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"GEAR UP" GRANT APPROVED FOR NH STUDENTS TO PURSUE COLLEGE DEGREES

CONCORD – Building off the successes of the NH Scholars initiative and Campus Compact for NH's AmeriCorps VISTA project, a new program is beginning aimed at helping students improve their chances at getting into the college of their choice. GEAR UP is a federally-funded grant that works with students from 7th grade through their first year of college, and will be an ongoing resource that helps students find, afford and maximize their college experience. The GEAR UP grant was award to the New Hampshire College and University Council (NHCUC) in partnership with Campus Compact for New Hampshire.

"This is a statewide, all-encompassing program designed to help students pick classes that align with their career choices, access scholarship aid, find a college that fits their goals, and even find internship programs to get them in the door early," says Tom Horgan, President and CEO of NHCUC. "GEAR UP has a proven record of success and we are thrilled to bring it to New Hampshire."

GEAR UP stands for ***G****aining* ***E****arly* ***A****wareness and* ***R****eadiness for* ***U****ndergraduate* ***P****rograms*. It is a program that helps students succeed in school. It helps families and students learn about choices for education after high school and how to pay for it. GEAR UP believes that every student should have the opportunity to go to college if they work hard, take the right courses and stay in school. GEAR UP also believes that planning future success should begin with students and families in 7th grade and continue through 12th grade. For students who attend colleges in New

Hampshire after their high school graduation, they will be eligible for scholarships and services that will continue through their important first year of college.

GEAR UP began in 1999 and has had great results, including better student grades and attendance, higher test scores, increased enrollment in courses that prepare students for college, lower high school drop-out rates and increased college enrollment rates. The results have caught the attention of college presidents around the country and in the state.

"This is a logical extension of the NH Scholars program, which has proven to be very successful in our state," says Michele Perkins, President of New England College. "We offer direct scholarship aid to all NH Scholars, and we envision GEAR UP students to receive the same amount of attention and assistance in the near future. This is a win-win. Colleges get well-prepared students and families get the type of help they need right now."

GEAR UP services may include: making arrangements for services to help students succeed academically, mentoring, tutoring, study skills workshops and summer enrichment programs on college campuses. GEAR UP will also help students to learn about colleges and future career options.

A total of 505 students will be served from the 7 cohort GEAR UP middle schools: Berlin Middle School, Claremont Middle School, Franklin Middle School, Laconia Middle School, Lisbon Regional School, Stewartstown Community School and Whitefield Elementary School. GEAR UP NH and local school officials will follow 7th graders all the way through their first year of college.

"This is an unprecedented level of support for our students," says Dr. Middleton K. McGoodwin, Superintendent of Schools, SAU Unit #6, in Claremont. "Knowing our students will have access to GEAR UP scholarship aid on top of what is already available will make the difference in the lives of many families in our district; that creates truly exciting opportunities for students."

In addition to programming at cohort schools other NH students will have the opportunity to participate in the GEAR UP program, which will coordinate statewide and regional activities such as: enhancing and improving college readiness through the NH Scholars Initiative, building college access programming through the AmeriCorps VISTA program, and offering various resources to students via events such as College Access Conventions.

"Virtually all of our students dream about going to college and following a career path to success and happiness, but the reality in our part of the state is different; this program will close the gap between dreams and reality for many of our students," says Dr. Corinne Cascadden, Superintendent of Schools, SAU Unit #3 in Berlin. "Finances are a major hurdle for families, but building a resume and connections that help students connect to their future are also a challenge. GEAR UP offers a holistic approach to helping kids gain access to the college of their choice."

GEAR UP does not require any matching state funds; it is fully funded through the federal grant. If successful, the grant can be extended beyond the initial six year investment for the current class of 2023. "Collaboration is the key to success, and this program ties together several individual efforts that have been showing great results in New Hampshire," explains Debby Scire, Executive Director of Campus Compact for NH. "Tomorrow's economy will demand highly skilled and well-trained workers. GEAR UP will provide a critical foundation to help tomorrow's graduates meet growing demand."

For more information, log onto www.gearupnh.org.