



Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad

Annual Implementation Report

Evaluation of Year 4


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Now in its fourth year of program implementation, the Texas Gaining Early Access to Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): Beyond Grad program (referred to as “GEAR UP” in this report) made important progress during the 2021–22 school year to support college and career readiness for students from low-income schools in Texas.



GEAR UP provides targeted services to a grade-specific primary cohort of students who were in Grade 7 during the 2018–19 school year (i.e., the class of 2024) through their first year of postsecondary education (i.e., through the 2024–25 academic year). GEAR UP also provides basic services to a priority cohort of students consisting of all other students in Grade 9–12 attending participating high schools in the grantee districts during each year of the 7-year grant (i.e., from school years 2018–19 to 2024–25). The core strategies conceptualized in GEAR UP to close the college achievement gap include increasing academic rigor, preparing middle school students, expanding college and career advising and resources for high school students, leveraging technology to expand advising capacity, and developing local alliances (the full description of GEAR UP strategies is listed in Appendix A).

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is working with participating districts to make a range of programs and services aligned with these core strategies available to class of 2024 and priority cohort students, such as comprehensive individualized college and career counseling, college visits, and opportunities to participate in an academic enrichment or college exploration summer program. Parents/guardians of class of 2024 and priority cohort students also have access to individualized college and career counseling and a variety of parent workshops/events. In addition, teachers and personnel at GEAR UP campuses have access to professional development (PD) to improve academic rigor and college and career counseling services.



To implement the programs and services, TEA has partnered with several organizations. TEA has partnered with three non-profit organizations—CFES Brilliant Pathways, Advise TX, and College Advising Corps (CAC)—to implement college and career counseling/advising services





This report presents findings from the implementation study during the fourth year—school year 2021–22 (Year 4)—when the class of 2024 students were in Grade 10 and the priority cohort students were in Grade 9, Grade 11, and Grade 12. Findings were derived from data collected via stakeholder surveys, virtual site visits, and telephone interviews (see Appendix B for full methodological details). The report highlights how GEAR UP is being implemented, promising practices, how the program is being sustained and what activities should be sustained, and how program activities are being scaled across the state (see Appendix B for the list of evaluation questions used to guide the implementation study).



- x  Grade 9 priority cohort students who were enrolled in Algebra I generally Agreed that they were prepared for the course but reported lower levels of agreement that their Algebra I course was challenging when compared to students from previous years. Additionally, personnel from District 4 shared that student enrollment in dual credit courses increased in Year 4, which could be due to enrollment not being contingent upon meeting a certain Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) score.
- x  GEAR UP continued to provide targeted tutoring support to students with a failing grade to succeed academically in Year 4. Participation in tutoring services increased in Year 4, with students receiving tutoring



readiness activities impacting participation levels. Students reported increased



