

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Grantee-level Performance: 2004–05 and 2005-06

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) is committed to continually improving its management of programs and improving the educational outcomes of students. One tool for program improvement is providing program performance data to grantees, key stakeholders and the public in a way that encourages reflection, action and collaboration.

The *Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs* (GEAR UP) awards six-year grants to secondary and postsecondary institutions to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP provides grants to states and partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. GEAR UP grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school. GEAR UP funds are also used to provide college scholarships to low-income students.

Grants were awarded in 2001 (8 institutions), 2002 (51 institutions) and 2005 (245 institutions). This performance evaluation looks at results from 2004-05 and 2005-2006 school years. These institutions were variously in the fourth/fifth and fifth/sixth years of their grant cycles.

Selected Findings

The Department uses three performance measures: academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of GEAR UP students; rate of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education of GEAR UP students; and GEAR UP students' and their families' knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation and financing. Based on student and parent survey, student performance data, and grantee service characteristics, the following was found:

Student Survey Findings:

- The percentage of students who have spoken to school officials about college entrance requirements increased from 65 percent in 2004 to 66 percent in 2005. Both years exceeded target measures. (Targets: 61 percent for 2004 and 64 percent for 2005) (Table 1)
- The percentage of students who had spoken to school officials about the availability of financial aid increased from 54 percent in 2004 to 55 percent in 2005. Both years exceeded target measures. (Target: 35 percent for 2004 and 37 percent for 2005) (Table 1)

- The proportion of students reporting college was ‘definitely affordable’ or ‘probably affordable’ was 61 percent in 2004 and 59 percent in 2005. (Table 2)
- The percentage of students who expected to earn a four-year college degree or higher was 69 percent among eleventh and twelfth graders in 2004, 71 percent in 2005. (Table 3)

Parent Survey Findings:

- The percentage of parents who had spoken to school officials about college entrance requirements decreased from 50 percent in 2004 to 38 percent in 2005. Targets were met for 2004 but not for 2005. (Target: 46 percent for 2004 and 47 percent for 2005) (Table 4)
- The percentage of parents who had spoken to school officials about the availability of financial aid decreased from 42 percent in 2004 to 32 percent in 2005. (Table 4)
- Parent perceptions of the affordability of college stood at 64 percent in 2004 and 63 percent in 2005. (Table 4)
- The percentage of parents who expect their children to earn a four-year college degree or higher was 67 percent in 2004 and 68 percent in 2005. (Table 5)

Student Achievement Findings:

- The percentage of students performing at or above grade level in English rose from 36 percent in 2004 to 49 percent in 2005. (Table 6)
- The percentage of students performing at or above grade level in math rose from 32 percent in 2004 to 44 percent in 2005. (Table 6)
- Individual grantee changes in English performance ranged from -62.88 percent to 78.75 percent. (Table 7)
- Individual grantee changes in math performance ranged from -56.39 percent to 67.34 percent. (Table 7)
- In both 2004 and 2005 approximately 70 percent of grant funds were used for tutoring/academic enrichment, computer-assisted lab, mentoring and counseling activities. (Table 8)
- In 2004 the graduation rate was 80 percent while 37 percent of those graduates were enrolled at a postsecondary institution. (Table 9)

Performance Measure Definitions

Student Cohort for Rate Calculations:

- Comprised of participants who are enrolled full-time, and are part of the GEAR UP program.
- Participating schools are required to have a student population with at least 50 percent of the students being low income, (i.e., eligible for free or reduced-price lunches).
- Grantees must provide assistance to all students in designated grade levels as part of the cohort model.

Percentages for Student College Entrance Requirement Knowledge

- Divide the number of students who responded that they had spoken to school counselors, advisors, or someone else about college entrance requirements by total number of student respondents.¹

Percentages for Student Availability of Financial Aid Knowledge

- Divide the number of students who responded that they had spoken to school counselors, advisors, or someone else about availability of financial assistance by total number of student respondents.¹

Percentages for Student Perceptions of the Affordability of College

- Divide the number of students who responded that college was definitely affordable or probably affordable by total number of student respondents.¹

Percentages of Students Who Expect to Earn a Four-Year College Degree or Higher

- Divide the number of students who responded that expected to earn a four-year college degree by total number of student respondents.¹
- Student surveys were conducted among eleventh and twelfth graders who participated in the GEAR UP program.

Percentages for Parent College Entrance Requirement knowledge

- Divide the number of parents who responded that they had spoken to school counselors, advisors, or someone else about college entrance requirements by total number of parental respondents.¹

Percentages for Parent Availability of Financial Aid Knowledge

- Divide the number of parents who responded that they had spoken to school counselors, advisors, or someone else about availability of financial assistance by total number of parental respondents.¹

Percentages for Parent Perceptions of the Affordability of College

- Divide the number of parents who responded that college was definitely affordable or probably affordable by total number of parental respondents.¹

¹ Data from the annual performance reports (APRs) for 2004-05 and 2005-06 were used to calculate student response percentages.

Percentages of Parents Who Expected Their Children to Earn a Four Year College Degree or Higher

- Divide the number of parents who responded that they expected their children to earn a four year college degree by total number of parental respondents.¹

Percentages for Students Performing at or Above Grade Level in English

- Divide the number of students performing at or above grade level in English by the total number of students served.¹

Percentages for Students Performing at or Above Grade Level in Math

- Divide the number of students performing at or above grade level in math by the total number of students served.¹

Percentages for Students Graduating

- Divide the number of students who graduated by the total number of seniors.¹

Percentages for Students Enrolled at a Postsecondary Institution

- Divide the number of students who were enrolled at a postsecondary institution by the total number of seniors.¹