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Year 7 Annual Implementation Report

Texas GEAR UP State Grant
Evaluation

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Submitted to:
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Highlights

Year 7 of the evaluation focused on evaluating the implementation of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) program when participating students were in their first year of postsecondary education. The Texas GEAR UP SG was designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education through state and local partnership grants.

Implementation

At the conclusion of Year 6, 91% of Grade 12 students completed high school, however only 4% met criterion on the SAT and/or ACT to be considered academically prepared for college. Beginning in Year 7, 46% of graduates enrolled in their first year of postsecondary education. College Preparation Advisors continued to provide support to graduates in Year 7 through one-on-one meetings, text messaging, email, and by phone. They advised graduates on topics such as the transition from high school to postsecondary education, financial aid, and course registration.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Support Center also provided support to the Texas GEAR UP SG districts and schools as they developed sustainability plans based on the implementation of the grant in previous years. Planning across districts varied but was most often led by district administrators and Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinators. On school campuses, student advising, college visits, and tutoring were all activities that continued to be implemented in Year 7 for follow-on cohorts and were incorporated into district sustainability plans. These activities were most often led or coordinated by school-based community alliances and school counselors.

Potential Promising Practices

f Offer students opportunities to participate in multiple college visits throughout education options. Opportunities for students to participate in college visits from middle school through high school will expose students to a broad range of postsecondary education options and allow them to explore options that best meet their needs. This will help to ensure that students in postsecondary education have enrolled in an institution that best fits their needs.

f Allow College Preparation Advisors to have flexible schedules so they are able to meet evolving needs of graduates. Year 7 of the Texas GEAR UP SG, flexible College Preparation Advisor schedules allowed students and College Preparation Advisors to meet at times and locations that were conducive to the needs of graduates.

f Establish immediate and consistent communication with graduates. Immediately establishing contact with graduates after graduation and maintaining consistent contact through in-person meetings, texts, phone calls, and/or emails helped College Preparation Advisors ensure all graduates in need of support in Year 7 knew how and when to reach out. The immediate establishment of contact and the continued consistent communication



Executive Summary

Overview

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded the Texas Education Agency (TEA) a \$33 million federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant in federal fiscal year 2012. The purpose of the federal GEAR UP program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education through state and local partnership grants. The GEAR UP program addresses the challenges faced by low-income students in attaining postsecondary success in an early and ongoing manner by providing services, activities, and resources to students from Grade 7 through the first year of college. GEAR UP is organized around three goals: (1) increasing postsecondary awareness and aspirations; (2) strengthening academic preparation and achievement; and (3) raising postsecondary participation. The cohort of students and parents from four participating districts are provided services through the Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG) from Grade 7 (the 2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (the 2018–19 school year). This report focuses on implementation in Year 7 of the Texas GEAR UP SG (the 2018–19 school year), while the cohort is in the first year of postsecondary education.

The Texas GEAR UP SG program includes nine project goals and 26 corresponding objectives, provided in Appendix A of the report. Goals pertain to topics related to student services, including advanced coursework, student support services, and summer programs. Other goals intend to increase data-driven instruction (through teacher professional development [PD]), community collaboration, and access to postsecondary information. Further, goals related to outcomes include on-time promotion, improved high school completion at a college-ready level, college attendance, and college retention. In addition to meeting goals at campuses selected to participate in the program, there are objectives to provide statewide information and professional learning for educators to promote college readiness across the state.

Participating schools and their districts are listed in Table ES.1; throughout this summary, schools are identified by letter (e.g., High School H, High School I) in order to protect confidentiality.¹ P



Entry System (GUIDES), student surveys, and qualitative interview and focus group data. Year 7 implementation data was submitted in GUIDES in line with the original federal annual performance report (APR) reporting requirements, covering the period between March 1, 201



Texas GEAR UP SG cohort who graduated high school in spring 2018 (the cohort is referred to as graduates in Year 7) as well as the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools as they developed sustainability plans.⁵

Grade 12 students completed high school with mixed levels of readiness. At the conclusion of Year 6, 91% of Grade 12 students completed high school, one percentage point higher than the state average the year prior. Upon completion, less than one-fifth (19%) had earned college credits by graduation. Additionally, 83% participated in the SAT and/or ACT by the end of Grade 12, however only 4% met criterion to be considered academically prepared for college, compared to almost one-quarter (22%) of Texas graduating examinees from the 2016 ± 17 school year.⁶ After high school, National Student Clearinghouse data showed that almost half (46%) of graduates were enrolled in their first year of postsecondary education. For comparison, the Texas statewide average for college enrollment was 54.7% for graduates from the class of 2016 (TEA, 2019).

College Preparation Advisors continued to provide advising and counseling services to graduates in Year 7. Nearly two-





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