

Putting Students on the Path to Success

Jeannine Huenemann

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Over 13,000 students received services through the USU STARS! GEAR UP program during the previous school year. Reports show that over 90% of the students in [grants two and three](#) have been involved in one or more services every year. In addition to encouraging academic rigor and financial aid knowledge, the program supports STEM education and professional development for educators.



Students at Gunnison Valley High School participated in Utah College Awareness Week and other GEAR UP sponsored activities in October



GEAR UP students from middle and high school visited college campuses across the state

In October, students at many USU STARS! schools participated in Utah College Awareness Week and other GEAR UP sponsored activities. Site coordinators led visits to college campuses, shared college knowledge trivia, sponsored family FAFSA nights, and helped students meet college graduates.

Starting in 2012, Utah State University STARS! GEAR UP [received federal funding](#) from the Department of Education to support over 13,000 students in Utah and Nevada. Participating schools were identified as underserved based

on their school's low-income population. These schools also had some of the lowest high school graduation rates in the state, making education after high school even less of an option.

USU STARS! serves whole grade bands of students through GEAR UP, providing services to help them see college as an option. Currently, the program has four active partnership grants in Utah administered through Utah State University. Highlights from the 2018-2019 school year came from school reports, and are reviewed annually by outside evaluators. They show that 92 percent in grant two and 97 percent in grant three, engaged in one or more GEAR UP services at their school. Students logged over a half million hours of services last year in these two grants alone.

GEAR UP works with teachers and staff to encourage STEM-education. During the last school year, 526 teachers were involved in nearly 6,000 hours of [professional development](#) in grant two. Teachers in all of our grants take advantage of training opportunities outside their classroom hours to improve their teaching. Some of these hours include GEAR UP-sponsored training to improve their effectiveness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. The best part of this training is that it is an investment in future success as it pays forward to students in grades to come.

"[College visits](#) are so vital for students because they expose them to what college is really like," said Craig Peterson, secondary director at American Preparatory Academy. Last year, two thirds of the middle school students in grant three visited a college campus. "The visit opens students' eyes to the amazing opportunities and certain freedoms that college life offers," said Peterson. "To have them be on campus, walking around among busy, happy college students is key to helping them picture themselves at a college and developing and growing in the direction they choose."

Families are encouraged to take part in college planning for their child early in the process. Many of the evening activities such as FAFSA nights and college fairs allow parents and siblings to learn about the process along with their child. Over half the parents in grant three attended GEAR UP events along with their middle school student during the last school year. Additionally, 52 percent of our grant two students in high school received financial aid information. USU STARS! plans to add additional student and family FAFSA and scholarship workshops and activities in the next school year to support students as they get closer to high school graduation.

We are excited about what the future holds for these students and families. Early intervention is a key to future success for students in the areas of college enrollment, persistence to graduate, and degree attainment after high school. The USU STARS! GEAR UP program is under the leadership of the [School of Teacher Education and Leadership](#) in the [Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services](#) at USU. As funding continues, the program supports grade bands of students in participating schools through their first year of college in the 2024-2025 school year.

Press: [Utah State Today](#)

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