stated that they did not know the cost of one year's tuition, about 57% of them overestimated the actual cost.

- As in previous years, a large proportion (in some cases, up to 60%) of student respondents reported that they did not participate in several of the GEAR UP services such as tutoring, mentoring, financial aid workshops, parent and community activities, and so on. However, the timing of the surveys (mid-year) may impact students' reports of participation in activities that occur on an ongoing basis or later in the year only (i.e., students may have participated in such activities after the survey had been completed).

- Although students' ratings in the four areas of aspiration all tend to be above the mid-point of the scales (i.e., exceed 3.00 on the 5-point scale), only students' ratings for their own *achiever orientation* have exceeded 4.00 (agree) over the life of the grant. Of particular concern are GEAR UP Cohort students' ratings of *teacher support*, which have consistently received the lowest ratings within that group for the three years of the

program; whereas, Priority Cohort students have consistently offered their lowest ratings in the area of *positive environment.* Because the GEAR UP program seeks, in part, to foster supportive cultures of postsecondary success within schools, the consistently low (in comparison to other scales) ratings given to these scales is notable.

- The response rates[3] for the long-form surveys were not as high as they should be for strong, generalizable conclusions to be drawn from the data.

More details of the findings from the student and parent surveys are available in the narrative summary of the Year 3 survey effort and in the survey summaries prepared for the program, counties, and schools each year.

School Personnel Survey

Findings from the School Personnel Survey indicated that the West Virginia GEAR UP program experienced a successful implementation and made improvements in many areas in the third year. Highlights of the successful implementation and improvements include the following:

- West Virginia GEAR UP resources were distributed in schools and were being used by school personnel. School personnel continued participating in various GEAR UP activities. Throughout the three years, respondents reported fairly similar involvement in GEAR UP activities.

- Between Year 2 and 3, school personnel reported similar levels of professional development, with a slight shift in the focus of those activities.

- School personnel believed that the services provided for themselves, their students, and parents were useful, relevant, and of high quality.

- According to school personnel surveyed in Year 3, student involvement and interest in school seemed to be improving over Year 2. Students were perceived as being more aware of college and career opportunities. School personnel also reported that parent involvement and interest in school had improved.

- In the third year, more school personnel perceived a positive impact from the West Virginia GEAR UP program in their school, county, and/or community.

- The majority of respondents (about 87%) reported that West Virginia GEAR UP had been implemented fully or partially in their school and was running smoothly. About the same percentage of participants reported that West Virginia GEAR UP was fully implemented in their schools in Year 3 compared with Year 2.

The survey results also revealed some challenges to implementation within the schools. School personnel seemed to participate in mentoring and professional development activities as frequently in Year 3 as they did in Year 2. School personnel reported that additional professional development in

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[3] For the GEAR UP Cohort, 39% of all students enrolled in the Class of 2014 responded to the survey; these students represented 48% of GEAR UP Cohort students with signed parental consent to participate in the survey. For the Priority Cohort, 42% of all students in Grades 11 and 12 responded; they constituted 67% of Priority Cohort students with signed consent to participate. For the comparison group, 22% of students in the Class of 2015 and 14% of students in the Class of 2013 had signed parental consent and responded to the survey. Parent survey response rates were as follows: GEAR UP Cohort, 26%; Class of 2015, 30%; Class of 2013, 19%.

technology integration and how to motivate students would be most beneficial in the future. Some school personnel reported that the GEAR UP program should cover all grades in their schools. Respondents seemed to be less optimistic about the sustainability of the GEAR UP program after the third year.

More details of the findings from the School Personnel Survey are available in the narrative summary of the Year 3 survey.

Site Coordinator Group Interviews

Generally, site coordinators continued to be satisfied with West Virginia GEAR UP and reported believing that students benefit greatly from the services offered through the program. Services were typically well received, although site coordinators were disappointed that attendance and participation were not as extensive as they desired. Focus group discussions suggest that the program is finding some successes in the schools (e.g., offering high quality, relevant, and useful services) but continues to struggle with persistent challenges (e.g., limited parental involvement).

- Site coordinators are implementing their work plans and providing required services and activities, although students, faculty, and other stakeholders may not always be aware that the GEAR UP program is providing the resources, service, or activity. In general, site coordinators reported feeling that they could improve activities, services, and recognition of GEAR UP sponsorship in the coming school year and have begun to reflect on ways to do so.

- Although participants in GEAR UP events appreciate the information and assistance they receive, attendance levels for all groups (students, parents, and teachers) continue to disappoint site coordinators, particularly for events held outside of regular school hours and not in conjunction with other school events (e.g., sporting events).

- College visits are, for the third year, perceived as particularly beneficial for students. Site coordinators believe that these activities are high quality, useful, and relevant experiences that help students become more familiar with the college environment and what they do or do not want from colleges that they may plan to attend after high school.

- As in previous years, GEAR UP resources continue to be used to enhance schools' technological capabilities, to provide professional development to teachers, and to provide enhanced academic opportunities to students (e.g., dual credit courses). Thus, evidence suggests that site coordinators are making appropriate and effective use of GEAR UP resources.

- Activities and services are being very well received and are perceived to be of high quality, relevance, and utility. Some sites still seem to be struggling with full, effective implementation of the tutoring component for various reasons (e.g., lack of student participation, difficulty recruiting and/or hiring qualified individuals to be tutors).

- Relationships with partnering institutions of higher education are strong and perceived as mutually beneficial. Some site coordinators report that the GEAR UP program has helped improve the relationships between their high schools and the partnering institutions of higher education.

- During Year 3, students in Grade 10 were not directly served by the GEAR UP program while students in Grades 9, 11, and 12 did receive services. Some Grade 10 students (and

parents) noticed and were upset by the gap in service, and site coordinators were not always sure that their responses to these situations were adequate for addressing the concerns and frustrations students and parents voiced.

The concerns and challenges that emerged during Year 3 focus groups were identified as challenges in previous years as well. The challenges of increasing parental involvement, dealing with transportation to and from afterschool events in rural areas, and managing district-level bureaucracies seem to be enduring challenges without ready or simple solutions. Site coordinators continue to try to manage these challenges by trying different strategies and being flexible in scheduling activities. Having excellent support and information from HEPC personnel helps ensure that site coordinators are able to address other challenges as they arise.

More details of the findings from the site coordinator focus groups are available in the narrative summary of the Year 3 discussions.

Discussion and Recommendations

Data from SCRIBE, surveys, and interviews indicate that implementation of GEAR UP services and appropriate use of GEAR UP resources have continued in the participating schools during the third year of the project. However, the findings from the data sources also revealed some challenges to the GEAR UP program. Based on the findings of the Year 3 evaluation data collection, several recommendations can be made to continue improvements in the implementation of the West Virginia GEAR UP project. The recommendations should be considered formative suggestions rather than absolute solutions. While some may be easy to implement during Year 4, others may require more planning or lack feasibility due to funding or logistical requirements and constraints. The following discussion is organized by applicable evaluation topic; recommendations and considerations are highlighted. A complete list of evaluation questions is found in Appendix B.

Implementation of West Virginia GEAR UP

The West Virginia GEAR UP project is being implemented throughout the state at each service site. Site coordinators are planning and hosting a variety of services and activities for students, parents, and teachers in their schools during the school year. These services and activities are included in annual work plans, and site coordinators routinely report implementing all required activities. GEAR UP funds are also being used to purchase technological tools, software, books, and other equipment and resources to enhance instruction and academic capabilities of the schools.

Service Reach. Thousands of students and hundreds of parents and teachers have received services through GEAR UP. It appears that school personnel awareness of GEAR UP and buy-in to the goals and purposes of the program continues to increase. The majority of school personnel who responded to the survey reported that West Virginia GEAR UP had been implemented fully or partially in their school and was running smoothly. Site coordinators, too, reported that GEAR UP is well implemented, although they tended to be keen to point out areas where they could improve their services to their sites. Several key indicators (including the proportion of students and parents who have spoken with school personnel about financial aid and college entrance requirements) have continued to show sustained or positive growth over time, indicating that parents and students are receiving services.

Although participants in GEAR UP events—whether students, parents, or teachers—appreciate the information and assistance they receive, attendance levels for many GEAR UP services and activities continue to fall short of expectations. Site coordinators are providing services, events, and resources for students, parents, and teachers; however, it is not clear whether the services are reaching as many people in each group as GEAR UP staff may hope. Data from student and parent surveys, school personnel surveys, and site coordinator group interviews suggest that stakeholders may not make as much use of GEAR UP services as they could. Large portions of students and parents report not participating in specific GEAR UP services (although timing of the surveys at the mid-point of the year may deflate reports of participation in activities that occur later during the year); many school personnel do not report participating in GEAR UP services, and site coordinators continue to express concern that attendance at GEAR UP events does not always rise to the level of their expectations. Staff at GEAR UP schools, although generally familiar with the GEAR UP program, may not always be certain about what services and resources are provided by GEAR UP and which are provided by other sources. Students seem to be very familiar with the program, although parents' level of familiarity with GEAR UP is unclear—due, perhaps, to limited parental involvement in GEAR UP activities.

Site coordinators should be encouraged to reinvigorate their efforts to share information about the program and ensure that staff and school stakeholder are aware of the services, activities, and resources provided through GEAR UP funding.

Because lower-than-desired attendance at events is a persistent problem with no easy solutions, GEAR UP stakeholders (including project staff, regional coordinators, and site coordinators) could be encouraged to form a community of practice, reaching out to each other and to GEAR UP staff and stakeholders in other areas to discuss strategies for increasing participation and attendance.

It is possible that, particularly for professional development events, some survey respondents actually did participate in GEAR UP services but were not aware that they were sponsored by GEAR UP or forgot about them by the time of survey administration. In collaboration with site coordinators, program staff should examine participation in these programs to determine whether students, parents, and school personnel truly did not participate, if they participated but do not remember, or if they did not realize an event was sponsored by GEAR UP. Site coordinators may need to consider methods for expanding or advertising those services to involve more stakeholders. GEAR UP site coordinators could also follow up with participants to ascertain the main reasons they do or do not participate in services; that information could then be used to redesign advertising or marketing efforts to improve participation rates. West Virginia GEAR UP staff report that they hope to create more sophisticated reports within the SCRIBE data management tool to assist with such outreach and follow-up efforts.

Quality. Activities and services are being very well received by students, parents, and teachers and are perceived to be of high quality, relevance, and utility. Recipients of GEAR UP services are generally satisfied with the services they receive and appear to find the services helpful. Parents and students showed high levels of satisfaction with the GEAR UP services in which they participated, with college visits in particular being viewed as high quality and beneficial. School personnel tended to agree that GEAR UP services were of high quality, relevant, and useful for students and parents. They also found GEAR UP-sponsored professional development to be helpful in preparing them to deal with various college access, instructional, and other issues. Overall, site coordinators, who tend to be very proud of their work, also generally stated that they could improve their activities and services in the coming school year and have begun to reflect on ways to do so.

Challenges and Resolutions. Although the program is experiencing some successes in implementing required activities, sites continue to struggle with persistent challenges in providing services and activities and achieving the desired results. As in previous years, limited attendance at events and lack of good transportation options continue to serve as primary challenges in implementation.

For the third year, lack of transportation is a challenge that appears to be limiting participation in GEAR UP events. At many sites, students and parents do not have a way to travel back to the high school campus for afterschool events; even sites with activity buses may struggle to serve all students due to limited bus routes (e.g., only main roads rather than directly to students' homes). Lack of transportation may be a particular challenge in recruiting students to stay after school for tutoring or other enrichment services (services in which 59% of students in both GEAR UP cohorts did not participate) and in enticing families to attend workshops and other events. In a related vein, limited parental involvement continues to disappoint site coordinators. Site coordinators' discussions and parent survey results suggest that parent participation continues to be limited (e.g., about 45% of parent survey respondents indicated that they did not participate in GEAR UP's parent and community activities in Year 3). Parents who come to events appreciate the information and support; however, participation is still lower than stakeholders may desire. Sites may also be struggling to cultivate high levels of participation among teachers. The reasons for teachers' limited participation are not clear. However, findings of previous years suggest that teachers and other school personnel may not be particularly motivated to attend events after regular school hours.

To deal with the challenge of low attendance at GEAR UP events (for all groups—students, parents, and teachers), site coordinators try to schedule events at times that are most convenient for participants. For instance, professional development events may be scheduled during faculty senate times to ensure that teachers will not need to stay after regular school hours for the event. Some sites are also scheduling tutoring during regular school hours so that students will be able to attend without worrying about transportation. As in previous years, GEAR UP events continue to be scheduled simultaneously with other, well attended events (e.g., sporting events, graduation events) to boost the likelihood that families will be able to attend.

Due to the long-planned structure of the project, during Year 3, students in Grade 10 were not directly served by the GEAR UP program while students in Grades 9, 11, and 12 received services. Some Grade 10 (Class of 2013) students and parents noticed and were upset by the gap in service. Site coordinators occasionally struggled to explain the situation adequately. Such resentment may have contributed to the very low response rate (14%) among comparison students in the Class of 2013 (Grade 10 during Year 3).

Other challenges that sites may be facing are difficulties navigating and negotiating relationships with their district offices (especially where bureaucratic hurdles appear to hamper the project); challenges in finding and recruiting qualified tutors; and challenges in finding ways to ensure that site coordinators, teachers, and others are able to balance GEAR UP work, requirements, and requests with responsibilities of their primary jobs. Sites try to deal with these challenges in ways that are appropriate for their own contexts (e.g., recruiting retired teachers to serve as tutors, hiring current teachers to act as tutors during their planning periods, setting priorities for work to achieve as much as possible).

HEPC staff should consider providing general and/or targeted assistance to sites regarding methods for boosting participation in GEAR UP events. Site coordinators may need additional training,

assistance, and tools for communicating effectively with parents of underserved student populations. Additionally, they may need additional assistance finding ways to facilitate participation or motivate school personnel to participate in professional development. GEAR UP program staff should continue to facilitate discussions wherein site coordinators share their effective strategies with their peers. Alternately, regional coordinators could brainstorm strategies that might be effective in different situations (e.g., when dealing with an active resistor, when dealing with a willing-but-overworked teacher) and for each site's context. Resolutions should be careful to take into account transportation and geographic issues that challenge many GEAR UP sites.

Because many sites continue to have concerns about transportation issues, HEPC should look into transportation concerns as an area for further development and assistance. In collaboration with site coordinators, program staff should examine and discuss strategies for improving transportation and/or scheduling options that might work in the contexts of the GEAR UP sites to maximize opportunities for student and parent participation.

Because some sites still seem to be struggling with full, effective implementation of the tutoring component, more assistance or reform may be needed in this area. HEPC personnel may want to work with sites to achieve fuller implementation of the tutoring component, particularly when tutoring must be implemented after school (with the attendant difficulties associated with adequate transportation to and from afterschool events).

HEPC staff should encourage site coordinators to be prepared to deal with the reactions of Grade 9 students and parents in Year 4. Grade 9 will receive no direct services from GEAR UP, and there may be hurt feelings or resentment among the group, as there was from Grade 10 students in Year 3. Providing a list of phrases or concepts that coordinators can draw upon during discussions about the issue may be particularly helpful.

Resources and Partnerships. For the third year, program resources appear to be utilized for appropriate purposes and in appropriate ways. Site coordinators are using funds to deliver services and purchase various resources to benefit students and educators in their schools. Purchases of technology equipment are especially common, although site coordinators also purchase software and textbooks as needed. GEAR UP funds are also being used to pay for students' dual credit courses and textbooks. All GEAR UP-funded resources and services are aimed at improving students' knowledge of and access to postsecondary options and the academic capabilities of students and educators. Further, findings from site coordinator group discussions and school personnel survey responses indicate that teachers and other school personnel are making use of the resources that GEAR UP provides for their schools.

Participation in GEAR UP-funded professional development, however, may be received less enthusiastically at some sites in comparison with the physical resources the project provides. Service data recorded in SCRIBE suggest that at nine of the 17 high schools, two thirds or more of the teachers who taught GEAR UP students participated in project-sponsored professional development; however, at the other eight schools, site coordinators appeared to struggle to get teachers to participate, with most of those schools having participation rates of about one third or less of the eligible teacher population. School personnel survey data also suggest that teachers did not participate at high levels in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development, although those findings could be reflective of teachers not knowing or being confused or mistaken about the organizations or entities sponsoring the activities. These findings, taken together, suggest that some sites may need extra assistance in

making the most effective and efficient use of GEAR UP funds and resources allocated to teacher professional development.

Partnerships with institutions of higher education (IHEs) created or strengthened through the GEAR UP project appear to be functioning well and are mutually beneficial for schools and their partners. In particular, relationships with IHEs—both official partners and other institutions—appear to be getting stronger and more positive with each year of the project. Based on discussions with site coordinators, IHEs appear to be familiar with the GEAR UP project and are eager to help participating schools and students. School sites are appreciative of the attention and assistance they receive from the IHEs, particularly for college visits. Regular college visits and increased participation in dual enrollment courses may be helping to strengthen these relationships. At this time, it is unclear how these relationships may change when GEAR UP funding ends and both college visits and dual enrollment are likely to decline.

It may be helpful to begin considering how relationships and partnerships may change following the end of project-funded events and activities. Project staff may want to consider whether technical assistance or advice may be necessary from both the secondary and postsecondary perspective to ensure sustainable, positive relationships.

Site coordinators did not mention partnerships with entities other than IHEs. If it is a HEPC goal for sites to develop further community or business partnerships, further assistance may be needed in this area. If site coordinators are to help their schools develop such partnerships, they may need guidance or discussion about the types of partnerships that best meet the goals of GEAR UP, state or regional resources or organizations that might fit that vision, how sites can develop those partnerships, how HEPC can provide support to nurture those relationships, and how such partnerships can help sustain the program after the grant.

Preliminary Outcomes

After Year 3 of the project, preliminary data related to outcomes offer a mixed picture with modest successes tempered by room for improvement to meet project goals and objectives.

Student Interest and Involvement in School. Although student interest and involvement in school may be increasing, the evidence at this point is slightly mixed. School personnel report that student involvement and interest in school has improved slightly since the previous school year. They also report that parent involvement and interest in school has improved since the previous year. However, the challenges that school personnel and site coordinators both mentioned in getting parents engaged and involved suggest that substantial difficulties in raising parental involvement still remain. Student survey results, however, suggest that student interest and involvement in school has not changed substantially. GEAR UP Cohort and Priority Cohort student participation in school activities like sports, clubs, and student government appears to have been fairly stable or has declined slightly since Year 1 of the project.

Student Career Awareness and Interest. Survey evidence also suggests some modest improvements in students' career awareness and interest. Survey results suggest that school personnel perceived a slightly greater level of career awareness and interest in Year 3 than they did in the previous year. Further, when asked what occupation they would like to have when their education was complete, students in Year 3 selected from a greater percentage of available options (40 out of 44 career options) than did students in Year 2 (21 out of 44 options). Survey results also

showed a slight increase over Years 1 and 2 in the percentage of students who had heard of vocational and trade schools. In Years 2 and 3, about 35% of GEAR UP Cohort students and 40% of Priority Cohort students reported that they did not participate in career planning services offered by GEAR UP, and they tended to be satisfied with the services. This finding actually suggests a higher rate of participation in career planning than in several other GEAR UP services (e.g., tutoring, mentoring). However, although it may be reasonable to assume that participation in career planning services may have had a positive effect on students' awareness or interest in various careers, the data do not speak to any such effect. It is difficult to draw further conclusions about students' career awareness and interest from the available data because the student survey is more focused on college than on career awareness or training.

Students' College Knowledge. The GEAR UP project does seem to be having a positive impact on some aspects of students' college awareness and knowledge. Site coordinators report that students who attend college visits find them to be very valuable experiences in learning what life on a college campus is like. Site coordinators have also been very impressed with how well their high school freshmen are able to navigate college campuses (e.g., knowing how to get lunch in the cafeteria). Student and parent survey results corroborate site coordinators' perceptions that college visits are very helpful for students. Students who participate in such activities, then, seem to be developing knowledge about college life (in addition to the application and admission processes and requirements, financial aid, and so on).

The majority (three fourths or more) of students in both the GEAR UP Cohort and Priority Cohort reported having conversations with someone from their school or from GEAR UP about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid. Nearly all students in each year of the program have planned to continue their education beyond high school (with most students—60% or more—expecting to obtain a four-year degree) and believe that a person with a college degree generally earns more than a person without a college degree. Additionally, the majority of students thought they could *probably* or *definitely* afford to attend a public four-year college using all available funds. However, there were still fairly high rates of uncertainty, with just less than one quarter of the students being unsure about college affordability. The uncertainty could be a result of the current economic climate or uncertainty about the actual costs of tuition (see the following paragraph for a discussion of survey respondents' tuition estimates). Program staff may want to investigate this area further.

Most students still overestimate or do not know the cost of one year's tuition at a public college or university in the Mountain State. In Year 3, about one third of GEAR UP Cohort students and slightly more than one fifth of Priority Cohort students stated that they did not know tuition costs. About half or more of the students participating in the GEAR UP program overestimated tuition costs. It could be that students simply do not know how much tuition costs; alternately, they may interpret the term "tuition" to mean the cost of attendance (i.e., they could be offering estimates of the cost of tuition, all fees, room and board, and so on). Further, this lack of awareness about the actual costs of tuition may be contributing to students' lack of certainty about whether or not they can afford to attend a four-year college. Although students may be taking into consideration their own and their families' financial circumstances and factoring in continuing uncertainty about the economic climate, it is also possible that they are not willing to say that they can afford to attend college because they are overestimating how much it will cost.

Tuition awareness could be an area for special emphasis in Year 4 for the GEAR UP program. Special tuition awareness events or initiatives could be planned in conjunction with other activities (e.g., kick-

off events, College Goal Sunday, financial aid workshops) to ensure that students and parents understand what is meant by the term "tuition," to introduce them to the terms for other fees and costs associated with attendance, and to make sure they understand what all those different costs are for the public higher education institutions in West Virginia.

Tuition awareness could be combined with efforts to advise students (and their parents) about financial aid and other resources available to help them afford college. GEAR UP project staff and site coordinators could begin by examining the information and materials currently available to students and determine whether to provide students with more information on scholarships and financial aid opportunities, to provide different kinds of information about the topic, or explore different ways to provide such services. They should also consider encouraging students and parents to talk to each other about college plans and financing options.

Academic Development and Capacity. As with most other outcomes, evidence about changes in students' academic development and capacity are mixed. Year 3 students are no more likely to think that they work harder in school than their peers than they were in previous years; neither are they more likely to consider themselves good or excellent students. However, the majority of students in the GEAR UP and Priority cohorts do perceive that they are at least good students. The majority of students participating in GEAR UP also report that the program is helping to improve their academic preparation for college, with two thirds of GEAR UP Cohort students and almost half of Priority Cohort students saying that GEAR UP has helped them become a better student. However, in Year 3, a slightly higher percentage of GEAR UP Cohort students than in previous years said the main reason they would not continue their education beyond high school was because their grades were not good enough. More detailed conclusions about students' academic development and capacity can be drawn when Year 3 student outcomes data (e.g., course completion, standardized test performance, ACT scores) become fully available[4].

Parent Knowledge. Parents' awareness of postsecondary issues may be increasing. A greater percentage of parents in Year 3 reported having conversations about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid than in either of the previous years. About half of parents or slightly more reported being familiar with the three basic types of postsecondary schools (vocational schools, community or two-year colleges, four-year colleges), representing increases in familiarity from Year 2. As in previous years, most parents had heard of most types of financial aid sources, although federal work-study, institutional scholarships, and private or academic scholarships continued to be least familiar to them. In Year 3, two thirds of parents—more than in previous years—expected that their child(ren) would obtain a four-year college degree or higher. They held this expectation even though only 13% had earned a college degree themselves, and more than half had a high school diploma or less. These findings suggest that parents' awareness and expectations may be increasing as a result of GEAR UP services. It is a bit more difficult to ascertain whether their knowledge about college and related issues (e.g., financial aid) is increasing, although it is reasonable to expect that increased awareness and repeated exposure to high quality, highly credible, and valid information (as that provided through GEAR UP and CFWV) may serve to increase parents' knowledge.

Like their children, parents may still struggle to understand the information presented to them. Parents were more willing than students to offer an estimate of the cost of one year's tuition at a

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[4] Student outcomes data are reported by the participating counties and given to HEPC personnel who share them with evaluators, typically well after the school year has ended (allowing time to gather and report achievement test results, etc.). These data will be reported when they are available.

public four-year college or university in West Virginia, and their estimates tended to be a little more accurate. However, half of GEAR UP parents continued to overestimate the cost of one year tuition. The causes and effects of this lack of knowledge about tuition costs may be the same for parents as they are for students (e.g., misunderstanding of the term "tuition"; overestimates leading to decreased confidence that students can afford to attend college). In fact, almost one third of parents said that the main reason their child might not continue education after high school was that it costs too much.

Activities' Relation to Goals. Activities and services provided during Year 3 appear to be focused on promoting the goals of the West Virginia GEAR UP project. Site coordinators' discussion of their activities and service data recorded in SCRIBE reveal that Year 3 services and activities relate well to the goal of increasing students' and parents' awareness and familiarity with postsecondary topics (e.g., financial aid, college options, campus life). Activities and resources are also designed and intended to enhance students' academic performance and preparation (e.g., tutoring, ACT and other exam preparation). Structures and processes established by West Virginia GEAR UP staff are also designed to ensure efficient and effective use of resources, a goal that site coordinators appear to respect even if limitations on how they can use funds occasionally frustrate them.

> **West Virginia GEAR UP Goals**
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> **Goal 1:** To significantly increase the academic performance and rigorous preparation of students for participation in postsecondary education.
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> **Goal 2:** To significantly increase the number of high poverty, at-risk students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.
>
> **Goal 3:** To significantly increase the rate of high school graduation and participation of students in postsecondary education.
>
> **Goal 4:** To significantly increase cohort students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary educational institutions, admission requirements, and financial aid.
>
> **Goal 5:** To ensure effective, efficient, and most appropriate use of resources through intentional collaboration with identified partners that are committed to GEAR UP goals.

Sustainability

It may be too early to determine which project elements may be sustainable beyond the life of the project. However, given the use of GEAR UP funds to purchase technology and other relatively durable resources for schools (e.g., tutoring software, sets of books for classrooms), the project may leave behind tools and resources that schools can use for a few to several years after project funding ends. Other elements that would not be possible without GEAR UP funding (e.g., full payment for dual enrollment courses and books, fully funded college visits) may not be sustainable when GEAR UP funding is no longer available. Schools across the nation are facing financial struggles, particularly in an era of austerity such as the one the nation is currently facing. Although most schools and districts participating in the West Virginia GEAR UP project appear to be supportive of the work and intentions of the project, fiscal challenges may limit their abilities to sustain the kinds of college access work GEAR UP is helping them do at present.

Although not discussed specifically in this report, West Virginia GEAR UP staff and partners are making efforts to disseminate information about and findings from the project to various audiences, including local stakeholders (e.g., site coordinators, district and school personnel, state advisory board, other HEPC personnel) and national GEAR UP stakeholders (e.g., those attending the national GEAR UP conference). Dissemination efforts have included convening meetings for advisory board members and other local audiences; sharing information, reports, and announcements via the GEAR UP website; sharing updates and reports with district and school personnel via e-mail and phone calls; and attending and presenting at national conferences for GEAR UP project staff and other college access project personnel (e.g., the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

[NCCEP]/GEAR UP Annual Conference). Conference presentations seem to be well attended and received; advisory board members and local stakeholders also appear to be receptive to the information shared with them. At this time, it appears that the West Virginia GEAR UP project is experiencing some success in sharing information about the project with various stakeholders.

Project staff may want to consider whether other audiences may be interested in learning more about the West Virginia GEAR UP project. It may be particularly helpful to share information about the work of the project with other entities within the state, particularly civic and business partners who may be able to provide funding, resources, or support to continue the work after federal funding ends. Helping generate or build on local interest and support to ensure students are successful in their postsecondary endeavors may help to ensure that the goals of the GEAR UP project become a permanent part of the mindset in West Virginia's communities in need of greater opportunity, educational attainment, fiscal stability, and hope. Westside High School in Wyoming County tried such an initiative with great success in Year 3; their local College Access and Student Success Summit could serve as a model for other similar events throughout the regions served by West Virginia GEAR UP.

Other Considerations

Response rates for the long-form student surveys were better or relatively stable from Year 2 to Year 3 in terms of representing the population of students served by GEAR UP. However, the student rates were still lower than desired, and parent response rates among the GEAR UP Cohort were very low. The low parent response rates could be due in part to an intense focus in Year 3 on attaining federally required student response rates (80%) and a lesser focus on attaining parent response. It could also be that parents in the GEAR UP Cohort do not understand why they need to complete the same survey every year and are experiencing some survey fatigue.

Evaluators should continue to explore different ways of increasing survey response rates, including shortening the survey to exclude questions that are not essential for the research foci, enlisting the help of key stakeholders (e.g., HEROs, parent liaisons) for survey collection, and offering different or additional incentives for schools meeting or exceeding response rate targets. Already planned is an effort to move data collection to an online platform to provide a more efficient mechanism for monitoring and reporting student response. Online data collection may not be practical or feasible for parent respondents, however. Other strategies for increasing response rates should include explanations about why stakeholders are asked to respond to the surveys each year. Evaluators should work closely with GEAR UP staff and site coordinators to devise contextually appropriate strategies for ensuring adequate response rates from students and parents served by the program.

Student aspiration results have not changed much from Year 2 to Year 3. The results reveal that among all four scales,[5] students in all groups rate themselves highest in *achiever orientation*. Students in the GEAR UP Cohort tended to give higher ratings in *positive environment* than the other groups; of all the groups, however, the Priority Cohort gave the lowest ratings in that area, which was also the lowest rated scale within the Priority Cohort. Because the GEAR UP program tries to influence the school environment, these mixed findings are both encouraging and discouraging. Program staff may want to explore these findings with site coordinators to determine what factors may be influencing students' perceptions of the school environment and to determine what, if anything, the program could change to influence perceptions in a positive way. In Year 3, perceptions of *teacher support*

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[5] The four aspiration scales include *Achiever Orientation*, *Leader Orientation*, *Positive Environment*, and *Teacher Support*.

were very similar—nearly identical—among all the student groups. However, within the GEAR UP Cohort, the *teacher support* scale received the lowest rating among the four scales for the third year.

The West Virginia GEAR UP program should explore opportunities to offer training, assistance, or support for initiatives aimed at fostering better or more supportive relationships among teachers and students. Because the development of good relationships with teachers is important for student success and the cultivation of a rigorous and supportive school culture, this area seems to be an important one on which to focus in Year 4 and beyond.

Generally, similar results were observed in the GEAR UP Cohort and comparison groups for both students and parents. The most substantial difference between the groups was in the rate of having discussions about college entrance requirements and financial aid. Students and parents served by GEAR UP report much higher levels of these conversations than their comparison peers. In most other respects, the groups seem to be fairly similar. It should be noted, however, that the response rates among comparison students and parents were much lower than were the response rates among the GEAR UP groups (with the exception of Class of 2015 parents; see footnote 3 for details). It is possible that comparison respondents are different in important ways from non-respondents in the comparison group. Comparison respondents, who were motivated to respond to the survey without incentive, may be more motivated in other areas related to academic preparation and aspiration. Thus, although the comparison data give a point of reference to determine the extent to which the GEAR UP program is reaching its intended service population and achieving its goals, interpretation should be made with caution given the limited comparison response rate.

APPENDIX A

Year 3 Evaluation Participants and Data Collected

Year 3 Evaluation Participant Groups and Data Collected

Participant Group	Description	Year 3 Data
Priority Cohort	Students in Grades 11 and 12 at GEAR UP schools. These students receive GEAR UP services for two years (during both Grade 11 and Grade 12). These students are surveyed each year; although they may complete surveys twice, they are not tracked longitudinally.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); student survey (winter)
GEAR UP Cohort	Students in the graduating class of 2014. These students were enrolled in Grade 7 when the GEAR UP program began and were enrolled in Grade 9 during Year 3 (2010-2011 school year). Students in this group receive intensive GEAR UP services every year and will continue receiving such services until they graduate from high school. These students are surveyed each year and are tracked longitudinally.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); student survey (winter)
GEAR UP Cohort Parents	Parents of students in the GEAR UP Cohort. These parents are eligible to receive services through the GEAR UP program. Parents in this group are surveyed each year; they are tracked longitudinally.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); parent survey (winter)
Comparison Students	Students in the graduating classes of 2013 and 2015—those student classes immediately older than and immediately younger than the GEAR UP Cohort. Comparison students do not typically receive GEAR UP services, although they will be eligible when they age into the Priority Cohort. Inclusion of this group is intended to provide a picture of typical student experience and expectations absent intensive GEAR UP intervention. These students are surveyed every other year (until they age into the Priority Cohort); the group is tracked longitudinally.	Student survey (winter)
Comparison Parents	Parents of students in the comparison group (classes of 2013 and 2015). These parents are not eligible to receive GEAR UP services. Parents in this group are surveyed every other year, and the group is tracked longitudinally.	Parent survey (winter)
School Personnel	Professional staff (teachers, administrators, counselors, and others who work directly with students) at GEAR UP schools. School personnel are eligible to receive professional development, training, other services, and resources through the GEAR UP program.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); school personnel survey (spring)
Site Coordinators	Site Coordinators, contractors for the West Virginia GEAR UP project, plan and implement GEAR UP services at each participating school.	Focus group discussions (end-of-year)

APPENDIX B

West Virginia GEAR UP Evaluation Questions

West Virginia GEAR UP Evaluation Questions

Implementation questions. The central question for the formative evaluation is the degree to which the West Virginia GEAR UP activities are being implemented as planned. This is referred to as the formative question, or "F." The evaluators also will examine the degree to which the activities are producing the outputs intended.

F1. Are project activities being implemented with fidelity to the design?

F2. Are services to students, parents, and schools/teachers achieving the desired reach?

F3. How do stakeholders perceive the quality of project activities, interventions, products, and outputs?

F4. What problems have emerged in implementing project activities and interventions, and how are they being resolved by those responsible for delivery?

F5. How effectively, efficiently, and appropriately are (a) resources being used, and (b) partners collaborating toward GEAR UP goals?

Outcome questions. The evaluation includes a number of questions relating to the outcomes the West Virginia GEAR UP project is intended to achieve. These are organized by project objective (O), with the addition of O9, which aligns with all objectives.

O1. To what extent does GEAR UP increase student interest and involvement in school?

O2. To what extent is student academic achievement increasing?

O3. To what extent does GEAR UP promote student academic progression?

O4. To what extent does GEAR UP promote student career awareness and interests?

O5. To what extent does GEAR UP promote students' "college knowledge"?

O6. Does student participation in postsecondary opportunities increase?

O7. To what extent do GEAR UP activities promote academic development and capacity of GEAR UP schools and educators?

O8. To what extent does GEAR UP increase parent knowledge of college admissions and financial aid?

O9. How do activities and interventions, and other variables, relate to the above goals?

Sustainability questions. Through reviews of the development and use of the college information Web portal, project staff interviews, site coordinator focus groups, school personnel surveys, and project documentation review, the evaluation team will examine the degree to which this GEAR UP model shows promise to be sustainable and transferable.

S1. How, to whom, and how successfully is project information being disseminated?

S2. Which, if any, project elements appear to be sustainable beyond the life of the grant?