

# West Virginia GEAR UP

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

West Virginia GEAR UP (WV GEAR UP) is a federally-funded program that helps students prepare to succeed in education and training beyond high school. "GEAR UP" stands for "Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs," and the program's goal is to help more students pursue their dreams of earning a college diploma or certificate after high school.

WV GEAR UP is managed by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WV HEPC), in collaboration with the West Virginia Community and Technical College System, the West Virginia Department of Education and many other community partners.

The GEAR UP program operates on seven-year cycles. WV HEPC is concluding its second consecutive GEAR UP grant, which began in 2014. In September 2021, WV HEPC was awarded a third grant of \$24.5 million to serve an estimated 17,500 students from 50 secondary schools across 11 counties.



## PROGRAM PURPOSE

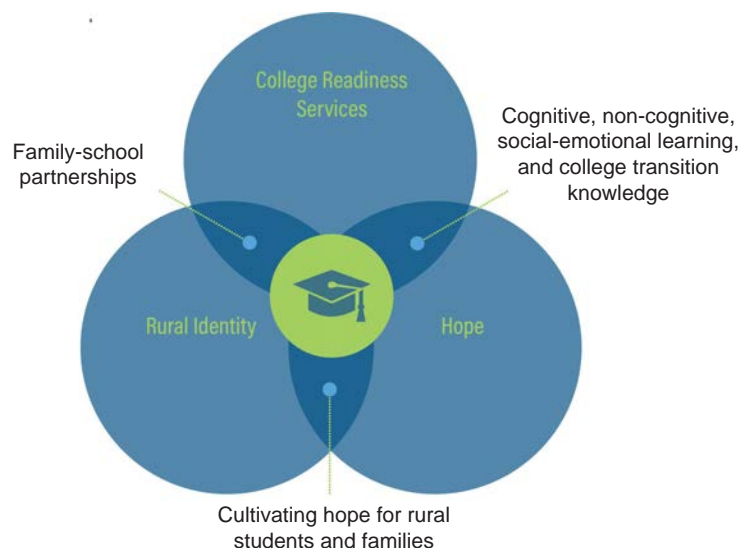
WV GEAR UP provides students and their families in rural WV communities with college-readiness services to increase their hope for a college-going future and the ability to imagine a better reality for themselves and their families.

WV GEAR UP aims to achieve this by:

1. Increasing WV GEAR UP students' academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education.
2. Increasing their rates of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education.
3. Increasing educational expectations and knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation and financing of students and families.
4. Increasing students' and educators' hope and expectations for students' future postsecondary plans.

## RESOURCES TO GEAR UP STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS

- WV GEAR UP stresses the importance of earning a trade certificate, two-year degree or four-year degree after high school and provides students with resources to prepare for and succeed in college.
- The program offers students the chance to participate in free college tours, ACT and SAT test preparation workshops, tutoring, mentoring, financial aid workshops, and college preparation summer academies.
- WV GEAR UP also offers college-planning workshops for parents and provides professional development opportunities for teachers working in counties served by the program.



Visit [www.wvgearup.org](http://www.wvgearup.org) for more info.



## PROGRAM IMPACT

More than 28,000 students have participated in WV GEAR UP activities since WVHEPC received its first GEAR UP award in 2008. This has resulted in students participating in more than 750,000 hours of activities, including mentoring, financial literacy programs, tutoring, workshops, financial aid assistance and college and job site visits.

## PROGRAM RESULTS FOR THE CLASS OF 2020

- 99% graduated from high school on time
- 96% of their parents and guardians spoke to them about college
- 91% of their parents and guardians believe that attending college is important to their student's future
- 70% expected to obtain a postsecondary credential
- 85% spoke to someone about financial aid
- 60% filed a FAFSA

*"As a teacher, it is important to help students with college prep. Also, to encourage them. GEAR UP makes a huge difference at our school. I see more and more students looking into college since GEAR UP."*

- Teacher quote, 2020 School Personnel Survey

## NOTABLE QUOTES

*"I have experienced firsthand how the West Virginia GEAR UP program helps students discover opportunities to continue their education beyond high school and the message of affordability.*

*I credit the program for helping me select my postsecondary pathway. I have witnessed those lightbulb moments that students have when they discover that education is attainable, and West Virginia GEAR UP helped do that for me."*

- Taylor Raby, 2014 WV GEAR UP Alumna



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