

# NEVADA GEAR UP AMBASSADOR MANUAL FY 2019

Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for  
Undergraduate Programs

*"GEAR UP is widely viewed as an effective solution for creating systemic change, as well as increasing academic achievement, high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates among low-income, first generation and underrepresented students."*

*-National Council for Community and Education Partnerships*



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## GEAR UP Introduction

GEAR UP is a competitive grant program of the U.S. Department of Education. GEAR UP increases the number of low-income, minority, and first generation students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. It is a bi-partisan, public-private educational partnership created by Congress in 1998.

### **GEAR UP is Cohort-Based**

GEAR UP works with entire grade levels, and whole schools, supporting low-income students and their families, starting no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> grade (middle school), through high school and onward to fulfill their dreams of attaining a postsecondary education.

### **GEAR UP Provides Critical Early College Awareness and Support Activities**

The program includes interventions such as tutoring, mentoring, rigorous academic preparation, and financial education to improve access to higher education for low-income, underserved, and most likely, first-generation students and their families.

### **GEAR UP Is Community-Based**

GEAR UP provides six-year grants, with an option of an additional year to support students in their first year of postsecondary education, to states and partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. The program unites the entire community in a responsive, creative, and research-based effort to get low-income, minority and underserved children and their families ready for higher education.

### **GEAR UP Leverages Local Resources**

Because GEAR UP is built around public and private partnerships, it enlists the formidable resources of government, industry, business, labor, community groups, and places of worship alike, in the cause of helping low-income students prepare, enter, and succeed in college.

### **GEAR UP Works**

The program now serves more than 707,000 low-income, minority and disadvantaged students nationwide in 42 states, the District of Columbia, and three U.S. Territories.

*Source: National Council for Community and Education Partnerships*

## Nevada State GEAR UP Program

The Nevada Department of Education is the Governor-designated agency for the Nevada State GEAR UP grant. Since 2001, the Nevada Department of Education has provided leadership for the statewide GEAR UP grant. Together with the Nevada System of Higher Education, Nevada school districts, and businesses, NV GEAR UP provides research-based interventions and services to targeted schools.

### WHO WE ARE

Generally, students served by the Nevada GEAR UP statewide grant were identified as GEAR UP during their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. Some 5,500 students now participate in Nevada GEAR UP. School selection is based on a federally free or reduced lunch rate of 50% or higher. Our current two cohorts in fall 2018 are now either seniors in high school or graduated high school in summer 2018. Many now attend Nevada public institutions of higher learning, and our grant will offer this cohort services as well. For a current list of districts, schools, and NSHE institutions serving as designated contacts, see page 6.

### WHAT WE DO

Nevada State GEAR UP services include academic enrichment, summer programs, assessment preparation, mentoring & tutoring, career & college counseling, college & university campus visits, financial literacy & financial aid, family engagement, summer workshops on leadership, college readiness, transition and first year programming, and other activities.

### NEVADA GEAR UP DISTINCTIVES

*Student-Parent Involvement Facilitators:* SPIFs monitor each student's progress through high school and serve as the primary GEAR UP contact for parents. Individual Learning Plans (ILP) are developed and updated annually as an academic roadmap to reach GEAR UP students' college and career goals.

*GEAR UP Ambassador Program:* Ambassadors, in partnership with SPIFs, coordinate and conduct college readiness and transition activities for GEAR UP cohorts. GEAR UP Ambassadors and GEAR UP Specialists are a regular presence in GEAR UP schools, contributing to the general expectation of college as the next step in a student's education.

*GEAR UP Business Network:* The Business Network gives companies, professionals, and community leaders an opportunity to support Nevada State GEAR UP through match funds, in-kind donations, job shadowing, advocacy efforts, and program feedback. Ambassadors are an integral part of the facilitation and networking activities.

### NEVADA STATE GEAR UP GOALS

#### Academic Preparation

Increase academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education.

#### Graduation and College

Increase high school graduation rate and participation in postsecondary education.

#### Knowledge

Increase student and parent/family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing.

#### College-Going Culture

Create a college-going culture in GEAR UP schools to ensure that all students have the opportunity, support, guidance, and information to obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to apply for and succeed in postsecondary education.

## WHAT HAS CHANGED

Two initiatives previously supported are no longer applicable or supported by the GEAR UP Grant

*Professional Development and Mentoring for School Leadership:* The College Readiness Team provided ongoing professional development and mentoring for GEAR UP middle school leadership. Each year a Summit was held for middle school leaders to assess school needs and to create and sustain a college readiness culture. Professional development was designed to meet the needs of GU middle schools to become models in their Local Education Agency (LEA) to foster a college-going culture. ***Since the current GEAR UP cohort is no longer in middle school, this initiative is no longer being supported by NDE.***

*STEM Professional Development:* The GEAR UP STEM team conducted needs assessments with GEAR UP schools and has designed appropriate activities and curriculum aligned with Common Core State Standards. ***Throughout the grant, STEM professional development opportunities are available to GEAR UP schoolteachers, but no GEAR UP Nevada-led option has been available since the FY 2017 grant year.***

In addition, Nevada received a waiver from the Scholarship Component for this grant cycle. The GEAR UP program will provide scholarship information about existing financial resources for higher education. In addition, financial education and literacy programs for students and parents are a part of ongoing services provided by SPIFs and GEAR UP Ambassadors.

## Nevada State GEAR UP Ambassadors

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) has designated the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) as a subgrantee serving as primary contact for higher education issues or questions. NDE and NSHE recognize one staff member at each NSHE postsecondary institution as the primary GEAR UP contact – the GEAR UP Ambassador – to the Ambassador Coordinator.

GEAR UP Ambassadors enhance Nevada’s college-going culture by increasing the number of low-income students from selected schools who apply to and attend postsecondary institutions, regardless of which Ambassador’s institution is lead mentor. As GEAR UP students enter college, Ambassadors also provide them transition and first-year programming at their respective institutions designed to foster persistence, retention, and ultimately on-time completion of their undergraduate studies.

Ambassadors are responsible for building a support and collaboration network with SPIFs, parents, teachers, school district staff, and staff at their NSHE institution to empower students at targeted schools with information, resources and strategies to achieve GEAR UP goals. This includes regular tracking of events planned and attended via the online Event Management System (EMS). Ambassadors should communicate with each other and the public regularly on approved GEAR UP social media channels, and to consider their presence in schools, on campus, and related events of highest value to GEAR UP’s mission.

GEAR UP Ambassadors, in partnership with SPIFs and college campus partners, plan and implement programs and activities for students and parents. Topics may include Career Exploration, College Exposure and Planning, Test Preparation, Financial Literacy, Parental Involvement, Academic Enrichment, Summer Programs, and other activities aligned with GEAR UP goals. Ambassadors often maintain and are present at “college corners” at GEAR UP schools for students to receive information about careers and postsecondary options. Finally, Ambassadors also support the GEAR UP Business Network, recruiting and maintaining ties to professionals who support the GEAR UP mission.

### **GEAR UP AMBASSADOR COORDINATOR**

The Coordinator assists Ambassadors in professional development seminars, creation of activity planning and pedagogical content, activity assessment, and management assistance in multi-institution GEAR UP programming. The Coordinator also chairs monthly Ambassador meetings, monitors entry and updating of the EMS, interacts with SPIFs, school district staff, parents and students to achieve GEAR UP goals, and convenes the GEAR UP Business Network. The Coordinator also ensures ongoing development and implementation of the GEAR UP strategic communications policy and its implementation in the Ambassador corps.

## NEVADA GEAR UP Primary Contacts

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## Nevada State GEAR UP Schools 2018-2019

County	High School	NSHE Institution
<b>Clark County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chaparral HS</li> <li>• Desert Pines HS</li> <li>• Las Vegas HS</li> <li>• Del Sol HS</li> <li>• SECTA</li> <li>• ECTA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNLV</li> <li>• NSC</li> <li>• CSN</li> </ul>
<b>Washoe County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wooster HS</li> <li>• Hug HS</li> <li>• Deans Future Scholars</li> <li>• AACT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNR</li> <li>• TMCC</li> <li>• WNC</li> </ul>
<b>Elko County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wells Combined School</li> <li>• Owyhee Combined School</li> <li>• Jackpot Combined School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNR</li> <li>• GBC</li> </ul>
<b>Humboldt County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McDermitt Combined School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNR</li> <li>• GBC</li> </ul>
<b>Lyon County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silver Stage HS</li> <li>• Yerington HS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNR</li> <li>• WNC</li> </ul>
<b>Mineral County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mineral County HS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNR</li> <li>• GBC</li> </ul>
<b>Pershing County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pershing County HS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNR</li> <li>• GBC</li> </ul>
<b>Nye County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pahrump Valley HS</li> <li>• Beatty HS</li> <li>• Tonopah HS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNLV</li> <li>• NSC</li> <li>• CSN</li> <li>• GBC</li> </ul>

Note: UNLV and UNR are required to serve all schools listed above. Other institutions are encouraged to support schools beyond their service region as appropriate.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Benchmarks

GEAR UP recommends that all students meet these benchmarks in order to graduate from high school ready for the postsecondary program or college of their choice.

	<b>ACTIONS</b>		<b>ACTIONS</b>
	Attend GEAR UP 12th grade orientation.		Participate in GEAR UP activities.
	Family attends GEAR UP 12th grade orientation and participates in FAFSA completion and other workshops.		Visit the postsecondary school(s) you want to attend, or take virtual tours online.
	Perform at or above grade level in math (calculus or above is recommended), language arts, and science classes. Participate in tutoring if needed.		Apply to three or more postsecondary schools or programs.
	Maintain the highest unweighted cumulative GPA possible (minimum 2.0). Nevada universities require a minimum 3.0, and many scholarships require an even higher GPA. Advanced diplomas require 3.25.		Know the Nevada minimum college admission requirements and choose courses that will help you meet these requirements while also working toward high school graduation.
	Stay alcohol-free, drug-free, crime-free, and tobacco-free.		Work with your GU Ambassador on your High School and Beyond Plan.
	Apply for the Silver State Opportunities Grant and Nevada Promise Scholarship if you meet the qualifications.		Complete the FAFSA application. Get help from your SPIF or GU Ambassador if needed.
	Take the ACT or SAT Test		Apply for scholarships.
	Participate in study skills and tutoring activities, enrolling in dual credit courses where possible.		Be on track to meet your diploma requirements.
	Research at least one job shadow and field trip in your career area of interest.		YOU MADE IT, GRADUATE!!!

## 1<sup>st</sup>- Year College Benchmarks

GEAR UP recommends that all students meet the 1<sup>st</sup> year college level benchmarks below to successfully complete freshman year and transition into sophomore year.

	<b>ACTIONS</b>		<b>ACTIONS</b>
	Get to know your academic advisor. Meet with them on a regular basis to discuss your classes, schedule, and degree progression.		Find out both: a) what your degree requirements are; and b) what courses you need to take, in what order.
	Get to know your roommate and residence hall.		Find out where the campus library is located, and utilize their services.
	Get to know your professors by interacting with them at office hours and university events.		Make memories with new friends.
	Take advantage of study resources offered on campus.		Continue to apply for scholarships, particularly in your department.
	Get involved on campus. Attend involvement fairs for more information.		Fill out the FAFSA on October 1 <sup>st</sup> for the following school year (sophomore year).
	Make a visit to the career services office. Utilize the services they offer.		Get organized, and plan ahead. Avoid procrastinating in college.
	Make time for yourself to relax.		Speak up in class. Ask questions! Participation is often part of your final grade!
	Sleep well, and eat right. Maintain a healthy lifestyle.		Attend events hosted by your campus
	Attend tutoring sessions as needed.		Balance your social and academic life.

## Use of Student Information & FERPA

GEAR UP Ambassadors interact with and have access to student personal information. Typically, Ambassadors are required to have Family Educational Rights and Primary Act (FERPA) training at the beginning of their college or university employment to insure compliance with Federal student data privacy guidelines. Ambassadors are encouraged to consult updated FERPA guidelines at regular intervals at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.

## Marketing & Public Relations

There are strict rules about what Ambassadors can say in advocating for GEAR UP with elected officials and the community. This section provides specific language to use.

**GEAR UP Mission:** To facilitate strategic partnerships in order to leverage funding and resources that provide direct, early intervention services to students in high-need schools in order to help them prepare for and succeed in college.

**Elevator Statement:** GEAR UP helps middle school and high school students get ready for college. We work with students from low-income and underserved communities who will likely be the first person in their family to go to college.

**Slogan:** DREAM, BELIEVE, ACHIEVE



**Logo:** See [GearUpNV.org](http://GearUpNV.org) for instructions on how to download and use logo.

### Key GEAR UP Talking Points

#### Students:

- You can go to college.
- A college degree gives you more choices, opportunities & control over your future.
- Going to college is exciting (new friends, new surroundings, new challenges)
- It is never too soon to get ready for college.
- Paying attention to classes and grades now pays off when applying to college.
- Having a plan to prepare, apply for and enter college is just as important as good grades, high test scores and extracurricular activities.

#### Parents/Significant Adults:

- Your student can go to college.
- It's OK not knowing where to begin.
- It's OK to ask for help in preparing your child to be a college student.
- GEAR UP staff want to help your child create a plan to get to and graduate from college.

#### School Personnel

- Every student can go to college.
- Parents want the best education available for their children.
- Parents that have not attended college need your help to make college a reality for their student.
- Students need help seeing themselves as college students.
- Students and parents may not know where to begin searching for information.

## GEAR UP Student Service Definitions

**Academic planning:** Providing individual or small group assistance on coursework/major selection, test advising or score interpretation, or assistance with placement.

**Advising:** Providing individual assistance to parents/guardians on college choices, college planning, financial aid planning, etc.

**Career counseling:** Providing individual or small group assistance to students about career choices, career planning, internships, or career interests.

**College application** completion must be tracked by the individual student. Provide follow up and reminders to ensure students complete applications.

**College Application Month (CAM)**, known nationally as the American College Application Campaign (ACAC), is supported by NSHE with the goal to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply to college. Ambassadors participate in CAM as part of grant requirements.

**College student shadowing:** An experience in which a student spends a day on a college campus with an undergraduate student seeing college life.

**College visit:** A physical visit to a college campus including an official tour, presentations by admissions, academic departments, athletics, student affairs, residence life, multicultural affairs, or other college departments.

**Comprehensive mentoring services** are school- or community-based. Teachers and other staff identify academically or social/emotionally at-risk students. These students are paired with volunteers who meet weekly at school or in the community (typically one hour) during or after school. This long-term, comprehensive mentoring can include academic, social, organizational, or life skills elements.

**Counseling:** One-on-one or small group student meetings to discuss issues such as decision making, goal setting, behavior concerns, family issues, or home visits.

**Counseling/advising services** span a spectrum of activities that can include one-on-one or small group advising. These services include meetings between a parent/guardian or adult family member and the GEAR UP school staff or counselor, with or without a student present, to discuss student's academic goals, college plans, etc.

**Dual Enrollment** refers to students being enrolled concurrently in two distinct academic programs or educational institutions while still enrolled in a secondary school.

**Educational field trips** combine travel to another location with academic components linked to classroom activities. Examples include science demonstrations on a college campus (the goal being a science lesson, not a college visit), trips to a museum linked to curriculum, academic competitions, experiences such as performing arts or similar activities, and field trips enhancing curriculum in math, science, or language arts.

**FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Every student applying for college should fill this out by October 1 of their senior year. Seminars and workshops for seniors and their parents will be organized by Ambassadors and SPIFs at each school served.

**FAFSA Completion Events** take place in October/November each year.

**Family events** are services in which parents or families participate. These services involve GEAR UP students and their families/guardians or just their parents/guardians.

**Financial aid counseling/advising services** assist students in understanding and navigating the complexities of financial aid, including hands-on assistance with the FAFSA and scholarship applications, financial aid or literacy presentations, financial aid or literacy curriculum, and participation in college savings plans.

**FSA ID:** Federal Student Aid ID. Students, parents, and borrowers are required to use an **FSA ID**, made up of a username and password, to access certain U.S. Department of Education websites. The FSA ID is used to confirm a student's identity when accessing financial aid information and electronically signing **federal aid** documents.

**Job site visit/job shadowing services** offer students exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest and reinforces the link between classroom learning and work requirements. Students witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. These activities include visits to local businesses, employers, and agencies to explore different professions career selections and can be followed by job shadowing.

**Summer programs** are intensive experiences that includes an academic enrichment, credit recovery, or college prep component. In Nevada, such programs are statewide GEAR UP summer camps, local summer programming funded by GEAR UP, residential GEAR UP programs hosted by a college/university/community organization, or other programming attended by GEAR UP students that supports the GEAR UP mission.

**Workshops** are services that include interactive informational sessions focused on college awareness and readiness such as study skills, self-monitoring, goal-setting, time management, and problem-solving which may include motivational speakers.

**Workshops in college prep/financial aid services** include a parent/guardian or adult family member's attendance at events that demonstrate how to assist their student with college preparation or financial aid. These services topics such as Financial Planning, Requesting Financial Aid, Career Exploration, Middle School to High School Transition Planning Activities, Successful Parental Involvement, etc.

**Virtual college visit:** A virtual online college tour via remote access.

## Assessment Definitions

**ACCUPLACER-** The ACCUPLACER is an academic placement exam for math, English, and reading used by Nevada's community colleges and universities either when ACT and SAT test scores are not available, or when a student wishes to place into a higher course level than the ACT or SAT scores or high school grades would allow.  
<[www.accuplacer.collegeboard.org/students](http://www.accuplacer.collegeboard.org/students)>

**ACT-** The ACT assesses high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The multiple choice test covers English, mathematics, reading and science and includes an optional writing portion.  
<<http://www.actstudent.org/>>

**PSAT/NMSQT-** The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is a pretest for the SAT and is used as a qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program. It should be taken in the Fall of 10th or 11th grade.  
<[www.nationalmerit.org](http://www.nationalmerit.org)>; <<http://www.collegeboard.org/>>

**SAT-** The Scholastic Assessment Test is a widely used college admissions test. It tests students' knowledge in the subjects of reading, writing, and math. It should be taken in the Spring of 11th grade and can be taken again in the Fall of 12th grade.  
<<http://www.collegeboard.org/>>

## Nevada Public College & University Admissions Requirements

### Community College Requirements

- High School diploma or equivalent GED

### State College Requirements

- High School diploma or equivalent; and
- Required high school courses;
- At least a 2.0 GPA

### University Requirements

- High School diploma or equivalent; AND
- At least a 3.0 (weighted) GPA in the required high school courses; or
- A combined SAT Critical Reading and Math score of at least 1040; or
- An ACT composite score of at least 22; or
- A Nevada Advanced high school diploma.

## Nevada Public Colleges and Universities

### University of Nevada, Las Vegas

[www.unlv.edu](http://www.unlv.edu)

UNLV's academic colleges and schools offer more than 180 undergraduate, master's and doctoral degree programs. It is the state's largest comprehensive doctoral-degree granting institution with more than 28,000 students. UNLV provides traditional and professional academic programs for a diverse student body. UNLV is home to a new medical school as well as the only public law school in Nevada.

Location: Las Vegas

### University of Nevada, Reno

[www.unr.edu](http://www.unr.edu)

The University of Nevada, Reno offers more than 70 undergraduate majors and 150 academic programs. More than 91 percent of classes are taught by faculty members and the student-to-faculty ratio is 17:1. All the University undergraduate students have the opportunity to participate in a diverse range of research projects, working closely with faculty mentors. UNR also has a medical school.

Location: Reno

### Nevada State College

[www.nsc.edu](http://www.nsc.edu)

Nevada State is a 4 year college dedicated to outstanding teaching, mentoring, and advising on a personal level. Nevada State College offers bachelor's degrees in Business, Education, Nursing, Visual Media and Computing, Biology, Environmental Science, Psychology, English, History, Integrated Studies, Law Enforcement and more...

Location: Henderson

### College of Southern Nevada

[www.csn.edu](http://www.csn.edu)

The College of Southern Nevada offers two year associate degrees, one-year certificates of achievement in more than 200 career fields, university transfer preparation, select bachelor's degrees, and skill training to secure employment or professional development.

Locations: Las Vegas & Henderson Campuses

### Great Basin College

[www.gbcnv.edu](http://www.gbcnv.edu)

Great Basin College serves five counties in northeastern Nevada and offers select bachelor's degrees and one-year certificates of achievement. GBC has several online offerings.

Location: Elko

## **Truckee Meadows Community College**

[www.tmcc.edu](http://www.tmcc.edu)

Truckee Meadows Community College offers more than 100 associate degrees and certificates of achievement programs ranging from automotive technology to nursing to paralegal. TMCC also offers select Bachelor or Applied Science degrees.

Location: Reno

## **Western Nevada College**

[www.wnc.edu](http://www.wnc.edu)

Western Nevada College offers more than 50 associate degrees or certificate programs, as well as a Bachelor of Applied Science in Construction Management.

Location: Carson City

## **Additional GEAR UP Resources**

### **GEAR UP Digest**

A monthly electronic newsletter sent to GEAR UP staff and community partners with GEAR UP news, announcements, updates, and important dates.

### **GEAR UP Handbook**

Information on GEAR UP goals, SPIFs, STEM, GEAR UP database, career cruising, student/parent forms, financial literacy and contacts.

### **A Handbook for Nevada GEAR UP Campus Visits**

Includes information on campus visits, checklists, logistics, handouts and activities, games, surveys and additional campus visit resources.

### **Ambassador and SPIF Professional Development**

Ambassadors are required to attend four training sessions each grant year. Such events include GEAR UP professional conferences. Topics may include college access materials and policies, summer academy planning, team building, first-year programming, and more. Ambassadors and SPIFs are also required to attend two trainings yearly by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE). Additional seminars and workshops may be scheduled as appropriate.

## Social media



## Acknowledgments

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Additional resources used to create this handbook:

U.S. Department of Education's Supplemental Educational Services Non-Regulatory Guidance. Retrieved from: [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/suppsvcsguid.doc](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/suppsvcsguid.doc)

U. S. Department of Education's Mentoring Resource Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.edmentoring.org/>

Washington State GEAR UP Coordinator Manual from: <http://www.gearup.wa.gov/resource/washington-state-gear-up-coordinator-manual-and-forms>

2011 Nevada State GEAR UP Grant Application July 2011, Nevada Department of Education

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships, handout "About GEAR UP" from: [www.edpartnerships.org](http://www.edpartnerships.org)

GoToCollegeNevada.org campaign handout "The College Journey," from: [www.gotocollegenevada.org](http://www.gotocollegenevada.org)

