**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

March 25, 2021

Dear GEAR UP Grantee Project Director:

Due to the continuing national emergency caused by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and pursuant to the authority granted under section 3518(b) of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) is now providing financial flexibility and relief for Gaining Early Awareness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grantees. This letter supersedes and replaces the letter regarding match waiver flexibilities that was issued by OPE on December 3, 2020.[[1]](#footnote-1)

As you are aware, the GEAR UP program requires that grantees provide, from State, local, institutional, or private funds, not less than 50 percent of the cost of the program, which matching funds may be provided in cash or in kind and may be accrued over the full duration of the grant award period.[[2]](#footnote-2) This is commonly known as a dollar-for-dollar match requirement—that is, generally, for every federal dollar provided under the grant, grantees must provide one dollar in matching funds.

OPE invites all GEAR UP grantees (both Partnership and State grantees) to request waivers of up to 100 percent of the matching requirement from the date of the declaration of the of the national emergency due to COVID-19, subject to the criteria and limitations listed below:

1. Grantees must submit the form for a waiver of the matching requirement to their assigned GEAR UP program specialist. This form will be forthcoming shortly.
2. Waivers granted under this authority will end no later than September 30 of the fiscal year following the end of the COVID-19 national emergency, which currently is September 30, 2022.
3. Waivers will only be granted under this authority if you certify that, to the maximum extent practicable, the GEAR UP project will continue to serve the same number of students and maintain the quality and intensity of the services provided to such students.
4. If a State grantee did not received a waiver of the GEAR UP scholarship component, that project will continue to provide GEAR UP students with scholarships.

OPE will release a waiver request form shortly. Grantees requesting a match waiver should specifically note on the form the timeframe for the waiver and the amount and percentage of matching funds the waiver, if granted, would waive. Incomplete forms may not be granted at all or may be granted for amounts smaller or for a shorter time period than requested.

If a grantee is requesting a match waiver as a result of COVID-19, the Department will entertain the possibility of a retroactive match waiver from March 13, 2020, the date of the President’s declaration of a national emergency due to COVID-19 ([85 FR 15337](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/03/18/2020-05794/declaring-a-national-emergency-concerning-the-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak)).

Thank you for your continued commitment to support GEAR UP participants during this time through the ongoing delivery of services to them. Please contact your assigned GEAR UP program specialist if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Michelle Asha Cooper, Ph.D.

Acting Assistant Secretary for

Postsecondary Education.

1. The superseded letter is available here: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/covid-gearup-matchflexletter.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See 20 USC 1070a-23(b)(1) and 34 CFR § 694.7 for a description of the GEAR UP program matching requirement. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)