



IowaCollegeAid.gov
Because College Changes Everything



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Heather Doe
515-725-3417
515-975-6769 cell
heather.doe@iowa.gov

Iowa Students GEAR UP for College and Career Readiness

Statewide College Preparation Efforts Celebrated During National GEAR UP Week

Des Moines, IA, September 22, 2015 – The Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid) is celebrating ongoing success in helping students and families prepare for college during National GEAR UP Week, Sept. 21-25, 2015. The celebration highlights Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a federally-funded college access program that provides students and their families with college planning resources. Since its inception in 1999, GEAR UP has helped improve educational outcomes for millions of low-income students across the U.S., including thousands of Iowa students served through the GEAR UP Iowa programs administered by Iowa College Aid.

"Improving college access and success in college is critical to prepare students for tomorrow's careers," said Iowa College Aid Executive Director Karen Misjak. "National GEAR UP Week provides an opportunity for us to reflect on the excellent progress Iowa and the nation have made in student preparation through GEAR UP."

In the fall of 2014, Iowa College Aid was awarded its second federal GEAR UP grant totaling \$22 million. The program supports a cohort of approximately 6,300 students in 12 Iowa school districts as they progress from seventh grade through college. GEAR UP Iowa goes beyond the classroom, encouraging community and parental involvement that helps school districts create and sustain college-going cultures.

-more-

“Being part of GEAR UP Iowa has provided a great opportunity for our district and our students,” said Amber Kilburn, GEAR UP Coordinator with Sioux City Community School District. “Through GEAR UP Iowa we are able to give our students greater exposure to college at a younger age. We have been able to provide extra assistance with tutoring and mentoring and have worked to create a college-going culture within our middle schools.”

GEAR UP Iowa school districts include: Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Columbus Junction, Davenport, Denison, Des Moines, Fort Dodge, Marshalltown, Ottumwa, Perry, Sioux City and Storm Lake.

“GEAR UP Iowa has been instrumental in keeping me focused on my personal goals,” said GEAR UP alumna Taylor Hills. A graduate of Columbus Junction High School’s GEAR UP Iowa program, Hills is now a sophomore at St. Ambrose University in Iowa. “The program helps students see the big picture so they can work toward successful transition into college,” she added.

To learn more about the statewide GEAR UP program, please visit www.GEARUPIowa.gov or contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456.

###

About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy and outreach services to Iowa’s students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$70.0 million annually, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education’s College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being utilized to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa’s students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.