



West Virginia **GEARUP** Evaluation

Year 4 Student and Parent
Surveys:
Summary of Results

July 2012

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Year 4 Student and Parent Surveys: Summary of Results

The West Virginia Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) evaluation team at Edvantia surveyed students and parents in GEAR UP schools to gather information about their knowledge and awareness about college, academic progression, and aspirations for educational attainment. This brief summary highlights the major findings of the student and parent surveys and presents recommendations to facilitate discussion about programmatic adjustments.

Survey Instruments and Methods

As in previous years, the evaluation team administered in-depth surveys to students and parents to gather information relevant to the implementation of the West Virginia GEAR UP project and outcomes resulting from the GEAR UP work. The surveys measured knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of key factors among students in the 2014 Cohort¹ and their parents as well as Priority Cohort² students. Specifically, the surveys assessed students' and parents' knowledge and awareness about college, academic progression, aspirations for educational attainment, and perceptions of GEAR UP services and impacts. Generally, the items included in the Year 4 student and parent surveys remained unchanged from the Year 3 (2010-2011 school year) surveys. Evaluators and key staff from the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC), which administers the West Virginia GEAR UP grant, deleted a few items following Year 3, however, in an attempt to streamline the survey and ask only the most pertinent questions that could not be adequately assessed by other means.

The Year 4 evaluation surveys were administered between November 2011 and February 2012. Year 4 survey data collection generally followed the timeline established in Year 3; compared to Years 1 and 2 of the project, the Years 3 and 4 survey administration timelines were slightly longer to ensure adequate opportunity for students and parents to respond and to enhance the likelihood that the program would meet federal expectations for survey response rates (80% for students, 50% for parents). Whereas Year 3 survey data collection extended into March 2011, Year 4 survey administration ended in mid-February 2012, shortening the timeline by about one month.

A Note about Parental Consent

Edvantia and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) continue to collect parental consent forms from students. Parental consent forms, once signed, cover all survey and secondary data collection (e.g., student achievement) through the life of the grant. At the beginning of 2011-2012 school year, the evaluation team sent consent forms to parents of 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students from 14 GEAR UP high schools in 10 counties. The 2011-2012 forms were sent primarily to students who did not already have parental consent on file. In combination with the consent forms collected in prior school years, evaluators have secured consent for 1,648 of the 1,897 2014 Cohort students, and for 2,009 of the 2,974 students enrolled in the Classes of 2013 and 2012 during Year 4 of the project.

¹ 2014 Cohort students are those in the graduating class of 2014; they were 7th-grade students during the first year of the grant (2008-2009 school year) and were 10th-grade students during Year 4 (2011-2012). 2014 Cohort students will be tracked each year of the grant through their graduation from high school. Previous reports may have referred to these students at the "GEAR UP Cohort." The evaluation team, acting under advice from West Virginia GEAR UP staff, has chosen to change the name to eliminate confusion (because other students also receive services and can be considered GEAR UP students).

² Priority Cohort students are those who are enrolled in Grades 11 and 12 each year.

Survey administration procedures in Year 4 were substantially different than those used in previous years. In an effort to facilitate more efficient and effective data collection, evaluators and GEAR UP project staff collaborated with project partner Xcalibur's staff to transition the surveys into an online format using the survey portal of the Standardized Collection and Reporting of Information Benefiting Education (SCRIBE) system. The survey portal was fully integrated with the SCRIBE databases to allow for immediate tracking of student and parent survey completion. Site coordinators, project staff, and evaluators were able to download completion reports directly from SCRIBE to monitor the response rate as well as completers and noncompleters; site coordinators were then able to use that information to target follow-up efforts with noncompleters (or with students who had completed the survey but did not have a signed consent form on file). In addition to the reports available in SCRIBE, evaluators provided project staff with regular updates of response rates by school and region; these updates included data about the completion of both the online surveys and the paper-based surveys that some sites used to supplement the online form. To prevent duplication of surveys, log-in protocols and controls within the SCRIBE system automatically disqualified respondents from completing the survey multiple times.

As in previous years, paper-based survey materials were made available for each school. Site coordinators provided evaluators an estimate of the number of paper surveys they thought they might need to distribute to parents and students; evaluators provided the survey materials to site coordinators at the group's October 2011 meeting. After survey administration began, site coordinators could request additional survey materials from the evaluation team on an as-needed basis. In some cases, at the request of site coordinators, regional coordinators, or HEPC staff, survey packets were prepared for individual students based on their grade level and consent status. In these personalized packets, students with parental consent were provided the survey to complete; students with no parental consent on file were provided with the appropriate survey and a parental consent form. These students were instructed to get permission from their parents (or to sign for themselves, if 18 years or older) before completing the survey.

Online and paper-based survey data collection occurred concurrently. Site coordinators arranged data collection activities that were most feasible and most likely to be effective for their own school contexts (e.g., scheduling computer lab time during the school day for students to complete the survey online; taking paper surveys to GEAR UP or other school events to distribute to parents and students; asking students to complete the surveys on bus trips to college visits or other events). Site coordinators returned completed paper surveys to the evaluation team on a rolling basis from November to February. Evaluation team members then entered the data, conducted preliminary data cleaning, and converted the data files into a format appropriate for uploading into the SCRIBE system. In the interim between receipt of paper surveys and the upload into SCRIBE, evaluators kept a log of respondents (by student lunch number) and provided updates about respondents and response rates that included this information. After paper-based survey data were provided to Xcalibur for uploading into SCRIBE, evaluators tracked which cases were successfully imported and which cases were not imported³; the tracking files were updated accordingly. As needed, evaluators performed additional data cleaning required to make a case suitable for uploading.

³ The SCRIBE survey portal tracked and controlled survey completion based on information specifically identifying individual students, such as the student's school, grade level, and unique identifier (i.e., the student's 5-digit lunch number or the 9-digit WVEIS [West Virginia Education Information System] number, used for both students and their parents). If the student's information did not match any students in SCRIBE, the case was not imported. This could happen if the student's WVEIS number was not on file with the student's case in SCRIBE or if there was a data entry error. In most cases, data cleaning was sufficient to resolve the issues and allow the case to be reimported. However, if a student completed the survey online, the paper-based response was treated as a duplicate case and was not imported.

The original deadline for submission of student and parent surveys was February 1, 2012, and student response rates met expectations by that date. However, the parent response rate lagged the target slightly; the evaluation team and West Virginia GEAR UP program staff decided to extend the data collection timelines in order to increase the response rate for the parent survey. As in Year 3, a brief version of the parent survey consisting only of required questions was also created (in paper format only) to help reach the target response rate; however, only four “short-form” surveys were received, with the remaining 954 surveys being collected online. Online data collection for the parent survey ended on February 10, 2012; a small number of paper surveys were received by the evaluation team after that date. The majority of data were collected by the end of February, and all data were collected, entered, and available in the SCRIBE system by the end of March.

Analyses

Analyses of Year 4 student and parent survey data consist primarily of descriptive statistics, including frequencies and measures of central tendency. Comparisons of identical survey items in Years 1 through 4 provide evidence about how much progress the West Virginia GEAR UP project is making toward improving student and parent outcomes. Where appropriate, tests of statistical significance (e.g., one-way analyses of variance [ANOVAs]) are presented to describe the significance and magnitude of changes over time. Survey findings are presented in the following sections, organized by topic area (e.g., college knowledge, aspirations).

Survey Findings

The response rates for the evaluation survey increased in Year 4 compared to previous years. In all, 1,445 students in the 2014 Cohort (about 89% of those with consent) completed the student survey in Year 4, representing the highest response rate yet achieved. The number of respondents represented about 77% of all enrolled students in the cohort. The response rate for students in the Priority Cohort was also higher in Year 4 than in previous years. The 1,741 Priority Cohort respondents represented about 87% of students with consent (and about 60% of all enrolled students). See Tables 1 and 2 for 2014 Cohort and Priority Cohort response rates by school.

Table 1. Number of Enrolled GEAR UP Cohort Students and Response Rates by School

County	School	Year 4				
		Eligible Students Enrolled*	Affirmative Consent Forms Received	Surveys Returned	% of Enrolled Students	% of Students with Consent
Boone	Scott High School	156	154	146	93.6%	94.8%
Boone	Sherman High School	94	86	86	91.5%	100.0%
Clay	Clay High School	122	95	89	73.0%	93.7%
Lincoln	Lincoln County High School	215	149	120	55.8%	80.5%
McDowell	Mount View High School	104	69	57	54.8%	82.6%
McDowell	River View High School	124	111	98	79.0%	88.3%
Mingo	Mingo Central Comprehensive High School	181	162	128	70.7%	79.0%
Mingo	Tug Valley High School	101	86	77	76.2%	89.5%
Roane	Roane County High School	178	141	118	66.3%	83.7%
Summers	Summers High School	100	100	100	100.0%	100.0%
Webster	Webster County High School	101	88	84	83.2%	95.5%
Wirt	Wirt High School	80	78	77	96.3%	98.7%
Wyoming	Westside High School	155	148	139	89.7%	93.9%

County	School	Year 4				
		Eligible Students Enrolled*	Affirmative Consent Forms Received	Surveys Returned	% of Enrolled Students	% of Students with Consent
Wyoming	Wyoming County East High School	158	153	126	79.7%	82.4%
Total		1,869	1,620	1,445	77.3%	89.2%

Note. The number of eligible students enrolled excludes those students for whom evaluators have received forms explicitly declining to give consent for student participation in data collection. At the end of the Year 4 survey timeframe, the total number of consent forms marked “no” for the 2014 Cohort was 28.

Table 2. Number of Enrolled Priority Cohort Students and Response Rates by School

County	School	Year 4				
		Eligible Students Enrolled*	Affirmative Consent Forms Received	Surveys Returned	% of Enrolled Students	% of Students with Consent
Boone	Sherman High School	180	159	158	87.8%	99.4%
Clay	Clay High School	278	220	180	64.7%	81.8%
Lincoln	Lincoln County High School	352	198	173	49.1%	87.4%
McDowell	Mount View High School	174	119	101	58.0%	84.9%
McDowell	River View High School	243	92	87	35.8%	94.6%
Mingo	Mingo Central Comprehensive High School	318	231	170	53.5%	73.6%
Mingo	Tug Valley High School	202	159	131	64.9%	82.4%
Roane	Roane County High School	301	105	67	22.3%	63.8%
Summers	Summers High School	147	146	145	98.6%	99.3%
Webster	Webster County High School	216	196	187	86.6%	95.4%
Wyoming	Westside High School	254	210	186	73.2%	88.6%
Wyoming	Wyoming County East High School	221	174	156	70.6%	89.7%
TOTAL		2,886	2,009	1,741	60.3%	86.7%

Note. The number of eligible students enrolled excludes those students for whom evaluators have received forms explicitly declining to give consent for student participation in data collection. At the end of the Year 4 survey timeframe, the total number of consent forms marked “no” for students in the classes of 2012 and 2013 was 88.

The response rate to the parent survey increased greatly from Year 3 to Year 4. The 570 parents who responded to the long-form paper survey in Year 3 represented about 26% of families within the 2014 Cohort. In Year 4, however, 959 parents responded, representing 51% of families in the 2014 Cohort. The Year 4 response rate exceeded the 41% response rate achieved in Year 2, but fell just short of the 55% response rate achieved with the Year 1 parent survey. Table 3 lists the number of enrolled 2014 Cohort students (and, therefore, the number of parents in the survey sample) and the number and response rate of parent participants by school in Year 4.

Table 3. Number of Year 4 Parent Respondents by School

County	School	GEAR UP Cohort		
		Students Enrolled	Surveys Returned	%
Boone	Scott High School	158	107	67.7%
Boone	Sherman High School	97	55	56.7%
Clay	Clay County High School	122	31	25.4%
Lincoln	Lincoln County High School	219	85	38.8%
McDowell	Mount View High School	107	13	12.1%
McDowell	River View High School	124	30	24.2%
Mingo	Mingo Central Comprehensive High School	183	93	50.8%
Mingo	Tug Valley High School	102	48	47.1%
Roane	Roane County High School	183	103	56.3%
Summers	Summers County High School	103	53	51.5%
Webster	Webster County High School	101	76	75.2%
Wirt	Wirt County High School	81	74	91.4%
Wyoming	Westside High School	157	83	52.9%
Wyoming	Wyoming County East High School	160	108	67.5%
TOTAL		1,897	959	50.6%

Note. The number of students enrolled includes all students in the 2014 Cohort, regardless of consent status. All parents were considered eligible to participate in the survey whether or not they provided consent for their student to participate in evaluation collection activities.

Figure 1 displays response rates for each year. Response rates reported are based on the standard (i.e., “long-form”) version⁴ of the surveys administered in Years 3 and 4.

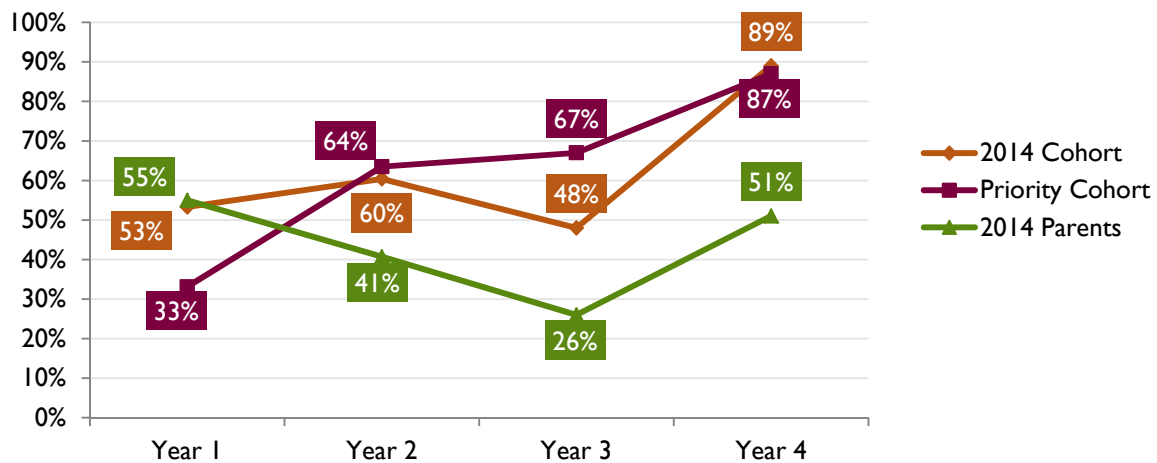


Figure 1. Student and Parent Survey Response Rates, Years 1–4

⁴ In Year 3, in an effort to ensure that the program met federal expectations regarding survey response rates (80% for students, 50% for parents), 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. In reporting data for the federally required annual performance report (APR), evaluators used the required questions from both survey forms; thus, Year 3 response rates reported for the APR included all respondents, regardless of survey form. However, summary reports for Year 3 and 4, as part of the local project evaluation, use data only from the long-form survey. Therefore, response rates and findings may be slightly different than those reported in the Year 3 APR. Note: HEPC staff complete and submit the required APR to the U.S. Department of Education in mid-April of each year. Evaluators provide data and narrative relevant to evaluation activities and findings.

Knowledge about College

Students were asked to report whether someone from their school had spoken with them about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid to help them pay for college (see Figure 2 for a visual summary of students' responses to these items in all years). In Year 4, 85% of 2014 Cohort students reported speaking with someone about financial aid, which represents a small increase from the previous year. The reported rate of these conversations among the 2014 Cohort has been relatively stable since Year 2, when it increased greatly over the 24% rate observed in Year 1. Similarly, 82% of GEAR UP Cohort students reported having spoken with someone from their schools about college entrance requirements, indicating a slight increase from the Year 2 and 3 rates of 72% and 79%, respectively. The rates of these conversations in Years 2 through 4 have continued to increase slowly following a rapid and impressive increase from Year 1 to Year 2.

In Year 4, the number of Priority Cohort students reporting that they had spoken with someone from school about financial aid and college entrance requirements increased slightly from the prior year (from 75% to 81% and 74% to 77%, respectively). These figures are comparable with the data collected in Year 2. Priority Cohort students' reported rates of these key conversations has varied slightly from Year 2 through Year 4. However, rates in these years have been much greater than those observed in Year 1.

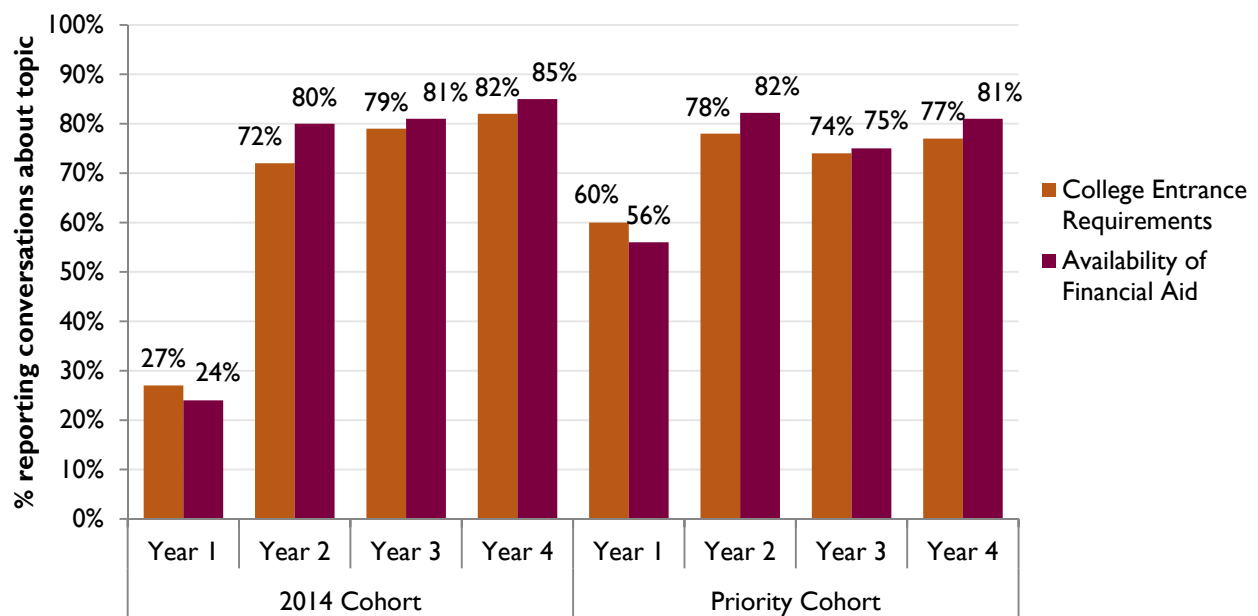


Figure 2. Percentages of students reporting conversations about financial aid and college entrance requirements.

Parents were also asked whether someone from their child's school or from GEAR UP had spoken with them about the availability of financial aid and about college entrance requirements (see Figure 3). In Year 4, more 2014 Cohort parents reported having these kinds of conversations than in any of the previous years, continuing the upward trend observed in Year 3. In the 2011-2012 school year, more than half of the parent survey respondents indicated having these key conversations with someone from their child's school or GEAR UP. The increases in these indicators from Year 3 to Year 4 were somewhat smaller than those observed between Years 1 and 2 and Years 2 and 3; such a moderation or slow-down is reasonable, though, given the dramatic gains made during the first three years.

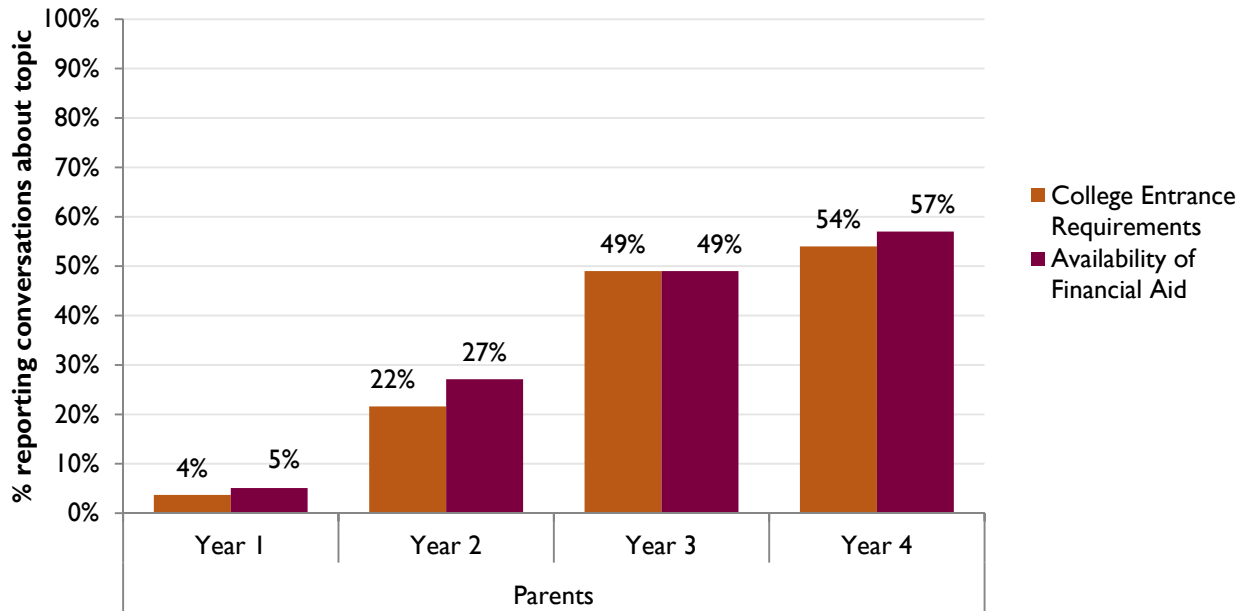


Figure 3. Percentages of parents reporting conversations about financial aid or college entrance requirements.

College planning and discussions. The parent survey asked respondents to indicate whether they had talked with their child about attending college. Nearly all parents in all years have indicated that they had these conversations with their children. The percentage of 2014 Cohort parents who reported having engaged in these kinds of conversations with their children was 95% in Year 4. An item on the student survey asked whether, in the past year, students had spoken with any adult in their household about the academic requirements for college. In Year 4, two thirds of 2014 Cohort students and 70% of Priority Cohort students reported having such conversations. These percentages were a slight increase from the previous year; the percentage of 2014 Cohort students reporting conversations about college requirements with an adult has been increasing steadily since Year 1. See Figure 4 for the four-year percentages.

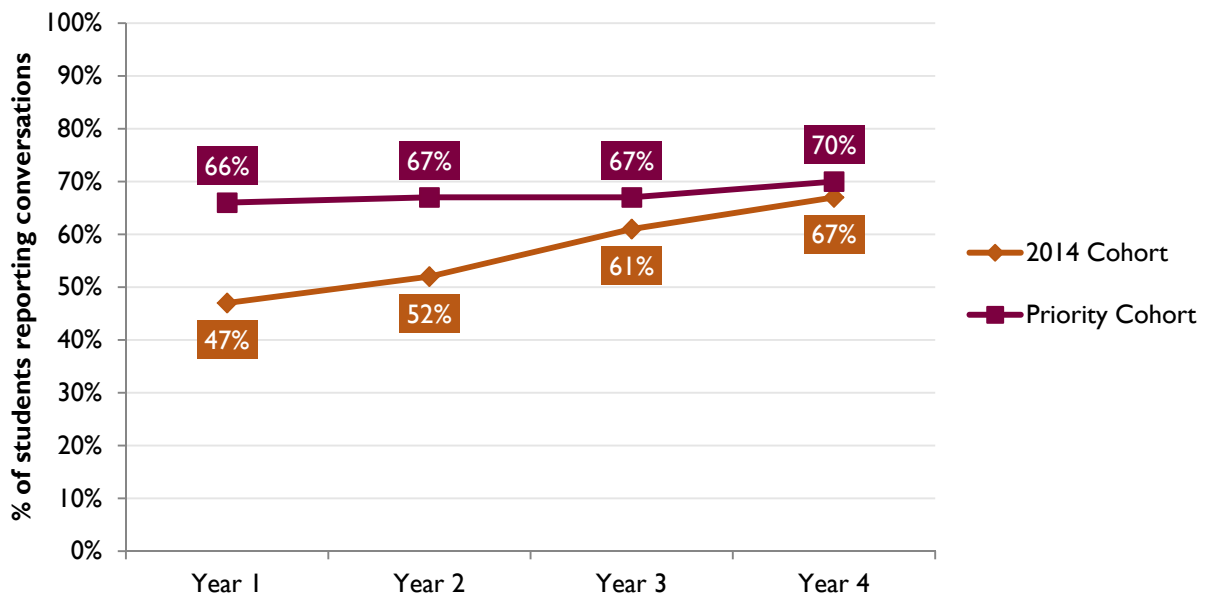


Figure 4. Students reporting conversations about college entrance requirements.

These 2014 Cohort student and parent survey data appear to be in conflict: nearly all parents report discussing college with their students, but only two thirds of 2014 Cohort students report discussing college requirements with their parents. It is important to note, however, that these two questions ask slightly different questions. The parent item simply asks if the parent has spoken with their child about attending college; the student item is more specifically focused on discussions related to academic requirements for college attendance.

Another survey item asked parents whether they had started saving any money for their child’s postsecondary education. In each of the first three years, 31% of parents indicated that they had begun saving money, while 69% had not started any savings. However, in Year 4, 42% of 2014 Cohort parents indicated that they had started saving money for their child’s postsecondary education. More than half (58%) of parents continued to indicate that they had not started any postsecondary savings for their child.

Parents were also asked whether they had talked with anyone from their child’s school about the courses their child needed to graduate from high school and whether they felt they had enough information about high school graduation requirements. In Year 4, 63% of 2014 Cohort parents indicated having spoken with someone about academic graduation requirements, and 72% reported that they had enough information about high school graduation requirements. These findings compare favorably to previous years. See Figure 5 for a graph of the data for Years 1 through 4.

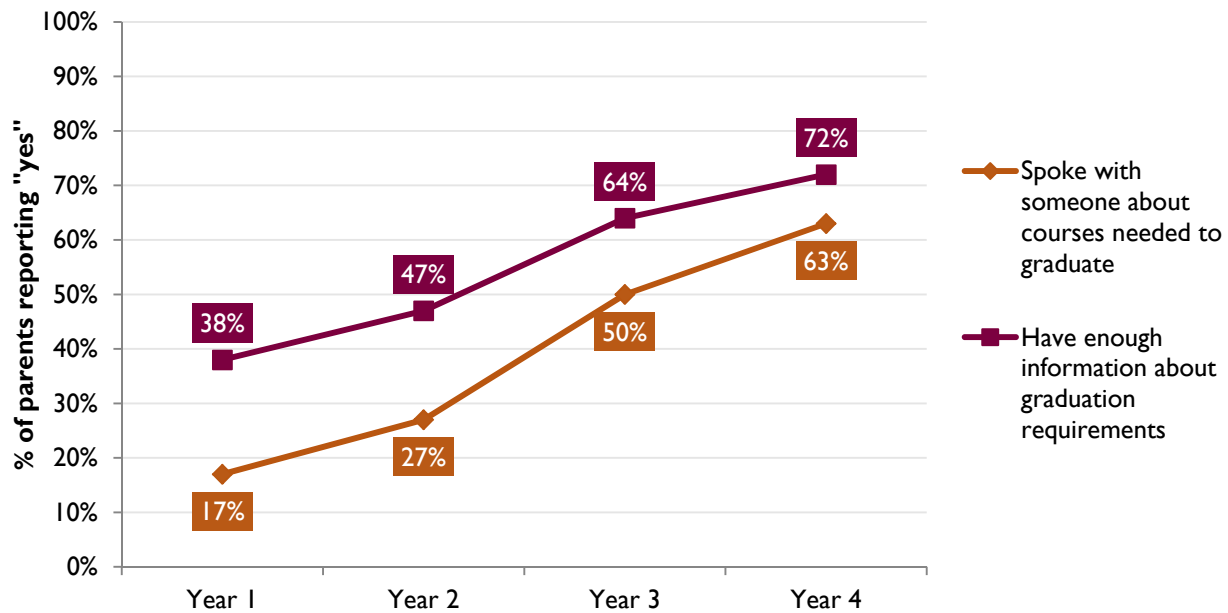


Figure 5. Parents reporting conversations about and knowledge of high school graduation requirements.

Students were asked whether they knew what courses they should take in high school that would help prepare them for college. The percentage of 2014 Cohort students indicating that they knew what courses to take was at its highest point ever in Year 4 (74%); more 2014 Cohort students have been responding “yes” to this item each year since Year 2. For students in the Priority Cohort, the percentage has remained relatively stable since Year 2, with 85% of Priority students in Year 4 responding “yes.” Figure 6 displays the four-year trend.

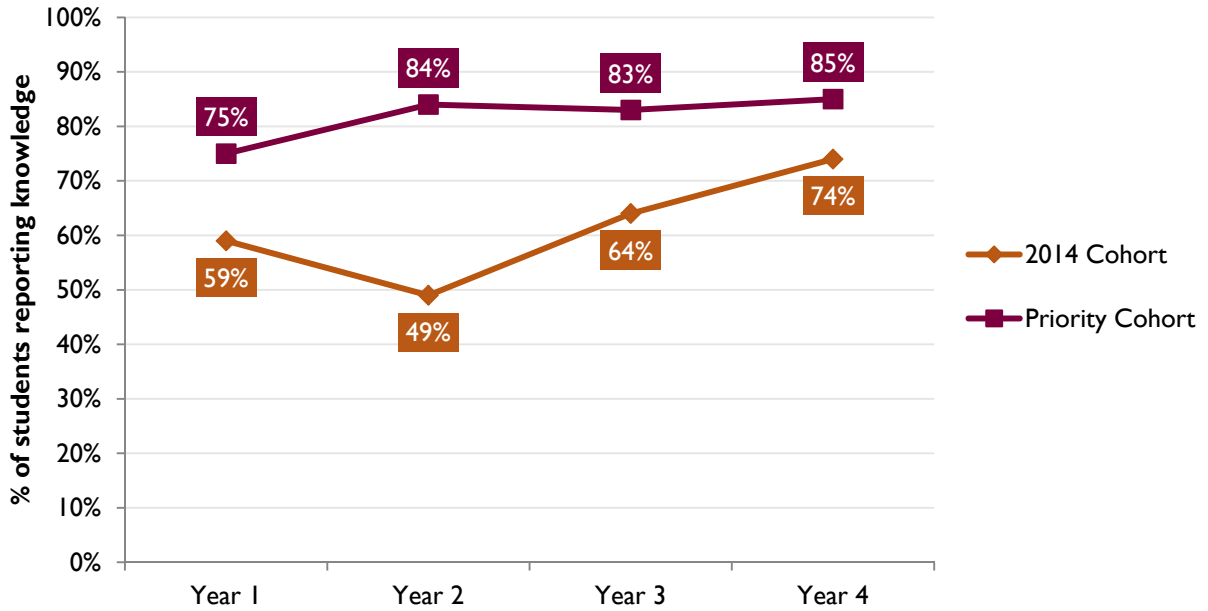


Figure 6. Students reporting knowledge of high school courses that will help prepare them for college.

Educational Expectations and Aspirations

The student and parent surveys included various items assessing students’ educational expectations and aspirations for themselves as well as parents’ expectations for their children. In Year 4, 89% of 2014 Cohort students and 91% of Priority Cohort students reported that they planned to continue their education after high school. Likewise, 90% and 93% of 2014 and Priority Cohort students, respectively, responded that they thought they had the ability to go to college. The percentages of students reporting similar plans and abilities in previous years was also very high—greater than 90% for both cohorts (see Figures 7 and 8 for more detail).

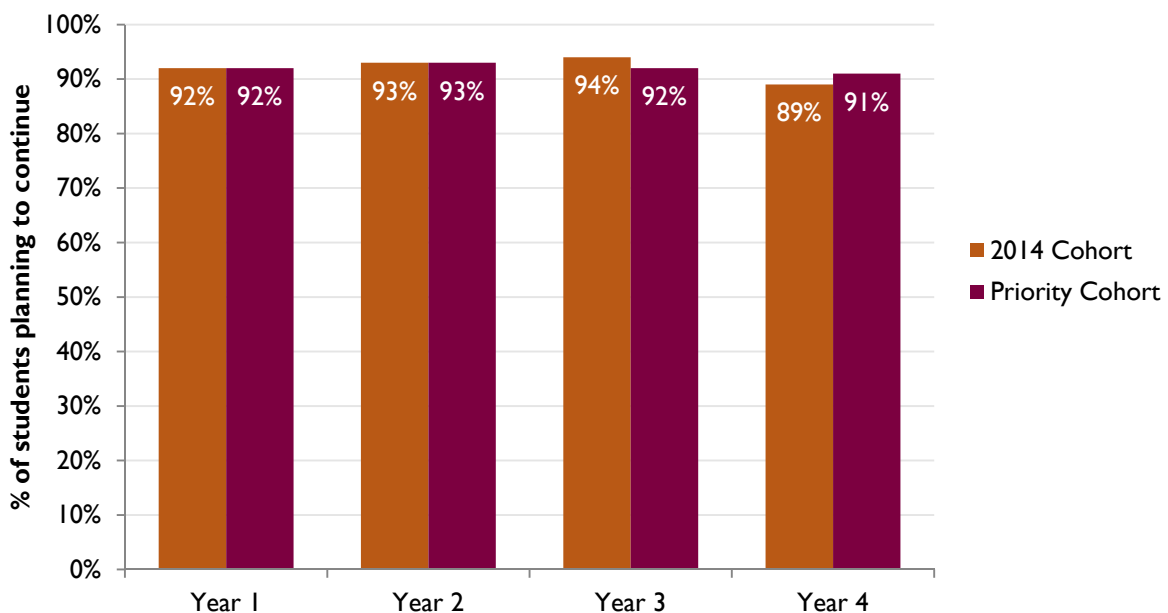


Figure 7. Students reporting plans to continue their education after high school.

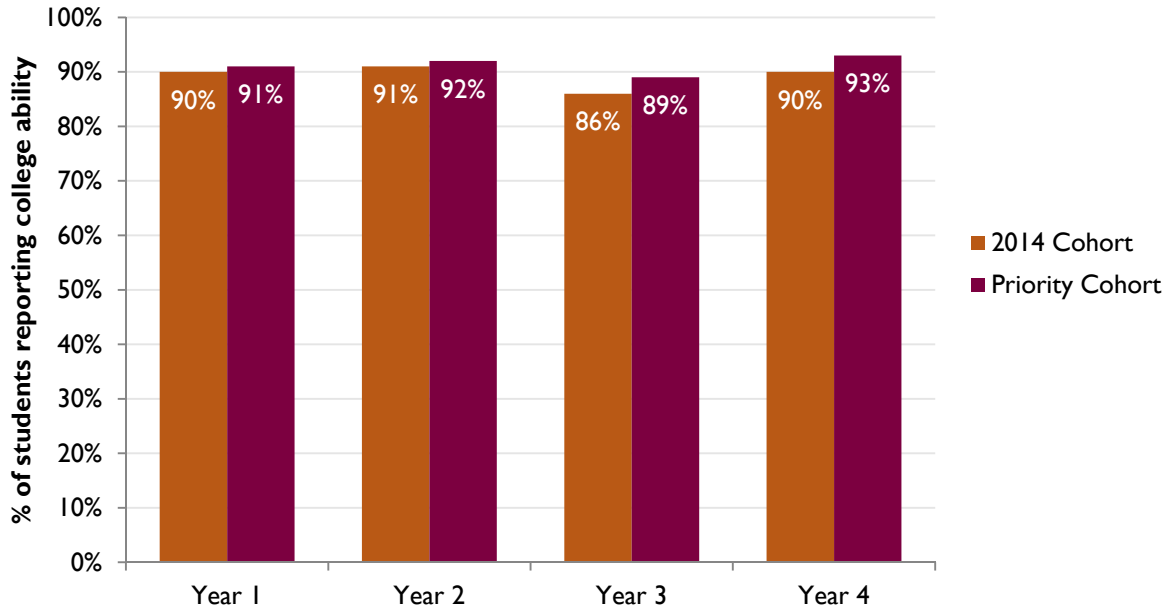


Figure 8. Students reporting they have the ability to go to college.

Students were asked to report the highest level of education they expected to obtain. As shown in Figure 9, in all years, the majority of the respondents indicated that they expected to obtain a four-year college degree or higher. The percentage of 2014 Cohort students indicating this expectation was fairly stable during the first three years but fell by 11% in Year 4. In Year 4, 65% of 2014 Cohort students expected to earn a four-year degree, compared to 74% in Year 3. Priority Cohort respondents' educational expectations continued to be stable across years. The percentage of students expecting to earn at least a four-year college degree was 63% in Year 4, as it was in Year 3.

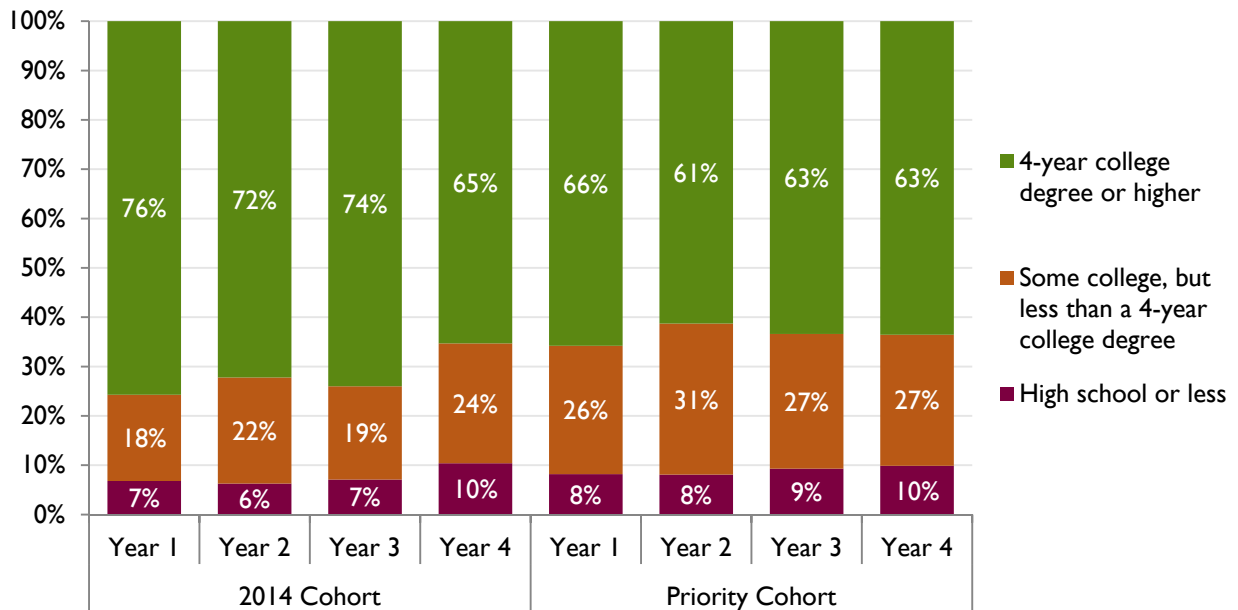


Figure 9. Highest level of education students expected to obtain.

Parents were also asked to report the highest level of education they expected their child to obtain. As shown in Figure 11, the majority of GEAR UP Cohort parents in Year 4 (67%), as in Years 2 and 3, expected their children to obtain at least a four-year college degree. This finding represents a substantial and sustained increase from Year 1, when fewer than half of GEAR UP Cohort parents thought their children would obtain a college degree and nearly as many expected that their child would complete only high school or less. For the first time, 2014 Cohort students and parents reported expectations for educational attainment that are roughly the same.

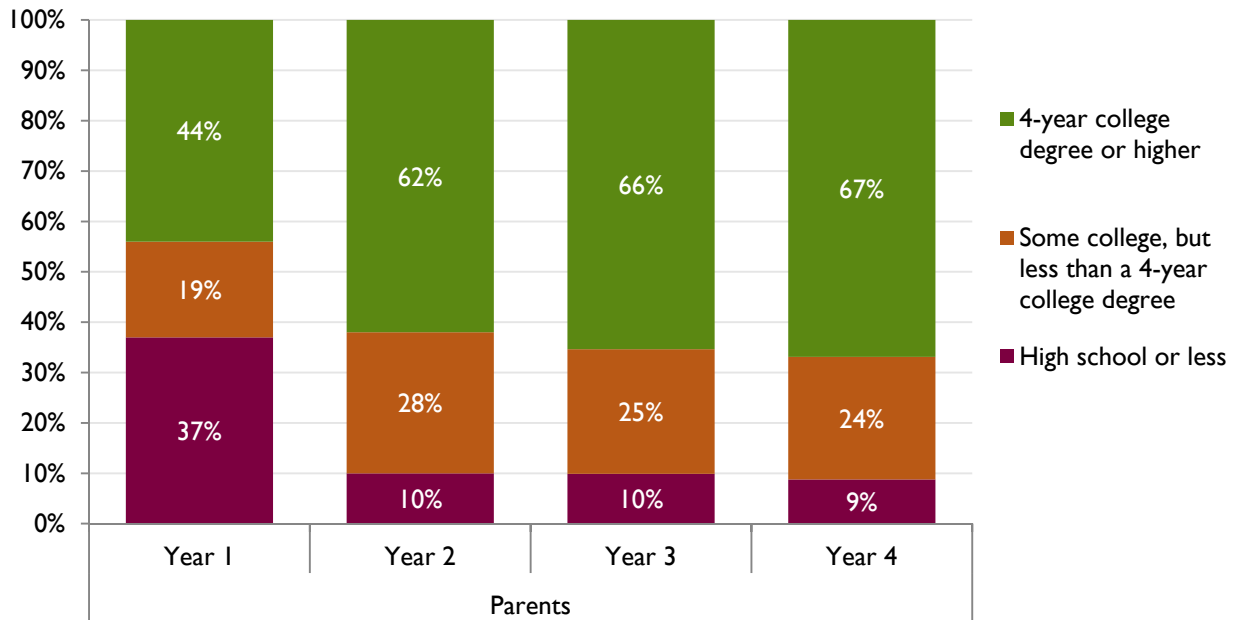


Figure 10. Highest level of education 2014 Cohort parents expected their children to obtain.

Aspiration scales. The student survey contains 23 items focusing on students’ educational aspirations to succeed or to become leaders and their perceptions about the learning environment and teacher support. A factor analysis of the Year 1 survey data identified four aspiration scales: leader orientation (seven items), achiever orientation (five items), teacher support (six items), and positive environment (five items). A second factor analysis following Year 3 confirmed these four factors. *Leader orientation* means students perceive themselves as leaders and role models for other students, and as able to solve problems and take control of situations. Students with high levels of *achiever orientation* have high expectations for themselves and believe their teachers have high expectations about their abilities to put forth the effort necessary to succeed and improve. *Teacher support* measures the extent to which students perceive that their teachers serve as positive role models, care about them, and encourage them to explore new topics. Students with a high level of *positive environment* perceive school as a good, interesting, and open place to be.

In Year 4, evaluators have refined analyses and interpretation of these data. Initially, all values in the 5-point rating scale were included in calculations for scale creation and item means. However, the midpoint of the scale (rating 3) is labeled “don’t know” rather than “neutral” or “neither agree nor disagree.” After several evaluation team discussions, evaluators concluded that a response of “don’t know” is qualitatively different than a response of “neutral.” Therefore, beginning in Year 4, evaluators will recode these data to create a four-point response scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), strongly agree (4). Responses of “don’t know” will be recoded (as 9) and indicated as missing values in the databases in order to exclude them from analyses. Additionally, if a scale score in an individual case is calculated based on fewer than half of the items comprising the scale, that individual

case will be excluded from the calculation of group scale means. For instance, if a 2014 Cohort student's scale score for leader orientation is based on only two items, that student's score for leader orientation will be excluded from calculation of the overall 2014 Cohort group mean. Evaluators are taking this step to ensure that group means are as valid and unbiased as possible. Means for all years (1 through 4) presented in this report have been recalculated via these procedures.

Generally, GEAR UP students' perceptions in all four areas appear to have remained steady and relatively high over time. All scale means in both groups exceed the midpoint of the 4-point scale, and most are greater than 3.00. Among both 2014 and Priority Cohort students, the most positive perceptions continue to be for the area of *achiever orientation*. The least positive perceptions for both student groups are in the area of *positive environment*; ratings in this area have typically been the least positive each year.

One-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether there were significant changes over time in aspirations among the groups. One-way ANOVAs were selected for the exploratory analyses rather than repeated measures analyses given the substantially different composition of the participant groups in each year. The ANOVA results indicated significant differences over time for three aspiration scales within the 2014 Cohort (all but *teacher support*). Post hoc comparisons revealed that Year 1 *achiever orientation* and *positive environment* were higher than ratings for those scales in all other years. Further, the mean rating for *positive environment* was lower in Year 4 than in any other year. The Year 4 mean rating for *leadership orientation*, however, was higher than in any other year, indicating significant improvement in that area during the 2011-2012 school year. Significant differences appeared for all aspirations scales within the Priority Cohort. The mean rating for *achiever orientation* was higher in Years 1 and 4 than in Years 2 and 3. *Leader orientation* among the Priority Cohort was higher in Year 4 than in either of the previous years. As in the 2014 Cohort, *positive environment* was significantly greater in Year 1 than in the subsequent three years. *Teacher support* was significantly greater in Year 2 than in either Year 3 or 4. The magnitude of the differences, however, tended to be small.

The descriptive statistics for the 23 items and four subscales for each group are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Table 6 presents the results of the ANOVAs exploring the significance of changes in mean ratings over time. Figures 11 and 12 show the trends (by group) in the students' aspirations, as measured by the four scales. Figure 13 shows the emerging trends for each student group by each of the four scales.

Table 4. GEAR UP Cohort Respondents' Descriptive Statistics of Aspiration Scales

Scale & Item	Year1			Year2			Year3			Year4		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Achiever Orientation	1,053	3.48	0.47	752	3.40	0.45	817	3.35	0.52	1,294	3.38	0.56
I believe I can always improve.	1,024	3.53	0.59	748	3.45	0.59	797	3.38	0.65	1,280	3.45	0.64
Teachers expect me to succeed.	970	3.46	0.60	681	3.38	0.63	732	3.31	0.69	1,176	3.31	0.72
I am confident in my ability to do well.	1,027	3.53	0.57	702	3.34	0.57	772	3.29	0.67	1,232	3.32	0.69
I put forth the necessary effort to reach a goal.	958	3.39	0.60	688	3.30	0.60	740	3.27	0.68	1,222	3.33	0.69
Anyone can succeed if they work hard enough.	1,002	3.52	0.65	736	3.53	0.64	807	3.51	0.65	1,281	3.50	0.66
Leader Orientation	913	3.09	0.55	631	3.07	0.57	683	3.08	0.61	1,161	3.18	0.60
I can take control of situations.	856	3.21	0.67	640	3.18	0.66	704	3.18	0.68	1,167	3.26	0.69
I am a good leader.	808	3.19	0.73	579	3.11	0.76	618	3.10	0.79	1,045	3.22	0.76
I can select the best way to solve a problem.	760	3.10	0.68	536	3.05	0.71	618	3.08	0.73	1,045	3.22	0.74
I do what I say I will.	863	3.18	0.66	658	3.14	0.67	720	3.19	0.67	1,233	3.32	0.67
I am a positive role model to other students.	737	3.04	0.83	522	3.06	0.77	560	3.09	0.75	998	3.18	0.79
I like to lead others.	837	3.04	0.86	586	3.04	0.83	627	3.02	0.87	1,098	3.07	0.87
Other students look to me for direction.	757	2.95	0.85	510	2.90	0.88	560	2.89	0.86	933	3.03	0.88
Positive Environment	1,016	3.10	0.61	729	2.97	0.64	789	2.98	0.64	1,236	2.85	0.78
I am proud of my school.	961	3.29	0.72	668	3.12	0.80	716	3.16	0.81	1,140	2.96	0.97
I am not usually bored in school.	900	2.71	0.97	681	2.55	0.93	721	2.50	0.94	1,178	2.41	1.01
Teachers encourage me to ask questions.	909	3.22	0.72	673	3.13	0.74	719	3.17	0.73	1,158	3.12	0.79
I like my school.	956	3.19	0.81	693	3.10	0.82	750	3.14	0.80	1,188	2.90	0.98
School is a good place to be.	924	3.10	0.80	639	3.04	0.85	702	2.99	0.81	1,131	2.91	0.92
Teacher Support	749	3.11	0.65	535	3.03	0.69	581	3.02	0.72	1,008	3.04	0.76
Teachers care about my problems and feelings.	727	3.03	0.82	546	2.97	0.83	570	2.95	0.88	1,000	2.97	0.91
Teachers respect my thoughts.	740	3.05	0.81	552	2.95	0.83	604	2.97	0.82	1,017	2.99	0.88
Teachers value my opinions.	703	3.09	0.77	497	2.97	0.83	558	3.00	0.85	966	3.02	0.88
Teachers support me when I try something new.	823	3.19	0.69	545	3.03	0.76	582	3.02	0.79	1,047	2.98	0.85
I have a teacher who is a positive role model for me.	852	3.15	0.86	630	3.16	0.81	685	3.14	0.80	1,179	3.22	0.79
Teachers allow me to explore topics I find interesting.	835	2.99	0.81	586	2.95	0.77	642	2.95	0.80	1,102	2.98	0.86

Table 5. Priority Cohort Respondents' Descriptive Statistics of Aspiration Scales

Scale & Item	Year1			Year2			Year3			Year4		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Achiever Orientation	1,068	3.44	0.44	896	3.35	0.50	1,390	3.35	0.50	1,614	3.42	0.50
I believe I can always improve.	1,055	3.51	0.56	872	3.45	0.62	1,382	3.41	0.62	1,600	3.49	0.60
Teachers expect me to succeed.	965	3.38	0.63	828	3.36	0.65	1,246	3.27	0.65	1,485	3.34	0.68
I am confident in my ability to do well.	1,032	3.42	0.59	834	3.34	0.61	1,326	3.31	0.61	1,521	3.38	0.62
I put forth the necessary effort to reach a goal.	1,014	3.37	0.55	833	3.23	0.61	1,291	3.27	0.61	1,534	3.37	0.64
Anyone can succeed if they work hard enough.	1,037	3.54	0.58	860	3.42	0.75	1,369	3.50	0.75	1,592	3.55	0.64
Leader Orientation	959	3.18	0.53	815	3.15	0.49	1,276	3.13	0.49	1,478	3.22	0.55
I can take control of situations.	993	3.29	0.63	826	3.27	0.57	1,304	3.23	0.57	1,502	3.31	0.63
I am a good leader.	868	3.26	0.68	729	3.21	0.63	1,161	3.20	0.63	1,328	3.28	0.69
I can select the best way to solve a problem.	848	3.16	0.64	712	3.15	0.59	1,158	3.14	0.59	1,348	3.25	0.68
I do what I say I will.	984	3.31	0.63	836	3.29	0.57	1,324	3.25	0.57	1,537	3.34	0.64
I am a positive role model to other students.	775	3.18	0.70	674	3.23	0.66	1,057	3.17	0.66	1,267	3.23	0.70
I like to lead others.	851	3.06	0.81	714	2.98	0.86	1,130	3.02	0.86	1,324	3.10	0.84
Other students look to me for direction.	737	3.03	0.77	597	2.96	0.84	965	2.95	0.84	1,137	3.06	0.84
Positive Environment	1,005	2.97	0.63	841	2.84	0.67	1,326	2.79	0.67	1,529	2.79	0.78
I am proud of my school.	917	3.11	0.80	750	2.92	0.85	1,189	2.87	0.85	1,391	2.87	0.98
I am not usually bored in school.	898	2.51	0.94	772	2.41	0.92	1,226	2.37	0.92	1,448	2.38	0.99
Teachers encourage me to ask questions.	932	3.16	0.68	792	3.17	0.67	1,196	3.08	0.67	1,425	3.11	0.79
I like my school.	957	3.07	0.81	798	2.86	0.87	1,234	2.82	0.87	1,446	2.80	0.98
School is a good place to be.	909	3.00	0.78	764	2.86	0.82	1,197	2.86	0.82	1,377	2.89	0.92
Teacher Support	777	3.06	0.62	668	3.09	0.60	1,015	3.01	0.60	1,360	3.01	0.73
Teachers care about my problems and feelings.	756	2.99	0.83	678	3.02	0.77	991	2.92	0.77	1,257	2.99	0.88
Teachers respect my thoughts.	808	2.97	0.78	685	2.99	0.76	1,051	2.92	0.76	1,699	2.52	1.14
Teachers value my opinions.	755	3.04	0.72	649	3.05	0.73	979	2.95	0.73	1,185	3.00	0.86
Teachers support me when I try something new.	781	3.07	0.68	655	3.08	0.70	1,008	2.99	0.70	1,223	3.01	0.84
I have a teacher who is a positive role model for me.	931	3.17	0.79	768	3.26	0.74	1,231	3.21	0.74	1,492	3.33	0.74
Teachers allow me to explore topics I find interesting.	845	2.97	0.78	719	3.05	0.73	1,082	2.96	0.73	1,377	3.04	0.81

Table 6. Comparison of Aspirations Over Time for 2014 Cohort and Priority Cohort Students

Scale	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			F	df	η^2	Differences (post hoc)
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD				
2014 Cohort																
Achiever Orientation	1,053	3.48	0.47	752	3.40	0.45	817	3.35	0.52	1,294	3.38	0.56	12.411***	3, 3912	0.009	Y1 > all
Leader Orientation	913	3.09	0.55	631	3.07	0.57	683	3.08	0.61	1,161	3.18	0.60	8.251***	3, 3384	0.007	Y4 > all
Positive Environment	1,016	3.10	0.61	729	2.97	0.64	789	2.98	0.64	1,236	2.85	0.78	25.215***	3, 3766	0.020	Y1 > all; Y2, Y3 > Y4
Teacher Support	749	3.11	0.65	535	3.03	0.69	581	3.02	0.72	1,008	3.04	0.76	2.162	3, 2869	0.002	
Priority Cohort																
Achiever Orientation	1,068	3.44	0.44	896	3.35	0.50	1,390	3.35	0.50	1,614	3.42	0.50	12.512***	3, 4964	0.008	Y1 > Y2, Y3; Y4 > Y2, Y3
Leader Orientation	959	3.18	0.53	815	3.15	0.49	1,276	3.13	0.49	1,478	3.22	0.55	7.804***	3, 4524	0.005	Y4 > Y2, Y3
Positive Environment	1,005	2.97	0.63	841	2.84	0.67	1,326	2.79	0.67	1,529	2.79	0.78	15.672***	3, 4697	0.010	Y1 > all
Teacher Support	777	3.06	0.62	668	3.09	0.60	1,015	3.01	0.60	1,360	3.01	0.73	2.835*	3, 3816	0.002	Y2 > Y3, Y4

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

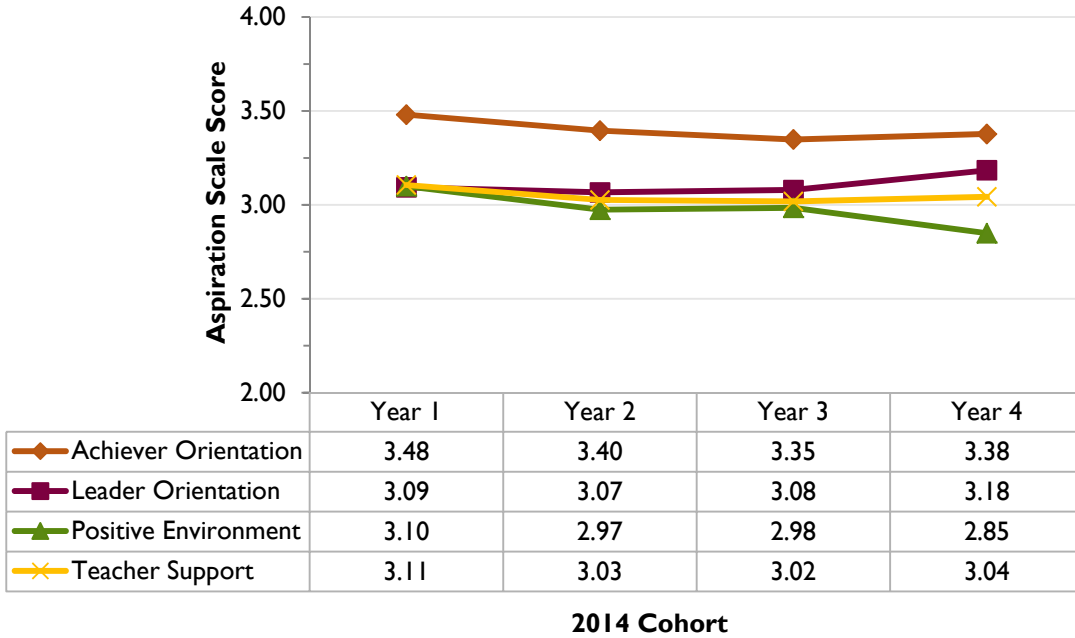


Figure 11. GEAR UP Cohort students’ aspiration results over time.

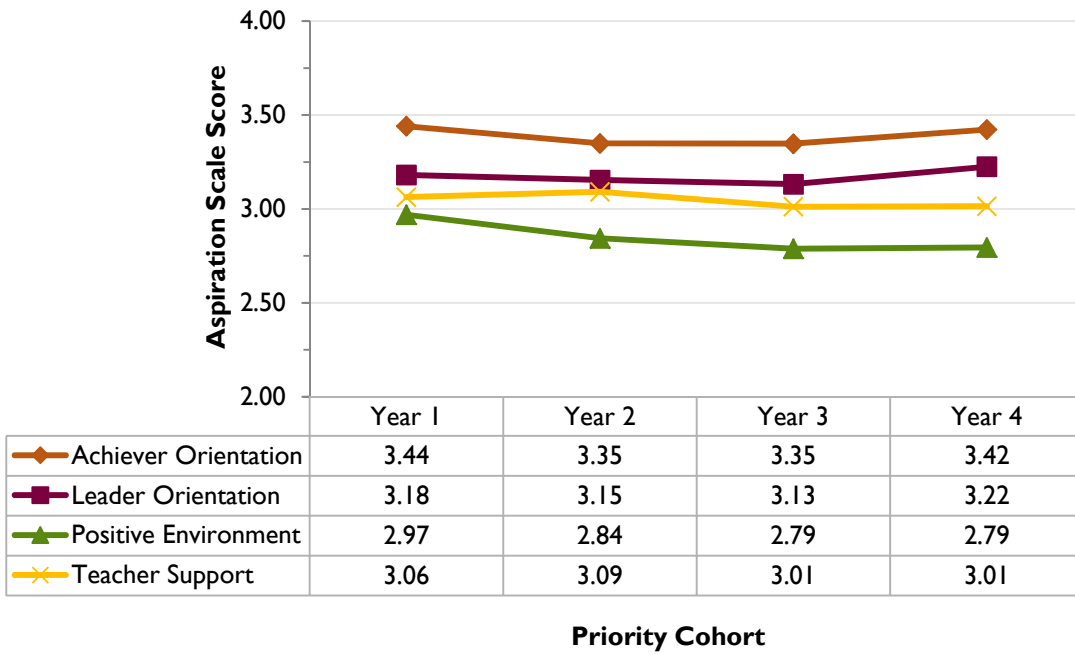


Figure 12. Priority Cohort students' aspiration results over time.

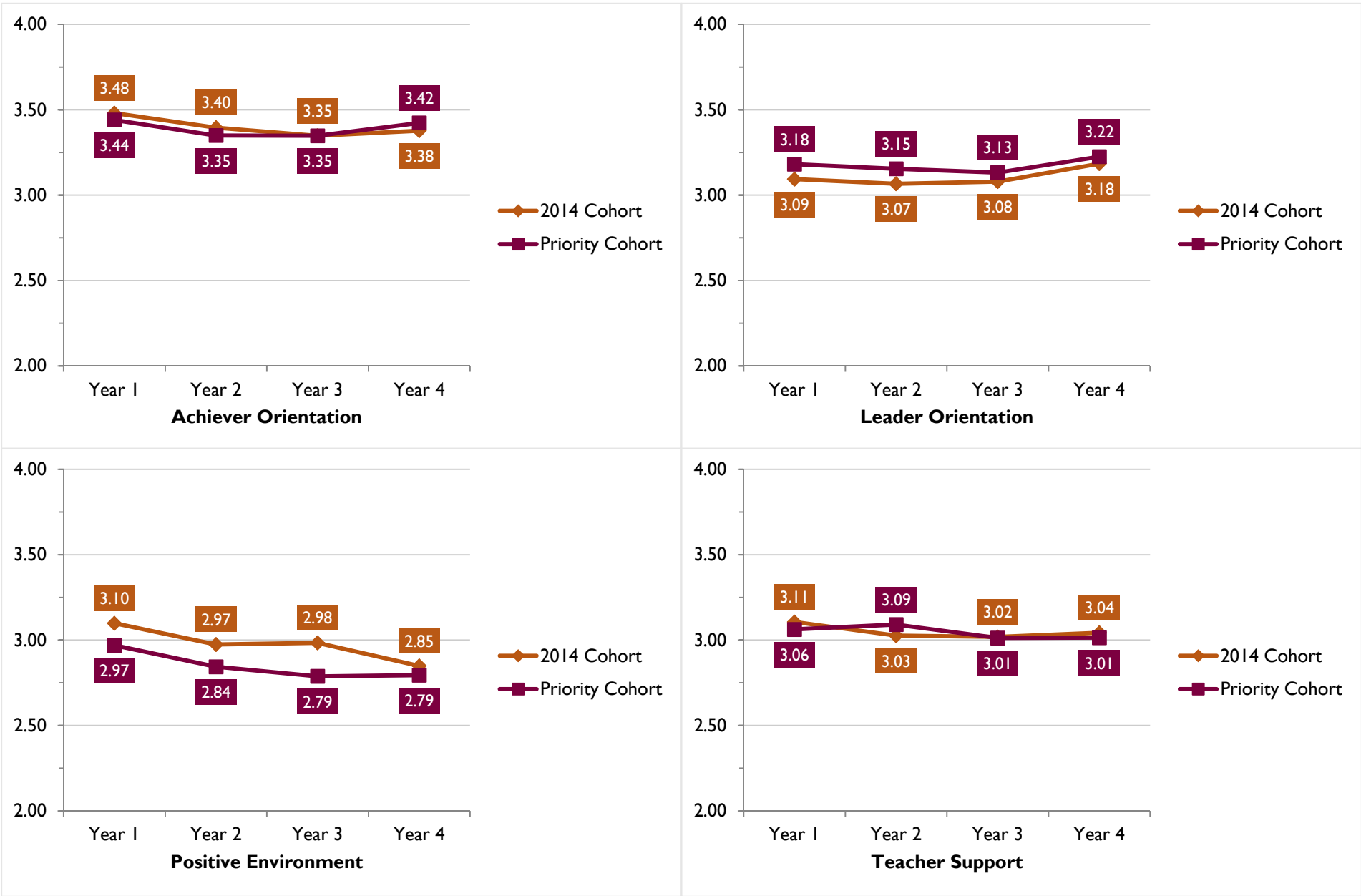


Figure 13. Group trends in aspiration scales over time.

Perceptions of Costs and Affordability

The student and parent surveys also included items relating to respondents’ knowledge and perceptions of postsecondary costs and affordability. The student surveys asked participants whether they thought they could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and family resources (see Figure 14 for students’ responses). In all years, most of the 2014 Cohort and Priority Cohort respondents reported that they *definitely* or *probably* could afford to attend a public four-year college using all available funds. In Year 4, 68% of 2014 Cohort students and 67% of Priority Cohort respondents responded that they could *probably* or *definitely* afford to attend college. The percentage of 2014 Cohort students who reported that college was *definitely* affordable increased by 6% from Year 3 to Year 4, after a slight dip in Year 3. The distribution of responses among the Priority Cohort did not vary much between Years 3 and 4.

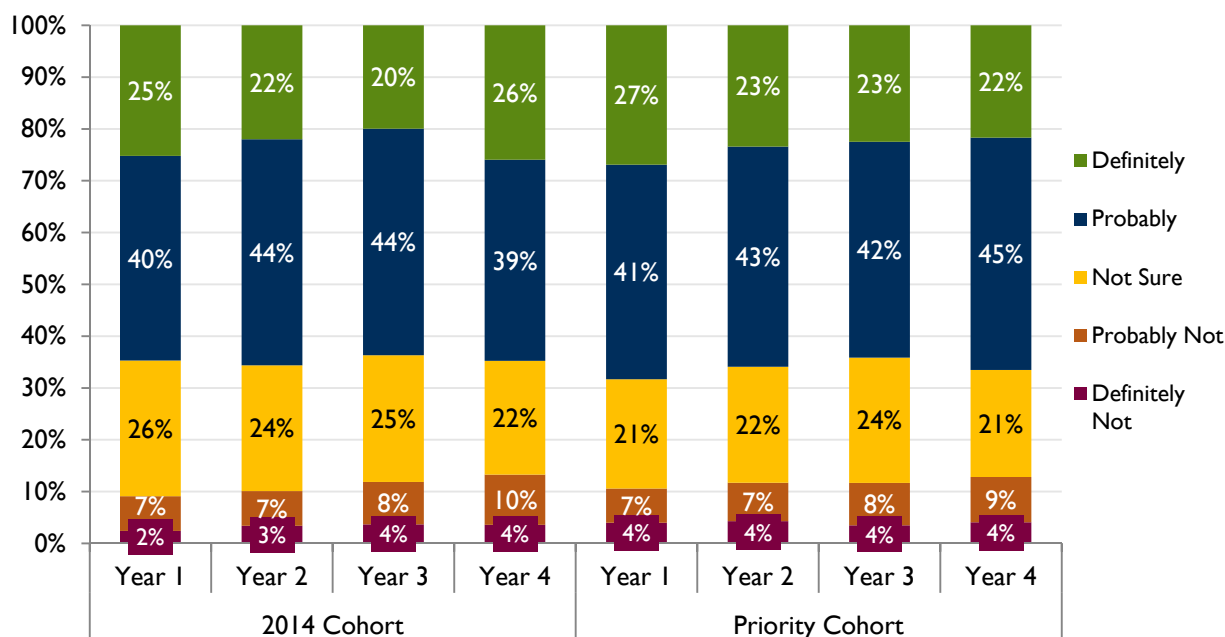


Figure 14. Respondents’ perceptions about ability to afford a public four-year college.

Parent participants were asked whether they thought their child could afford a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and family resources. Most of the parent respondents—and more than in any previous year—reported that their child could *definitely* or *probably* afford a public four-year college education. Overall, about two thirds of parents believe that their child *probably* or *definitely* will be able to afford the costs of college. These data, combined with students’ responses to the 2014 Cohort survey, suggest that parents may be more likely to believe that college will *probably* or *definitely* be affordable (70% of 2014 Cohort parents compared to 65% of 2014 Cohort students). Figure 15 displays parents’ perceptions of affordability.

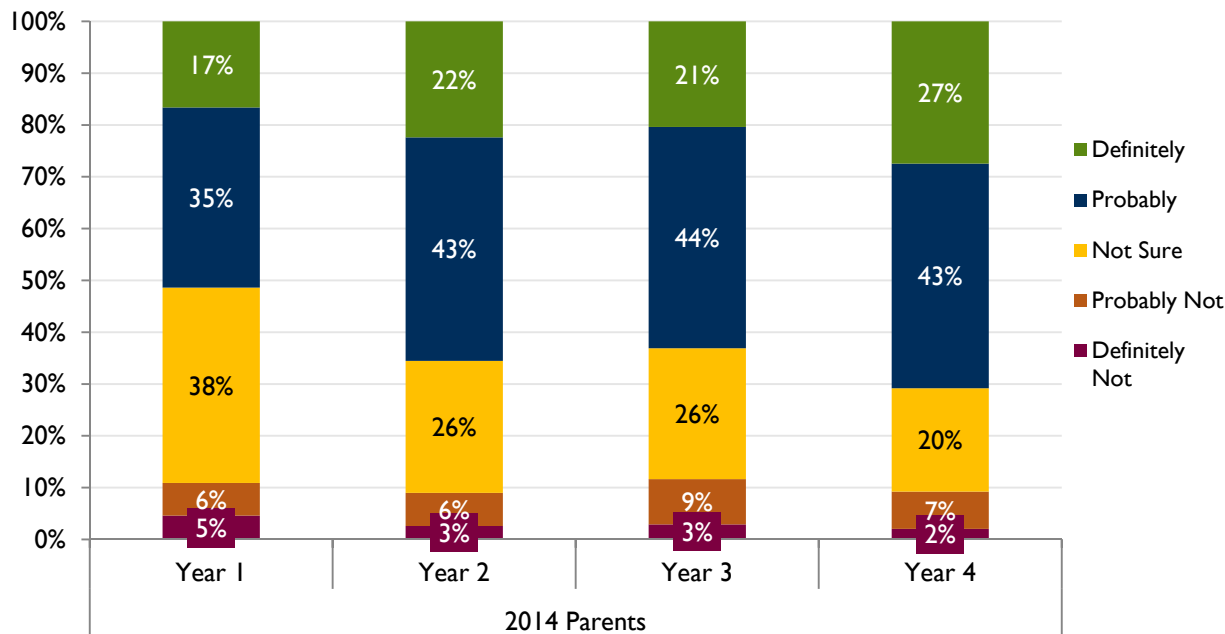


Figure 15. Parents’ perceptions about child’s ability to afford a public four-year college.

Tuition estimate. Beliefs about whether or not a student can afford to attend college may be related to perceptions about how much college tuition costs. Therefore, students and parents were asked to estimate the cost of one year’s tuition at a four-year public college in West Virginia. The actual average cost of one year’s tuition in 2011-2012⁵ was \$5,017 with a range of \$2,844 to \$5,674, costs that fall within the first two cost categories on the survey (see Figure 16 for cost categories). In Year 4, for the first time, the largest percentage students and parents (about one third in each group) selected the correct cost range (\$3,000-\$7,000) for the average tuition cost of public four-year colleges in West Virginia. Smaller percentages in each group selected the “I don’t know” response option than in any of the previous years in which that option was available. However, about half of the respondents in each of the three groups (47% to 53%) continued to overestimate the costs of tuition. Figure 12 displays the distribution of responses for each group.

⁵ Tuition estimate, which includes tuition and required fees, was calculated using data from the *2011-2012 Tuition Summary* posted on the WV HEPC website. The average cost was calculated based on tuition and fees required at four-year institutions, excluding specialized programs (e.g., WVU undergraduate health professions). The average cost of tuition, including the specialized programs in the calculation, is \$5,256, with a range of \$2,844 to \$7,178.

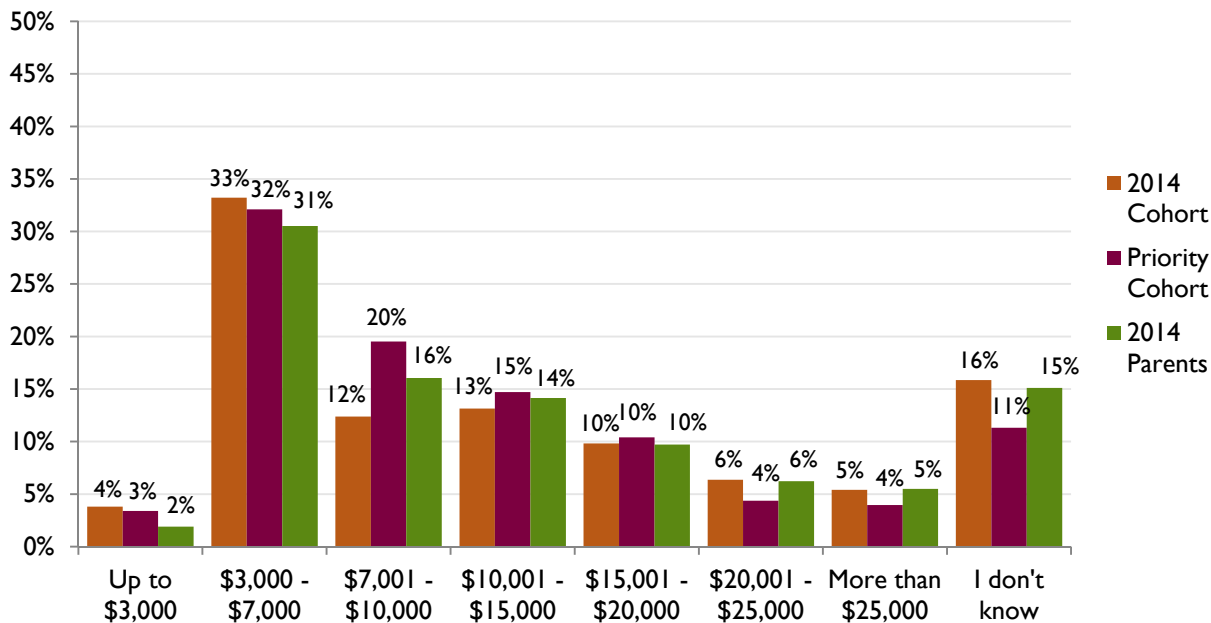


Figure 16. Year 4 student and parent respondents' estimation of one year's tuition at a public four-year college in West Virginia.

The percentage of students and parents who correctly estimate the average cost of tuition at West Virginia's public four-year colleges and universities has been steadily climbing since Year 2. Figure 17 displays the trend for correct tuition estimation. As the figure shows, the largest percentages of students and parents to date are able to select the correct tuition cost range.

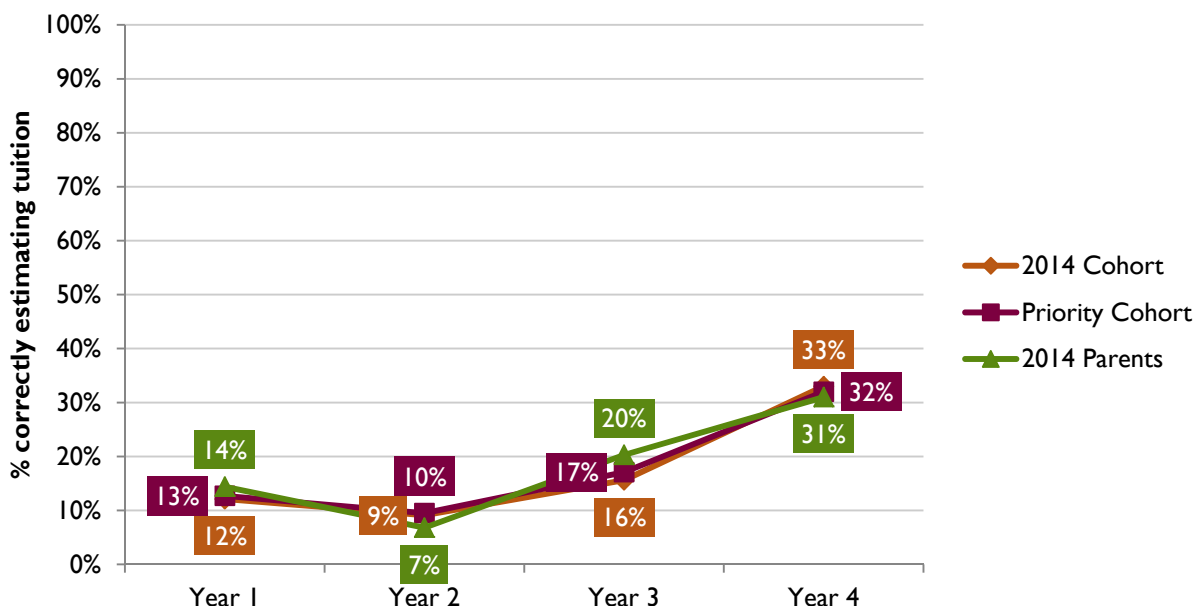


Figure 17. Students and parents correctly estimating average tuition cost (Years 1–4).

Perceptions of GEAR UP Services and Impact

The student and parent surveys included several items to assess GEAR UP participants' perceptions of the program's services and the impact of those services on students' postsecondary preparation and plans. The student survey asked respondents to report whether the GEAR UP program had an impact on their plans for college and their academic preparation. A total of 615 (44%) 2014 Cohort students and 354 (22%) Priority Cohort students reported that their plans for college changed as a result of participating in the GEAR UP program. The Year 4 findings for this item compare favorably to previous survey years. In Years 2 and 3, respectively, 32% and 40% of 2014 Cohort students indicated a change in plans resulting from GEAR UP participation. The increases in the Priority Cohort were more modest however, increasing from a Year 2 rate of 18% and a Year 3 rate of 29%. Students who reported that their plans had changed were further asked to indicate how their plans had changed as a result of participating in GEAR UP. Respondents were given four options from which to select the kind of impact the program has had on their postsecondary intentions. The frequencies of respondents selecting each of the four major changes are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Students Reporting How Their College Plans Changed as a Result of Participating in the GEAR UP Program

College Plan Changes	2014 Cohort		Priority Cohort	
	n	%	n	%
I have decided to go to a trade school, college, or university.	204	33.2%	114	32.2%
I have decided to get more education or a higher degree than originally planned.	277	45.0%	151	42.7%
I now have a good idea of where I will go to school.	234	38.0%	158	44.6%
I now know what I want to study in school.	237	38.5%	135	38.1%

Note. Percentages are calculated based on the number of students indicating that their plans had changed as a result of GEAR UP (n = 615 and 354 for the 2014 Cohort and Priority Cohort, respectively).

The parent survey asked respondents to report whether the GEAR UP program had an impact on their child's college plans and academic preparation. A total of 332 (36%) GEAR UP Cohort parent respondents reported that their child's plans for college changed as a result of participating in the GEAR UP program. This rate compares favorably to the previous years, which saw parents reporting changes in their children's college plans at the rates of 23% (Year 2) and 29% (Year 3). As on the student survey, parents who reported that their child's plans had changed were further asked to indicate how plans had changed. The numbers and percentages of respondents selecting each of the four major changes are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Parents Reporting How Their Children's College Plans Changed as a Result of Participating in the GEAR UP Program

College Plan Changes	n	%
My child decided to go to a trade school, college, or university.	70	21.1%
My child decided to get more education or a higher degree than originally planned.	72	21.7%
My child now has a good idea of where he or she will go to school.	65	19.6%
My child now knows what she or he wants to study in school.	73	22.0%

Note. Percentages are calculated based on the number of parents indicating that their child's plans had changed as a result of GEAR UP (n = 332).

Academic preparation. The majority (57%) of the 2014 Cohort respondents indicated that the GEAR UP program helped them become more academically prepared. About 20% of students responded that the program had not helped them become better prepared academically, and 23% did not know. The Year 4 perceptions about academic preparation among the 2014 Cohort represent a slight decline from previous years in which 62% (Year 2) and 68% (Year 3) of the students felt that the program enhanced their preparation. Less than half (45%) of Priority Cohort students believed that the GEAR UP program helped them become more academically prepared; 24% responded that it did not, and 31% did not know. Again, the Year 4 perceptions of enhanced academic preparation are slightly lower than those observed in previous years (45% in Year 1 and 48% in Year 2).

Parents in Year 4 were more likely than students to perceive that the GEAR UP program helped their child to become more academically prepared. About three fifths (61%) of parents indicated that the GEAR UP program helped with their child's academic preparation. About 10% of the parent survey respondents reported that the GEAR UP program did not help their child become more academically prepared, and another 29% did not know.

Perceptions of GEAR UP services. The surveys included items assessing respondents' satisfaction with various GEAR UP services as well as the GEAR UP program overall. When asked about their satisfaction with the GEAR UP services, the percentages who were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* were much greater than those who were *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied*. Tables 9 and 10, respectively, present the 2014 Cohort and Priority Cohort groups' levels of satisfaction with major types of GEAR UP services; parents' levels of satisfaction are presented in Table 11.

The 2014 Cohort students and their parents were most likely to say they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with services in the category of "college visits/field trips"; both groups also were most likely to report that those services were the most beneficial. Similarly, Priority Cohort students were most likely to indicate high levels of satisfaction with college visits/field trips and rate them as the most beneficial service. However, career planning also received high satisfaction ratings, with 52% of respondents indicating they were satisfied.

Overall, students in both cohorts and parents of 2014 Cohort students were most likely to indicate that they (or their child) participated in college visits. Respondents in all groups were least likely to select the *did not participate* response for this service. Students and 2014 Cohort parents were most likely to indicate nonparticipation in the financial aid incentive award, which is unsurprising because that service is only available for Grade 12 students, and summer programs, which is also unsurprising given the midyear timing of the surveys. More than half of students in both groups also indicated not participating in tutoring, mentoring, financial aid workshops, and parent and community activities. In general, there were fairly high rates of respondents indicating nonparticipation in several activities.

In addition to rating their satisfaction with individual GEAR UP services and activities, students and parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the GEAR UP program overall. In Year 4, 88% to 90% of respondents in the three surveyed groups indicated that they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the West Virginia GEAR UP program overall (see Table 12 for details). These rates are generally in line with rates of satisfaction observed in prior years. An ANOVA (presented in Table 13) indicated that there were significant differences in satisfaction ratings over time. Post hoc comparisons revealed that 2014 Cohort students' satisfaction was significantly higher in Year 3 than in either Years 2 or 4, and Priority Cohort students were more satisfied in Year 2 than in Year 4. Parents, however, were more

satisfied in Year 4 than they were in Year 2. Although significant differences did emerge, the effects were small or very small.

Table 9. GEAR UP Cohort Respondents' Satisfaction with GEAR UP Services and Perception of Most Beneficial Service

GEAR UP Services	N	Very Dissatisfied		Satisfied	Very Satisfied		Did not Participate	Most Beneficial	
		%	%		%	%		n	%
Tutoring	1,390	4.7%	3.7%	24.7%	10.2%	56.8%	246	17.0%	
Mentoring	1,383	3.9%	4.0%	24.7%	13.8%	53.6%	201	13.9%	
College Visits/Field Trips	1,386	6.1%	2.8%	31.1%	45.8%	14.2%	960	66.4%	
Financial Aid Workshops	1,382	4.2%	3.9%	25.3%	14.5%	52.2%	136	9.4%	
Educational Tools and Technology	1,375	5.0%	3.1%	28.5%	23.1%	40.4%	183	12.7%	
Career Planning	1,387	5.0%	3.5%	31.4%	27.5%	32.5%	466	32.2%	
Test Preparation/Study Skills Workshops	1,372	4.2%	4.4%	28.1%	16.9%	46.4%	170	11.8%	
Parent and Community Activities	1,377	3.9%	4.5%	24.8%	16.6%	50.2%	139	9.6%	
Award and Recognition Events	1,378	4.5%	4.1%	24.9%	18.1%	48.4%	127	8.8%	
Financial Incentive Awards for College ^a	1,369	3.4%	2.9%	17.8%	9.8%	66.2%	62	4.3%	
Summer Programs	1,368	3.6%	4.2%	18.0%	13.2%	61.0%	204	14.1%	

a. Financial Incentive Awards are only available in Grade 12.

Table 10. Priority Cohort Respondents' Satisfaction with GEAR UP Services and Perception of Most Beneficial Service

GEAR UP Services	N	Very Dissatisfied		Satisfied	Very Satisfied		Did not Participate	Most Beneficial	
		%	%		%	%		n	%
Tutoring	1,656	3.2%	2.8%	22.3%	6.5%	65.2%	207	11.9%	
Mentoring	1,652	2.4%	3.0%	22.3%	7.4%	64.9%	111	6.4%	
College Visits/Field Trips	1,651	4.0%	4.1%	27.9%	25.7%	38.2%	737	42.3%	
Financial Aid Workshops	1,656	2.7%	4.2%	25.6%	15.3%	52.2%	322	18.5%	
Educational Tools and Technology	1,646	2.7%	3.4%	28.8%	16.9%	48.2%	197	11.3%	
Career Planning	1,653	2.7%	3.2%	31.2%	21.0%	41.9%	500	28.7%	
Test Preparation/Study Skills Workshops	1,650	2.9%	3.9%	27.2%	15.5%	50.4%	285	16.4%	
Parent and Community Activities	1,649	2.9%	4.2%	22.8%	11.3%	58.8%	123	7.1%	
Award and Recognition Events	1,641	3.1%	3.8%	22.8%	10.7%	59.6%	100	5.7%	
Financial Incentive Awards for College ^a	1,643	2.7%	3.5%	20.1%	9.9%	63.7%	135	7.8%	
Summer Programs	1,406	3.2%	3.1%	18.6%	7.3%	67.8%	107	6.1%	

a. Financial Incentive Awards are only available in Grade 12.

Table 11. Parents' Satisfaction with GEAR UP Services

GEAR UP Services	N	Very Dissatisfied		Satisfied	Very Satisfied		Did not Participate
		%	%		%	%	
Tutoring	880	3.4%	2.4%	30.6%	16.9%	46.7%	
Mentoring	869	3.6%	3.3%	30.3%	19.2%	43.6%	
College Visits/Field Trips	893	2.9%	2.4%	41.0%	44.6%	9.2%	
Financial Aid Workshops	867	3.5%	3.7%	30.8%	20.8%	41.3%	
Educational Tools and Technology	868	2.9%	3.0%	37.0%	28.0%	29.1%	
Career Planning	879	3.3%	3.3%	40.7%	28.6%	24.1%	
Test Preparation/Study Skills Workshops	867	3.0%	3.9%	37.0%	20.3%	35.8%	
Parent and Community Activities	872	3.1%	4.5%	34.1%	23.1%	35.3%	
Award and Recognition Events	864	2.9%	4.3%	35.4%	22.5%	35.0%	
Financial Incentive Awards for College ^a	836	2.3%	1.1%	24.4%	16.1%	56.1%	
Summer Programs	865	2.4%	2.5%	25.8%	17.8%	51.4%	

a. Financial Incentive Awards are only available in Grade 12.

Table 12. Students' and Parents' Overall Satisfaction with GEAR UP

Group	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
2014 Cohort	6.1%	4.5%	48.7%	40.6%
Priority	4.9%	6.9%	64.2%	24.0%
Parents	6.0%	4.4%	54.1%	35.5%

Table 13. Comparison of Students' and Parents' Overall Satisfaction with GEAR UP Over Time (Years 2 – 4)

Group	Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			F	df	η^2	Differences (post hoc)
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD				
2014 Cohort	797	3.29	0.69	820	3.43	0.66	1410	3.24	0.80	17.082***	2, 3024	0.011	Y3 > Y2, Y4
Priority	949	3.17	0.65	1265	3.13	0.68	1678	3.07	0.71	6.169**	2, 3889	0.003	Y2 > Y4
Parents	857	3.10	0.75	550	3.18	0.71	913	3.19	0.78	3.334*	2, 2317	0.003	Y4 > Y2

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Discussion and Recommendations

Findings from the student and parent surveys present a modest picture of continued progress and sustained success for the West Virginia GEAR UP program. Thousands of students and hundreds of parents and teachers have received services through GEAR UP, and a clear majority of students and parents are satisfied with the program overall. Several key indicators have continued to show positive growth in Year 4 of the project, although the gains were less dramatic than those seen in earlier years. Other indicators neither increased nor decreased appreciably in Year 4.

Knowledge about College

The West Virginia GEAR UP project is continuing to reach a greater number of students and parents to increase their knowledge and awareness of postsecondary options. In a continuing positive trend, more 2014 Cohort students and parents in Year 4 had talked with school staff or GEAR UP representatives about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid than in previous years. Priority Cohort students' rates of discussions about college entrance requirements were stable from Year 3 to Year 4, while their rates of discussions about financial aid increased in Year 4. Parents reported the highest rates of these key informational discussions yet measured during the West Virginia GEAR UP project, and about eight out of 10 students in Grades 10 through 12 have been reached by GEAR UP or school staff sharing this kind of key information. These findings strongly suggest that the GEAR UP program is achieving its goals of disseminating information about college entrance requirements and financial aid to students and parents. The continuing increases observed in parents' responses are particularly encouraging given the very low rates observed in Year 1 and the difficulties some sites have had in engaging parents in GEAR UP activities. Although increases in dissemination have slowed or leveled slightly in comparison to previous years, the moderation in the rate of increase is understandable, given the sharp increases seen between Years 1 and 2 (and Years 2 and 3 for some indicators). Site coordinators should be encouraged to keep up their successful work in these areas of information dissemination.

Discussions about college that students are experiencing through the GEAR UP program may be influencing their discussions with their parents or guardians. More than two thirds of students participating in the GEAR UP program reported in Year 4 that they had discussed the academic requirements for college with an adult in their households. The rates at which Priority Cohort students have been having these discussions has been fairly stable over time; however, more 2014 Cohort students each year have reported having these discussions in their homes. It could be that these kinds of college-focused discussions naturally become more common as students progress through high school and grow closer to the age when postsecondary decisions must be made. However, given the specific nature of the survey question (i.e., college entrance requirements) and the consistently high rates at which parents report having discussions about college (in general) with their children, it is reasonable to conclude that the GEAR UP program may be influencing the frequency or nature of students' college-focused conversations. Examination of comparison student data again in Year 5 may shed more light onto whether GEAR UP or some other factors (i.e., maturation) are influencing this indicator.

Students and parents both appear to be gaining familiarity with high school graduation requirements and high school courses that can help students prepare for college. Affirmative responses to the relevant survey items have increased fairly consistently over time and have reached their highest points since measurement began. With respect to parents' familiarity with high school

graduation requirements, it is likely that the observed increases are attributable to the information and advising processes that are a natural part of the matriculation and promotion process within the school systems; parents of Grade 10 students should be more familiar with high school graduation requirements than when their children were in Grade 7. Likewise, the rate at which 2014 Cohort students are gaining knowledge about what high school courses will prepare them for college could be a result, at least in part, of standard advising that all high school students receive. Again, examining comparison student and parent data in Year 5 will help evaluators understand what portion of the increase is organic to the standard high school practices and processes and what portion is unique to the GEAR UP project.

Educational Expectations and Aspirations

All three surveyed groups (2014 Cohort, Priority Cohort, 2014 Cohort Parents) had similar expectations for students' educational attainment. About 90% of students in both cohorts plan to continue their education beyond high school, and a similar number believe that they have the ability to go to college. About two thirds of parents and just less than two thirds of GEAR UP students (in both cohorts) expected to obtain (or expected their child to obtain) at least a four-year college degree. Priority Cohort students' expectations were fairly stable from Year 3 to Year 4, although there was a small increase in the percentage who expected to earn a four-year degree. Although parents' expectations for their children's academic attainment stabilized from Year 3 to Year 4 and were fairly well-aligned with those of the 2014 Cohort, students' expectations for their educational attainment continued to decline slightly. Although about 90% of 2014 Cohort students expect to earn at least some college credits (a figure that is relatively similar to that observed in previous years of the evaluation), only 65%—the lowest percentage in four years—expect to earn a four-year degree. This finding is a continuation of a negative trend that first became apparent in Year 3. In Year 3, evaluators suggested that the observed declines in students' expectations may have been due, at least in part, to stresses associated with the transition to high school; however, a continuing decline suggests that there may be other factors at work in changing students' educational expectations. 2014 Cohort students may be determining whether a two-year degree is more appropriate for their life and career goals than a four-year degree. The continuing poor economy may also be tempering students' perceptions of the value of a four-year college degree in relation to the cost and the job or career prospects they may face immediately after graduation. They may also be starting to question whether a four-year degree is appropriate or achievable given their performance in their high school classes to date and their course-taking plans for the remainder of their high school careers. To better understand students' changing educational expectations and aspirations, site coordinators and program staff should examine these perceptions in conjunction with students' stated career goals, academic performance, and other information to which site coordinators may be privy by virtue of their relationships with students and families.

Although students' aspirations have varied slightly over time, changes tend to be small, even when they are statistically significant. Among the four aspiration scales (*achiever orientation*, *leader orientation*, *positive environment*, and *teacher support*), students in both cohorts groups rate themselves highest in *achiever orientation*. In Year 4, an increase in *leader orientation* was observed among both groups after three years of stability in the measure. Students in both cohorts tended to give the lowest ratings to *positive environment*, and the data for that measure are trending downward. Since the GEAR UP program tries to influence at least some aspects of the school environment, these findings should be explored in collaboration 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. It is important

to remember, however, that even the most negative findings in the student aspiration scales are still high ratings on the scale (with scale means exceeding the midpoint).

Perceptions of Cost and Affordability

During Year 4, the West Virginia GEAR UP program experienced particular success in influencing students' and parents' knowledge and perceptions about the costs and affordability of college. Although Year 3 survey results revealed a slightly negative trend in perceptions of college affordability among 2014 Cohort students from Year 1 to Year 3, survey data collected in Year 4 suggest that more students and parents believe that college is *definitely* affordable. The percentage of 2014 Cohort students and parents indicating that students could *definitely* afford college was the highest yet recorded for the West Virginia GEAR UP project. Parents' perceptions in this area continue to trend upward. The percentage of Priority Cohort students who believe that college is *definitely* affordable declined from 23% to 22%, the lowest level in four years and a continuation of the negative trend first observed in Year 3. Program staff should examine 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, to target efforts to reach specific students, or explore different ways to provide financial aid advising. Given the improvements in this measure from Year 3 to Year 4 observed among the 2014 Cohort students and parents, site coordinators may want to revisit strategies used with those groups to determine whether they might be similarly successful in affecting Priority Cohort students' perceptions of college affordability.

Students' and parents' perceptions of college affordability are likely affected by their understanding of the actual costs of college. The increases in 2014 Cohort students' and parents' perceptions of affordability may be related to their improved understanding of tuition costs in West Virginia. Estimates of the cost of one year's tuition have improved greatly in Year 4 compared to previous years. The highest percentages to date of students and parents (roughly one third of those surveyed in each group) were able to give the correct range of tuition costs in response to the survey item, and far fewer were likely to indicate that they did not know the cost of tuition for one year. Year 4 findings represent the greatest level of accuracy in estimating or recalling tuition costs observed in the West Virginia GEAR UP evaluation. Although these findings are very promising, about half of students and parents generally continue to overestimate tuition costs, although the magnitude of the overestimation appears to be smaller than that observed in the early years of the project. The overestimates could be due to several factors—misunderstanding of the meaning of tuition, misinterpretation of the item (i.e., thinking about cost of attendance rather than tuition), or lack of knowledge about actual tuition costs. Because substantial improvement in this area was made in Year 4, site coordinators should be encouraged to continue with and expand on their efforts to ensure that an even greater number of students and parents understand and can recall the actual cost of one year of tuition (separate from the cost of attendance) at public institutions of higher education in West Virginia.

Perceptions of GEAR UP Services and Impact

The West Virginia GEAR UP project may be having a positive impact on students' postsecondary plans and preparation. Almost half of 2014 Cohort students reported that the GEAR UP program had influenced them to change their college plans, most often by influencing them to get more education or a higher degree than they had originally planned. About one fifth of students in the Priority Cohort also reported changes in their college plans (primarily, the decision to get more

education than originally planned) as a result of the GEAR UP project. These results, particularly for the Priority Cohort, may seem modest; however, evaluators do not know based on survey data whether students who responded *no* to this item had low or high expectations and plans to begin with. Given that the majority of students each year have reported plans to earn at least a four-year college degree, it is possible that students who responded *no* to this item have always planned to pursue a college degree. Evaluators should examine the data in more depth to determine whether it is possible to uncover any additional information about this indicator.

The influence of the West Virginia GEAR UP project on students' academic preparation is unclear. A little more than half of the 2014 Cohort students reported that the program has helped them academically; however, the Year 4 results represent a decline from previous years. Some of this decline may be attributable to a larger pool of respondents in Year 4; however, it is important to take note of the decline. Parents were slightly more likely than students in the 2014 Cohort to report that the GEAR UP program has improved their children's academic preparation.

Recipients of GEAR UP services are generally satisfied with the services they receive and appear to find the services helpful. Students and parents tend to be *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the West Virginia GEAR UP project overall. Although an ANOVA revealed significant differences in overall satisfaction over time, the magnitude of the differences was small. Further, mean satisfaction ratings consistently exceed 3.00 on the 4-point scale, indicating high levels of satisfaction in all years. Parents and students showed high levels of satisfaction with the specific GEAR UP services in which they participated, with college visits in particular being viewed as high quality and beneficial. Priority Cohort students also found career planning to be very helpful in Year 4; such a finding is understandable given that students in the Priority Cohort are close to the age when they need to make and follow decisions about what they will do after high school.

As in previous years, the parent and student surveys found that large proportions of student respondents reported not participating in several of the GEAR UP services such as tutoring, mentoring, financial aid workshops, test preparation workshops, and so on. Although the timing of the surveys (administered during the middle of the school year) may have resulted in artificially depressed reports of participation for summer programs and services offered later in the school year (e.g., awards and recognition events, financial aid incentive awards), some services offered throughout the year (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, various workshops) may be underutilized. It is possible that students simply did not remember participating in an event or activity and did not report it; it is also possible that students did not realize they were participating in a GEAR UP activity (e.g., students may not refer to interactions or meetings with teachers and other adults "mentoring" although the GEAR UP project might classify those interactions in that way). Because student and parent self-reports of participation is not the most reliable way to determine whether or not the GEAR UP program is meeting service delivery goals, these data should be examined in conjunction with objective data collected via SCRIBE. In collaboration with site coordinators, program staff should examine participation in these programs to determine whether students truly did not participate, if they participated but do not remember, or if they did not realize an event was sponsored by GEAR UP. If the examination of data suggests that services are being underutilized, site coordinators may need to consider methods for expanding or advertising those services to involve more students. GEAR UP site coordinators could also follow up with students to ascertain the main reasons they do or do not participate in services; the information obtained could then be used to redesign advertising or marketing efforts to improve student participation rates.

Response Rates

In previous years, attaining adequate survey response rates and meeting federal expectations has been a substantial challenge. Transitioning the surveys—particularly the student survey—into the SCRIBE survey portal as the primary mode of administration has proven to be a good change that has helped the evaluation team and the project achieve success in obtaining adequate response to the survey. The response rates for the student and parent surveys continued to increase in Year 4 among the targeted cohorts (2014 Cohort students and parents; Priority Cohort students), meeting and exceeding federal expectations. Evaluators, project staff, site coordinators, and Xcalibur staff collaborated successfully to improve the collection of parental consent and student and parent surveys, and the tracking of survey returns in order to provide targeted follow-up to nonresponders. Use of the SCRIBE survey portal to administer surveys and track responses greatly improved efficiency in comparison to previous years. Project staff and evaluation team members should continue using the SCRIBE portal for student and parent survey administration and continue to work with Xcalibur staff to explore additional ideas for even greater improvements in efficiency and ease of survey response for students and parents.

In past years, lower-than-expected response rates may have resulted in limited generalizability due to small or skewed samples. However, such concerns do not appear to be applicable for 2014 Cohort and Priority Cohort student surveys in Year 4, wherein more than 80% of eligible students responded to the survey. In fact, the number of student survey respondents in Year 4 represent two thirds of all students enrolled in Grades 10 through 12 in the participating GEAR UP schools during the 2011-2012 school year. Likewise, stronger confidence in the findings of the parent survey may be warranted in Year 4 than in previous years due to the greater than 50% response rate. HEPC staff and other readers, however, should take care in interpreting the findings presented in this report due to the possibility that the differences in response rates over time might temper evaluators' abilities to draw definitive conclusions. Until evaluators can assess potential differences in respondents and nonrespondents (e.g., academic performance, attendance, behavioral variables) to determine the extent to which there may be nonresponse bias, findings for each individual year and for trends and comparisons over time should be examined and interpreted with caution.