



PRESS RELEASE

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COLORADO AWARDED \$35 MILLION FOR “GEAR UP” PRECOLLEGIATE PROGRAM

Denver, CO – Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia announced that the Colorado Department of Higher Education was awarded a \$35 million Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs “*GEAR UP*” grant by the U.S. Department of Education. “We know that one of the best predictors of Colorado’s economic success is a well-educated workforce,” said Lt. Gov. Garcia. “Too few students from lower income and first generation college families graduate from high school and matriculate to college. The Colorado GEAR UP program addresses these problems by helping students realize they possess the ability and have the opportunity to obtain a college degree.”

By the end of this decade, 70 percent of the jobs in Colorado are projected to require at least some college education. While Colorado ranks 3rd in the nation for educational attainment of an associate’s degree or higher, Colorado has one of the country’s largest majority-minority attainment gaps for higher education – a 33.3 percent gap, compared to the national average of 23.3 percent. The GEAR UP grant will help expand successful methods to reach more at risk students across the state and will help Colorado begin to close this gap.

With these grant dollars, Colorado’s GEAR UP program will serve 6,800 students in low-income schools beginning in the eighth grade. The program provides mentoring, a college preparatory curriculum, financial literacy training, requires students to take rigorous course work to be college ready, encourages and enables them to participate in concurrent enrollment options, assists in the college admission process, and creates support mechanisms throughout students’ first year of college.

The grant will be centered around the existing Colorado GEAR UP model which has statistically significant results based largely on utilizing dual enrollment, early developmental education programming, College Level Examination Program (CLEP) testing and other innovative and non-traditional methods. The existing program’s first cohort of college freshmen has attained an 85 percent college enrollment rate for the 2011-12 academic year. The Colorado GEAR UP model changes college going perceptions of at-risk students and ensures an effective student

success system by promoting greater success at critical transition points and creating the necessary momentum to push students to post-secondary completion.

The Colorado GEAR UP program has demonstrated success with the last grant cycle resulting in:

- 86 percent of GEAR UP participants receiving a C or higher in college classes while in high school;
- 90 percent of the senior class from the 2010-11 class earning college credit while in high school;
- 88 percent of participants earning college level credit through CLEP tests; and
- a success rate of 82 percent for students passing developmental (remedial) education courses while in high school.

Existing GEAR UP students are also surveyed every year against a control group of their non-GEAR UP peers. It is clear that the program's methods change college perceptions for low-income and first generation students. The last survey found that:

- 88 percent of GEAR UP students believe they will attend a postsecondary institution compared to 75 percent of their peers;
- 80 percent of GEAR UP students understand financial aid options compared to 30 percent of their peers; and
- 80 percent of GEAR UP students understand the varying degrees one can earn compared to 40 percent of their peers.

Colorado competed against 33 other states and was among the seven states that have thus far received the grant. This is the third award of this type to Colorado with the first grant occurring from 1999-2005 and the second occurring from 2005-2011.

For more information please visit the Colorado GEAR UP program website at:

<http://www.coloradogearup.org/>

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