



State of New Jersey

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April 22, 2014

David J. Rosen
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer
Office of Legislative Services
State House Annex
P.O. Box 068
Trenton, N.J. 08625-0068

Dear Mr. Rosen:

I am writing in response to the April 14, 2014 letter requesting a written response to a question raised by a member of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee following the Higher Educational Services hearing on April 8, 2014.

Question, Senator Oroho:

- **98% of the high school seniors enrolled in the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (GEAR UP) graduate from high school and 77% enroll in college within 6 months of high school graduation. Please provide information on the high school graduation rate and college enrollment rate of students in these high schools prior to implementation of the GEAR UP Program.**

Answer:

New Jersey's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (NJ GEAR UP) is a six-year discretionary grant whose goal is to prepare low-income students (many who are first generation aspiring college students) to enroll and succeed in post-secondary education. NJ GEAR UP has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education for three six year cycles. It is currently in year 3 of its third cycle. Since 1999, NJ GEAR UP has provided early intervention and quality enrichment services to students from the state's most underserved localities. NJ GEAR UP has grown steadily since its inception nearly 15 years ago, from servicing four cities (Camden, Jersey City, Newark and Trenton) and 18 middle and high schools to its current size of eight cities (Paterson

in 2005 and Atlantic City, Bridgeton, Pleasantville in 2011) and expanding its reach to 55 middle and high schools throughout the state.

The state project has graduated 14 cohorts of NJ GEAR UP students with an overall college enrollment rate of 77.3 percent. In 2013, NJ GEAR UP high school graduation rate of twelfth graders was 98.5 percent and enrollment in college within six months at a rate of 80 percent.

In each GEAR UP grant application to the US DOE for the federal funds (1999, 2005 and 2011), New Jersey Higher Education provided aggregated and comparative data to support the need for GEAR UP services to its target constituents. Data elements that were provided in the proposals included, but were not limited to the following: 11th grade state assessments, performance on the SAT, graduation rates and college participation rates.

For the purpose of this request, the data that was used for the participating schools at the time of the initial application for the NJ GEAR UP grant follows:

Target School Data (1998)

H.S. Graduation (4-year rate)	1998
Target Schools	44%

College Enrollment	1998
Low-income students in NJ	45.8%

The State of New Jersey introduced a new graduation rate calculation in 2011 to determine rates for schools and districts. Through NJ SMART, the Department of Education's longitudinal student data warehouse, the 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate calculation is used to derive the graduation rates of students across the State. Previously, New Jersey has calculated graduation rates from aggregate data supplied by districts during annual NJ SMART fall collections. This makes comparison between years prior to 2011 complicated.

Additional Target School Data (2011-2013)

H.S. Graduation (4-year rate)	2011	2012	2013
Target Schools	63%	66%	68%

College Enrollment	2012	2013
Target Schools	48%	57%

The data demonstrate that both students in the program as well as their schools benefit from the GEAR UP interventions. In addition, the State of New Jersey matches federal GEAR UP dollars with its investment in the College Bound Program.

The task of consistently gathering the necessary data to compare the State project's performance over time continues to be challenged by reorganization/restructuring experienced by many of our participating schools, districts and cities. Consequently, program sites emphasize the importance of maintaining an established partnership by continuing their efforts to engage and enhance GEAR UP with our participating schools/districts,

Sincerely,



Rochelle Hendricks
Secretary of Higher Education