

News Release

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Wisconsin wins \$35 million to help economically disadvantaged students attend college

New, seven-year GEAR UP grant focuses on eight districts while also supporting students statewide

MADISON – Wisconsin won a competitive federal grant to provide Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) helping students from economically disadvantaged families prepare for college.

"Using this award, we'll advance our goal of giving every student the support they need for an equitable chance to do well in school," State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor said. "GEAR UP services will help students succeed in high school and beyond. Many students will even earn college credit as part of their high school education, a huge benefit and a great cost savings for them and their families."

This school year's \$5 million in GEAR UP funding will enroll and serve 2,500 middle and high school students in eight Wisconsin public school districts: **Ashland, Bayfield, Green Bay Area, Milwaukee, Racine Unified, Shawano, Sheboygan Area, and Wausau**. The program will continue to support participating students after high school through college scholarships, as well as transitional support during the first year of postsecondary education. A **statewide** outreach component will provide college readiness and financial aid application assistance for an additional 5,000 students and their families around Wisconsin each year.

Pending approval of continued federal funds, the grant will last for seven years, totaling \$35 million.

Direct services from GEAR UP include mentoring, tutoring, academic advising, college and career exploration and visits, high school transition programming, and workforce readiness skill development. There will be an emphasis on helping students learn about and prepare for careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In collaboration with the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, students will have the opportunity to earn college credit or a workforce microcredential while still in high school at no cost to the student or family.

The Department of Public Instruction will administer the program through its Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs (WEOP) offices throughout the state. The grant was awarded to the department by the United States Department of Education through a competitive process. The department's history of running successful GEAR UP programs includes winning an award in the original GEAR UP competition in 1999, then securing continuous funding until 2017. The new seven-year grant marks the first time students in Shawano and Sheboygan will be able to benefit from GEAR UP services.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2019/wisconsin-wins-35-million-help-economically-disadvantaged-students-attend-college>.