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Four GEAR UP Iowa students chosen for national summit

The high school freshmen are headed for San Francisco in July

Four high school freshmen from Iowa have been selected to attend the 2017 Youth Leadership Summit this summer in San Francisco, sponsored by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships. They will be among 150 students from 21 states. All four are part of GEAR UP Iowa, a federal grant program administered by Iowa College Aid to increase college awareness and attainment in underserved school districts.

The students are:



Htay Meh, Hoover High School, Des Moines. "My goal is to get a master's degree from a university and become a physician's assistant or a teacher. ... One of the reasons why my family decided to come to the U.S. was so we could get a better education. Now I'm here trying to achieve my hopes and dreams so I could make a change for those who are lacking in education."



Rylie Maliszewski, North High School, Sioux City. "Being a first-generation college student, with my parents' highest level of education being a high school diploma, this experience is very new to me and my family. Not having much family to talk to about college experiences, GEAR UP gives me the opportunity to talk with college students, alumni, and explore colleges."



Lessly Ortega, Storm Lake High School, Storm Lake. "I wasn't born into a family where people grew up to go to college. All we have going for us is a simple high school education with work following after that, and ever since I was little I knew I wanted to break that cycle."



Montserrat Gonzalez, Perry High School, Perry. "I would love to become a teacher or an interior designer. It would be amazing to help and teach children new things to make a change for our future because I believe I am the future, and so are the other children in the world."

All four will be first-generation college students, meaning their parents did not complete college degrees. "These are exactly the students GEAR UP Iowa is meant to reach," said Karen Misjak, executive director of Iowa College Aid.

"They're intelligent and ambitious. They just need support navigating the road that will lead them to a college degree."

GEAR UP Iowa serves more than 8,000 students in 12 Iowa school districts. More than 60 took part in a statewide leadership summit last summer in Des Moines. These four were chosen to attend the July 16-19 NCCEP summit, where students will range in grade level from rising high school freshmen to rising college freshmen.

For more information about GEAR UP Iowa, visit GEARUPIowa.gov.

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About Iowa College Aid: We provide college access, financial literacy and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. We administer state scholarship, grant, work study and loan forgiveness programs totaling more than \$70 million annually; conduct research and distribute higher education data; and offer Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information.

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