

Seeing is Believing.

Our GEAR UP students are graduating from high school and preparing to make the transition to college and to face the challenges of their freshman year. They have learned about financial aid, mastered the complexities of the FAFSA, prepped for the SAT and ACT, and taken subjects that are prerequisites for college-level work. Perhaps equally as important, most of them have had opportunities to visit college campuses and observe college life firsthand.

As one NYGEAR UP advisor and mentor says about these college visits: "It was very important for students to have a glimpse into the daily life of a college student. . . they become very excited and more motivated to apply after a trip." A New York City GEAR UP student, after a tour of local colleges, remarked: "I never knew there were such beautiful campuses in Manhattan," while another said about a university near his home: "I was amazed that such an open, beautiful campus could exist in the Bronx, not too far from where I live." An upstate NYGEAR UP student observed: "GEAR UP has given me the opportunity to visit colleges that I would not have otherwise had a chance to do on my own. While on these college visits I have been able to think about my future for college and how to make the right choices." A GEAR UP student from a small town says: "If GEAR UP had never come to my school, I would not have had the opportunity to visit the college of my dreams. . . Going to see different colleges was a great way for me to really get enthusiastic about life after high school." Another upstate New York GEAR UP student, recently accepted by the institution of his choice, believes that "if I had not seen and loved this university, I would never have had nearly enough motivation to try and push myself in school and take the harder courses."

Being on a college campus, in addition to allowing students to talk with admissions personnel and learn about course requirements, gives them an opportunity to envision themselves at college, to see and feel that higher education is an attainable goal — that it is a reality for students like them. For these students, seeing was believing, and an important part of motivating them to achieve the goals they envisioned for themselves.

— Susan Nesbitt Perez
Vice President, Outreach Programs and Financial Aid
Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities



Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a federal grant program that awards grants to states or to local partnerships consisting of at least one college or university, at least one low-income middle school and one high school, and a minimum of two other partners (such as community organizations or businesses). Each GEAR UP partnership provides services to a cohort of students at high-need schools, beginning no later than grade 7, and follows these students through high school. Services may include: academic preparation; tutoring and mentoring; admissions and financial aid awareness activities for students and parents; college visits; career awareness; and professional development for staff.

In 2005, New York State received its second federal GEAR UP grant, called "NYGEAR UP II." This new grant followed on the heels of the 1999-2005 GEAR UP grant, and is again administered by NYSHESC. After a competitive process, NYSHESC awarded its NYGEAR UP funds to 11 community partnerships. In September 2005, these partnerships began providing services to a cohort of 7,285 students. These students were in grade 12 in academic year 2010-11.

The federal government also awarded six-year grants directly to five community partnerships in 2005. These "Federal GEAR UP" partnerships began providing services to more than 5,000 students in grades 6 or 7. In 2006, three additional partnerships received six-year federal GEAR UP grants to serve an additional 5,192 students in grades 6 or 7. Most recently, in the 2008 competition, three partnerships in the state were awarded new six-year grants. See pages 31-32 for a list of GEAR UP programs and contacts in New York State.

A group of key partners in the state's NYGEAR UP program provides additional services to GEAR UP in New York State. These "State Partners" include: the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (clcu), the Association of Proprietary Colleges (APC), City University of New York (CUNY), State University of New York (SUNY), the College Board, and the New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association (NYSFAAA).

In Gear II NY Alert newsletter is published by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (clcu), a partner in NYGEAR UP, New York State's GEAR UP program. The editors have made every effort to ensure accuracy; errors or omissions are unintentional.

Inside: Learn about the inspiring activities at each of the GEAR UP programs in New York (listed by grant lead organization):

* NYGEAR UP grantees. ^ Federal GEAR UP grantees.

Note: Some organizations received more than one grant, signaled by the type/number of symbols after their name.

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cIcu's 2010 Latino College Fair

Latino representation in institutions of higher learning is growing, but Hispanic students in New York State still face many challenges in acquiring a college education.

To offer useful information and guidance to young Latino students and their families about how to prepare for college, get financial aid, and navigate the application process, the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (cIcu) organized and held its third annual Latino College Fair on November 20, 2010.

Fordham University hosted the event at its Rose Hill campus. The event was supported by a federal College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) and a federal NYGEAR UP grant, both awarded to cIcu by the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), the state agency designated to administer CACG and NYGEAR UP. The remaining funds were provided by Fordham University and cIcu's member colleges and universities. The New York State Bronx Assembly Delegation also provided support.

The first cIcu Latino College Fair, held at the College of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale, New York on October 25, 2008, drew nearly 400 students and their families; representatives from 29 of New York's independent colleges and universities participated. At the second Latino College Fair, held on November 21, 2009, at Fordham University's Rose Hill campus, 58 independent colleges and universities were represented and nearly 900 attended. The third Fair drew more than 700 students and their families, including students from NYGEAR UP sites at City School District of Albany, CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership, Long Island University/Brooklyn, New Rochelle City School District, St. John's University, Syracuse University, and Yonkers Public Schools. 61 independent college and university campuses were represented at the 2010 Fair.

The program began with a welcome from Peter Farrell, Dean of Undergraduate Admission, and remarks from Lesley Massiah,

Assistant Vice President for Government Relations and Urban Affairs, both from Fordham. Laura L. Anglin, President of cIcu, and New York State Assemblyman Peter Rivera both spoke about the value of a college education and praised the attendees for their commitment to their futures. A workshop on "Saving, Planning and Paying for College" was offered. Families also had the opportunity to meet individually with financial aid experts to answer their questions. Experts included representatives from: The College of New Rochelle, Fordham University, Mercy College, New York Institute of Technology, Sarah Lawrence College, St. John's University, St. Joseph's College, University of Rochester, and Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology.

Representatives from 61 independent college and university campuses (see list at right) highlighted the features of their institutions and explained the college admissions process.

Feedback from students, families, and counselors who attended the Fair reveals that events of this kind are important to help Latino families navigate college options and learn about admissions and the availability of financial aid to meet college costs. cIcu will continue to reach out to and plan future events for Latino students.



Students and families arrive at Fordham University's Rose Hill campus for the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities' Latino College Fair on November 20, 2010.

2010 Latino College Fair Families meet with 61 Independent College and University Campuses

Adelphi University
Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
Albany Law School
Bard College
Barnard College
Boricua College
Bramson ORT College
Canisius College
Clarkson University
Colgate University
College of Mount Saint Vincent
The College of New Rochelle
The College of Saint Rose
Columbia University
Cornell University
Dominican College
Dorothea Hopfer School of Nursing
Dowling College
Fordham University/ Lincoln Center and Rose Hill Campuses
Hartwick College
Helene Fuld College of Nursing
Hofstra University
Institute of Design and Construction
Iona College
Ithaca College
Keuka College
Le Moyne College
Long Island University/Brooklyn and C.W. Post Campuses
Manhattan College
Marist College
Marymount Manhattan College
Mercy College
Molloy College
Mount Saint Mary College
Nazareth College
The New School
New York Institute of Technology
New York University
Niagara University
Nyack College
Pace University
Polytechnic Institute of NYU
Rochester Institute of Technology
The Sage Colleges
Sarah Lawrence College
Siena College
Skidmore College
St. Bonaventure University
St. John Fisher College
St. John's University
St. Joseph's College
St. Lawrence University
St. Thomas Aquinas College
Syracuse University
Union College
University of Rochester
Utica College
Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology
Wells College

GEAR UP in New York State

Program and Activity Highlights — Focus on GEAR UP Student Stories

Bronx Institute (BI) GEAR UP Network at CUNY Lehman College

► Bronx Institute GEAR UP Network Stories

GEAR UP Network students have worked hard in their senior year to engage in the college application process and understand which colleges might be a good match. GEAR UP Project Associates assisted them with the Common Application, the FAFSA financial aid form, the personal essay, creating a résumé and helped them find internships, community service opportunities, and academic enrichment coursework. Submitted by Iwan Notowidigdo, Director of Sustainability, Bronx Institute at CUNY Lehman College GEAR UP.

Featured Student: Krystal Thomas, 12th grade GEAR UP, Fordham HS for the Arts HS 437

Often schools either bombard juniors and seniors with college preparation to the point of overkill or they simply don't provide enough support. GEAR UP, however, provides the perfect amount of college prep whether it be résumé help, finding extracurricular programs, enhancing writing skills, conducting mock interviews, or hosting informational workshops for students and parents. Through GEAR UP, participants have a desire to attend college and are aware of what it takes to get there. There are various programs that our GEAR UP Project Associates encourage us to participate in, which will guarantee our success in college and our future. I have been able to be better organized because of my GEAR UP planner that I use to keep up with exams, important deadlines and with GEAR UP events. Being captain of the Step Team at Fordham High School for the Arts has helped in strengthening my leadership skills. I am currently in an internship, which GEAR UP helped me prepare for. With help from my Project Associate, I developed a solid résumé highlighting my achievements academically as well as socially. Thank you, GEAR UP, for helping me through this process.

Featured Student: Chantel Jones, 12th grade GEAR UP, Fordham HS for the Arts HS 437

Being an active student participating in the GEAR UP program has been very beneficial for me. Not only do I have a better understanding of what my high school academics should be, I also see how important it is to be aware of the admission processes at colleges and universities now rather than later. I enjoy the one-on-one sessions with my Project Associate; she has given me very valuable information about college, essay writing, and résumé writing. I have joined the school's Step Team and am also participating in church groups, which have helped

me increase my participation in extracurricular activities in and out of school. This year, my Project Associate has stressed how important it is to have these and how this will help build a great college profile. Thanks to GEAR UP, I have already made a college list with majors and careers that I am interested in studying. With the help of GEAR UP, I have been able to have a great, stress-free senior year.

The GEAR UP Network also sponsored a series of college trips that gave students an opportunity to tour large urban institutions, small colleges located in "college towns," and schools with varying entrance requirements. These trips gave our students the ability to see themselves in a variety of college settings.

Featured Student: Daquan Mervin, 12th grade GEAR UP, Celia Cruz Bronx HS of Music HS 442

I really enjoyed my college access class. Throughout the year we have been learning about the college process and I learned what I need to do in order to get into college. The best part for me has been learning about how to research colleges and find the right fit. Before, I wasn't sure where to start, but now I know the major I am going to study – computer engineering. I have found schools in New York, New Jersey and Florida that both offer my major and are a good fit for me. Without this class I don't think I would be prepared to go to college because it's better to get the information from a person who knows first-hand than from the Internet.

To support students' ability to meet the challenge of college coursework, students across the GEAR UP Network have participated in a variety of College Now (CUNY's dual enrollment program) and Advanced Placement classes. Participation in college level courses has allowed students to understand the work that will be expected of them by college professors, and also gave them a head start on accumulating college credits. In addition, students participated in a series of SAT and ACT preparation classes to help them do their best on these exams.

Featured Student: Arlyn Martinez, 12th grade GEAR UP, DeWitt Clinton HS 440

In the Einstein program at DeWitt Clinton, it is a requirement to take College Now and AP courses. While AP courses remain challenging, managing the workload and reviewing homework daily is essential. AP courses help students prepare for college by assigning a seemingly heavier workload than regular high school courses and providing more in-depth discussions that require students to answer questions with a higher level of thinking. The benefit of College Now is the fact that as high school students, we are offered credit-bearing courses taught by actual professors on the Lehman College campus. In addition to College Now, after school, and AP classes during the day, students in the Einstein and Macy program must attend a series of Saturday Reach sessions associated with their AP courses to assist them in passing the AP exams.

► 12th Grade GEAR UP Activities

- **The Physics of Complex Devices**
November 8, 2010 – June 30, 2011, 50 sessions

25 12th grade students at MS/HS 241 Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science were introduced to applications of electromagnetic theory to practical, real-world devices. Students also learned how to use electronic research equipment and worked on math and science skills while mastering such concepts as voltage, current, and resistance.

- **Real World Design Challenge**
December 10, 2010 – January 29, 2011, 18 sessions

7 12th grade students from MS/HS 505 Bronx School for Law, Government, and Justice learned how to use advanced CAD software to design a fixed wing aircraft for submission to the Real World Design Challenge, an annual high school competition that encourages interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

- **Deepening Engagement: Advanced Literary Skills**
December 14, 2010 – April 12, 2011, 32 sessions

25 12th grade students at MS/HS 241 Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science participated in this course, designed to increase their knowledge of literature across genres while also improving their ability to use language.

- **Advanced Writing**
February 9 – March 31, 2011, 20 sessions

21 12th grade students at DeWitt Clinton HS learned to recognize and master fundamental and advanced writing skills in a class with teacher Chris Gonzalez.

- **The Gilded Age**
February 17, 2011

20 12th grade students at HS 525 Bronx Leadership Academy participated in a presentation by David Weissberg for the New York Historical Society in which they explored artifacts and primary sources to learn more about the late 19th century, an age of great wealth and extravagance but also long hours and low wages for working people.

*Bronx Institute
continued on page 4.*

Bronx Institute
continued from page 3.

► South Bronx GEAR UP Stories

Through academic advising, mentoring, after school enrichment programs, educational field trips, leadership conferences, and college and career workshops, GEAR UP prepares students to succeed in high school and college. A successful 10th grade year brings students a step closer to their educational and career goals.

Featured Student: Angel Butron, 10th grade GEAR UP, Collegiate Institute for Math and Science HS 288

GEAR UP has been a very useful program that has inspired me to stay focused on school. It has given me the motivation to continue working towards becoming a better student and a better person. GEAR UP has helped me overcome the odds I faced inside and outside the classroom. With all the support the program gives us, such as extra help in almost every subject, students can expect to do well in school. One reason I've been so successful this year is that I've taken advantage of the opportunities GEAR UP offers. Thanks to GEAR UP I've become more self-motivated, improved my work habits and maintained a high grade point average. The knowledge that college is very important to succeed in life is a fact 10th graders need to understand. My Project Associate took us to a CHCI (Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute) student conference about leadership at Fordham University, and by the end I realized that if I keep working hard, I could be one of the students who receives grants and scholarships to go to college.

Featured Student: Geneva Nelson, 10th grade GEAR UP, Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology HS 295

My GEAR UP Project Associate has mentored me in so many different areas. She helped me to learn about colleges and has given me advice about planning my academic courses (what to take and when), improving my grades and looking for summer jobs and internships. She just recently helped me with my school transcript. We looked at my transcript together, and learned that I was missing some credits that I had earned in my previous school. She helped me fix this problem. If it weren't for my Project Associate taking the time out to teach me how to read a transcript, I would not have realized I was missing credits probably until my senior year of high school when it was time for me to apply to college and graduate from high school. When my Project Associate told me I was selected to receive a free laptop because of all the work I'd been doing to take my academics seriously, I thought it was very cool. The laptop has been a great tool for me. I love it. I have been using it to research colleges online and to do my class assignments. I would advise everyone to participate in GEAR UP.



St. John's University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students prepare to board their bus on November 13, 2010, during a tour of 6 colleges and universities in upstate New York.

► 10th Grade GEAR UP Activities

• Youth Leadership Think Tank

November 29, 2010 – June 9, 2011

25 10th grade South Bronx GEAR UP students participated in workshops designed to improve their social awareness, critical thinking, and presentation skills. They also worked on developing possible solutions to issues affecting their communities.

• Know Where You Are: A Tale of Two Transcripts

December 9, 2010

9 10th grade students from Bronx International HS 403 learned how to read a transcript and analyze their standing in high school by comparing two sample transcripts.

• Careers in Law

February 7, 2011

13 10th grade students from Harry S Truman HS 455 participated in a panel discussion with lawyers from Chadbourne & Parke LLP where they learned about becoming a lawyer and the professional opportunities a law firm offers.

• A Visit to Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory

April 1, 2011

40 10th grade Pablo Neruda Academy HS 305 students visited Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory on Long Island, a prominent institution that conducts research in genetics and molecular biology, and participated in a genetics lab.

• The Price of Procrastination

April 5, 2011

During a one-hour workshop, 16 10th grade students from Bronx Leadership Academy HS 525 discussed procrastination, how it affects their personal and academic lives, its negative effects, and ways to deal with this problem.

► Bronx GEAR UP Stories

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's Ready to Lead program seeks to motivate, educate and empower Latino high school students to graduate from high school, prepare for college admission, and serve and lead in their communities. On December 11, 2010, students from Bronx GEAR UP were invited to participate in a full day of presentations and workshops focused on preparing for college.

Featured Student: Richell Matias, 9th grade GEAR UP, Harry S Truman HS 455

I attended the Ready to Lead conference at CUNY Lehman College. The conference was run by GEAR UP and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. During the course of the day, the main topic was the importance of going to college. While at the conference, I learned all about applying, paying for and surviving my college years. I had heard about college before many different times, but this time it felt more personal. I was happy I decided to go to the conference because it felt good for me to hear from successful Hispanic people sharing their stories about what it took for them to achieve their goals. It made me believe that if they could be successful there is no reason that I could not be as well. I definitely left the conference feeling more determined to set higher goals for myself.

Featured Student: Solany Osorio, 9th grade GEAR UP, New World HS 513

I attended the Ready to Lead Conference and found it to be very informative. There were a lot of students from all over the Bronx, which I thought was great! There were workshops all day that discussed all different areas of attending college. I really enjoyed the workshop about financial aid because I knew little about this subject. I plan on going to college; however, I know it can be expensive so it was great for me to learn about the different ways I can pay for it. They also discussed the importance of studying and working hard. I know that if I do study and work hard I will have more opportunities in life. I found the conference to be very inspiring and motivating!

Featured Student: Kathya Marte, 9th grade GEAR UP, Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice HS 505

The Ready to Lead Conference was one of the most interesting and helpful events I have attended about college. One thing it taught me is the importance of going to college. I have always known about the importance of education, but this conference made me realize that going to college and doing well in school would allow me to have a more rewarding life. In one session, they showed us a graph of the amount of money a person makes based on their degree. I was shocked. It made me think about my mom, who did not have the opportunity to go to college, and it made me think about all the opportunities I would have as a college graduate. Later, when we had the opportunity to talk to successful Hispanic college graduates, I was even more inspired to go to college. Talking to other people who are Hispanic and have successful lives made me believe that I could do it too. It also made me want to talk to other college graduates, because one useful way to find out how to do something is to listen to other people's experiences.

To foster their academic and personal growth, students lived on college campuses and took part in challenging programs that included studying such subjects as genetics and psychology. As part of the summer's local educational activities, students took tours of Fordham University, The New School, and CUNY Lehman College to learn about the rich and varied higher education opportunities available in New York City.

Featured Student: Sharlene Richemond, 9th grade GEAR UP, Harry S Truman HS 455

Over the summer GEAR UP gave me the opportunity to go to Brown University for two weeks to take part in a summer science program called SPARK. In the class we learned to use real scientific equipment used in hospitals and did several experiments manipulating DNA. We extracted our own DNA from cheek cells and analyzed it using electrophoresis and polymerase chain reaction (PCR). We went on several trips to a hospital where we learned how the materials we worked with at Brown's laboratory are used every day for disease research. We also had scientists come to our class and teach us about the human brain bringing with them a donated human brain that was preserved for medical students to study. The classes were interesting and challenging. They exposed me to a new way of learning about things I would most likely not experience in high school.

One thing I feared about going away to college was living with a roommate I'd never met before and being on my own in a new environment out of state. My roommate was from a different state and, much to my shock, we had a lot to talk about, not just our differences but the hobbies we share. This experience made me more open to new experiences academically and personally. I still talk to all my friends from Brown and am planning to make Brown University a college choice.

Featured Student: Tahsin Akanda, 9th grade GEAR UP, Townsend Harris HS 525

This past summer I took a genetics course at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania that was made possible by Bronx GEAR UP helping me apply to the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) program. The staff and other students at CTY were welcoming and I quickly felt at home in the open atmosphere of the college. At first I was overwhelmed by the academic demands of the course, but there was so much to learn that I soon became motivated to work hard by the new and exciting challenges. Learning to extract DNA from protein cells and insert it into the wells made in the agarose gel was one of the many goals which I set out for myself to accomplish and I did it! The course has broadened my outlook on my education and approach to my studies. I no longer base my actions and decisions upon the opinions of others, but more on my abilities and interests.

Meeting other kids who value learning as I do encourages me to improve my vocabulary and express myself clearly. I no longer consider studying and research projects 'stupid' because my desire to learn about the world, beyond what I was given in school, has increased after learning about the many careers available to college graduates. I met students studying ethics, international politics, and psychology. Talking to my new friends made me realize that the possibilities for the future become endless. As I begin thinking about choosing the right college, I learned from my experience at Dickinson that I want advanced technology available on campus and for my college or university to be located in an urban area. Small class size is also important because students are able to ask questions and get to know their teachers. I now have something to base my future decisions on when researching colleges to apply to.

Featured Student: Maikerly Reyes, 9th grade GEAR UP, Fiorello H. LaGuardia HS of Music & Arts and Performing Arts 485

This summer I was accepted to the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) program and took psychology at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. I enjoyed the course so much that I'm considering becoming a psychologist in the future. The teacher made the class exciting by showing us videos and choosing interesting articles for us to read. What interested me the most was learning about multiple-personality disorder. I learned that this disorder can be caused by a trauma that an individual has experienced in the past. I also became interested in how the brain works and how we have "two brains," the right brain and the left brain. I enjoyed learning how each side of the brain serves a specific purpose. In addition, this program gave me the opportunity to live on a college campus as well as to meet and live with people from all over the world. Students came from Mexico, Spain, Puerto Rico, California, Arizona, Washington, Connecticut, and the list goes on. The staff at the college was amazing, and I especially developed a good relationship with the resident assistant in my dorm. I honestly had trouble saying goodbye to my new friends, and I hope to get a chance to experience CTY again this coming summer.

Featured Student: Anjali Bromfield, 9th grade GEAR UP, Bronx HS for the Visual Arts 418

In summer 2010, I attended the GEAR UP summer program. Through this program we were able to travel around the New York area and see different colleges and universities. The experience of touring colleges was really great. It was very helpful to learn about the different requirements that colleges have for applicants especially since I was going into my first year of high school. I learned about the different types of colleges that exist in New York and what types of offerings they had as well. Fordham University stuck out in my mind as a highlight of my experience because I was amazed that such an open, beautiful campus could exist in the Bronx, not too far from where I live. There were tons of open, green areas where students studied and enjoyed their surroundings. Fordham University was this perfect campus located in the Bronx that you would never expect would be there. I think that seeing this campus made me want to see other campuses.

Featured Student: Jevan Anderson, 9th grade GEAR UP, Collegiate Institute for Math and Science 288

Visiting The New School this past summer was a great experience. I always thought it was just one building, but I learned that it is actually five or more buildings on different streets. Each building has a different focus. I got to meet three different students who attend The New School. They discussed their experiences and their majors with us. They also gave us some informational packets with facts about the college and its programs.

Our summer program was held at Fordham University in the Bronx. We had classes there, but we also went on a full campus tour with Fordham students. I think Fordham University is pretty cool. My favorite building is the McGinley Student Center where the cafeteria and student activities programs are based. I also really liked the old-time style architecture of the buildings on campus. I learned a lot about the history of the school.

Featured Student: Jazmin Carror, 9th grade GEAR UP, DeWitt Clinton HS 440

The GEAR UP Summer Academy at Fordham University allowed me to visit colleges in New York City. I never knew there were such beautiful campuses like The New School, located in Manhattan. During our information session we learned about fields of study offered at the school, financial aid options and programs like the Higher Education Opportunity Program. The most fascinating part of the tour was learning about Parsons The New School for Design because I have always been interested in fashion, and now I can make my dreams come true in the comfort of my own city if I get accepted to a school such as this.

*Bronx Institute
continued on page 6.*

*Bronx Institute
continued from page 5.*

► 9th Grade GEAR UP Activities

• **Outward Bound Wilderness Trip** *September 27 – October 1, 2010*

70 9th grade students from Validus Preparatory Academy HS 263 enjoyed a 5-day trip to an Outward Bound challenge course, where they developed their leadership skills, practiced creative problem solving, and learned how to work as a team.

• **The Power of a Dream** *February 15, 2011*

10 9th grade students from Mott Hall HS 252 attended a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Power of a Dream," presented by the African-American Studies Department of CUNY Lehman College and the Urban Male Leadership Program. Dean Meminger, a Bronx native who has covered stories since 1997 for NY1 News, was the keynote speaker at this event.

• **Reading the World: Contemporary Culture and College Bound Literature** *March 3 – June 27, 2011, 26 sessions*

In this program that built on concepts taught in their ELA and Global History classes, 23 9th grade West Bronx Academy for the Future HS 243 students read fiction and nonfiction above their grade level; wrote, edited, and revised critical essays; expanded their vocabularies; and examined cultures in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

• **Junior Achievement: Economics for Success** *March 5 – 19, 2011, 3 sessions*

31 9th grade students from IN-Tech Academy MS/HS 368 explored different careers that matched their skills and interests; learned what was needed to succeed in various occupations and what education was necessary to obtain certain jobs. They also learned how to budget an income.

City School District of Albany (CSDA)

► **City School District of Albany NYGEAR UP Stories**

*Submitted by Alexandra Guerrero, Coordinator,
City School District of Albany NYGEAR UP.*

*Featured Student: Jenise Torres, 12th grade
NYGEAR UP, Albany HS*

Since I started Albany High I have been in the GEAR UP program. The program has taught me different things on how to prepare for college. It has also opened my eyes to different schools I could apply to that I never even thought of.

The best experiences through this program that I had were being able to meet new people and becoming friends with more people in my high school. Going on the trips helped me find what I have in common with people and what I don't have in common with people. It also gave me a chance to figure out what I really want to do while I'm in college and after.

"GEAR UP was a great way to motivate students and prepare them for college life."

*– Lawrence Moultrie, Social Studies teacher,
Albany HS, CSDA NYGEAR UP*

As far as my dreams for the future, I would like to go to college and become a RN in the hospital's NICU and work with babies that are sick. That has always been one of my dreams. Ever since I can remember I wanted to help save people or the world; whatever I have to do to help, I'm all for it and I believe this is a great way to start. Through GEAR UP I have found young people of color like myself who were still confused about the college search and who needed a little more help on getting the right information, and people being there encouraging them that they will make it to the college that they want to go to. I was in the same situation but GEAR UP helped me keep my head high and I love every moment of the time I spent with my friends, new-found friends and mentors who helped me through this process.

I plan on going to SUNY Canton and getting a bachelor's degree in nursing. In 10 years I plan on having my master's degree in nursing and a good job in a hospital working for things that I could never have or for things that people told me I would never be able to have. I encourage people who have not yet been able to get a chance to try this life-changing experience to try it.

"GEAR UP was a great opportunity for students to get exposure to colleges and universities that they typically would not have been exposed to."

*– Brenda Mahone, Principal, Albany HS South
House, CSDA NYGEAR UP*

*Featured Student: A'montay Giddings-Watson,
12th grade NYGEAR UP, Albany HS*

To me GEAR UP means discovering my own life decisions as well as myself. It has opened my eyes to my own abilities, dealing with my weaknesses as well as my strengths. Throughout my years of being involved in this program, I have enjoyed the activities and special opportunities given to me. With my family circumstances I would have problems being able to participate in college tours and other events, but thanks to GEAR UP I was able to travel and get involved with many things that were open to me. To me GEAR UP was like a family in which I was welcomed openly and able to grow a strong bond with the coordinator and the other students, making it a lifetime event that I will always remember.



CUNY CSI GEAR UP Curtis High School 11th grade student Amber Ellis examines a specimen during a science lab at CUNY College of Staten Island on November 17, 2010.

Of the moments within GEAR UP that were most meaningful was the ability to go to different programs that involve real life situations connected to choices that I may have taken or might have to take in the future. The most meaningful moments are the connections that I had with the other students and the bond that we were able to create through GEAR UP. Another moment is the idea of having a coordinator who is supportive of your decisions and helps guide you to the right situation, as well as tells you if you're making the wrong choices.

My dreams for the future are to become successful and live my life to the fullest. I want to become a writer where my work will be appreciated throughout the world. Whether it's through song lyrics or a book, as long as my audience can connect to my emotions and words then I would feel accomplished.

Throughout my involvement in GEAR UP, I have met people that I am close with and do different activities with them, as well as joining clubs. I've met a mentor/coordinator who has helped me decide what the best route is for me and helped me out in times of need.

The college I will be attending is Howard University, an HBCU (Historically Black College or University). I plan on studying English/creative writing, or psychology. In 10 years, I hope that I have a well-balanced job that correlates with my interests and am still studying towards my Ph.D.

“GEAR UP has helped me prepare for college and answered questions that I had about the college application process and going to college. GEAR UP means a lot to me, because without it I would not have had enough resources to get through this process.”

– Darian Henry, 12th grade CSDA NYGEAR UP student, Albany HS

► **City School District of Albany NYGEAR UP Activities**

• **Fall 2010 SAT and ACT Prep**
September – November 2010

12th grade Albany HS students received tutoring and prepared for the SAT and ACT exams.

• **NYGEAR UP Annual Kick-Off Dinner**
October 14, 2010

12th grade Albany HS NYGEAR UP students and their families, along with NYGEAR UP partners, faculty and staff, enjoyed dinner and a presentation by author and inspirational speaker Chappale Linn Burton.

• **cIcu College Quest Tour I to Dominican College, Mount Saint Mary College, and St. Thomas Aquinas College**
October 22, 2010

12th grade NYGEAR UP students, the NYGEAR UP coordinator, and staff from the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities visited the campuses of Dominican College, Mount Saint Mary College, and St. Thomas Aquinas College.

• **SUNY Cortland College Tour**
October 28, 2010

12th grade NYGEAR UP students, the NYGEAR UP coordinator, and Albany HS staff visited the campus of SUNY Cortland.

“GEAR UP has helped me narrow down my choices for college. When I was stuck and needed help with anything college-related, GEAR UP helped me.”

– Monique Price, 12th grade CSDA NYGEAR UP student, Albany HS

• **cIcu College Quest Tour II to Sage College of Albany, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**
November 3, 2010

12th grade NYGEAR UP students, the NYGEAR UP coordinator, and cIcu staff visited the campuses of Sage College of Albany and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy.

• **cIcu Latino College Fair**
November 20, 2010

12th grade Albany HS students and the NYGEAR UP coordinator attended the Latino College Fair at Fordham University's Rose Hill campus in the Bronx.

• **cIcu College Quest III to Long Island University/Brooklyn Campus, St. Joseph's College, and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**
December 3, 2010

12th grade Albany HS students, the NYGEAR UP coordinator, and cIcu staff visited the campuses of Long Island University/Brooklyn and St. Joseph's College. They also enjoyed a tour of the Schomburg Center in New York City.

“NYGEAR UP was a way for my class to understand what college was all about. Personally, it helped me narrow my college search and provided me with SAT fee waivers, SAT prep, and an understanding of the application and admissions process.”

– Raniah Richards, 12th grade CSDA NYGEAR UP student, Albany HS

• **Senior Financial Aid Night**
December 16, 2010

NYGEAR UP students and their families learned about and explored the financial aid process with NYGEAR UP staff and financial aid personnel from SUNY University at Albany.

• **Christmas Caroling at Teresian House**
December 20, 2010

For this community service event, Albany HS 12th grade students and the NYGEAR UP coordinator sang holiday songs for residents of the Teresian House, a nursing home in Albany, NY.

• **Study Skills Workshop**
January 13, 2011

Albany HS 12th grade students and the NYGEAR UP coordinator participated in a study skills workshop led by Kwasi Fenteng, GEAR UP Outreach Counselor for SUNY.

• **Presentation on SUNY Colleges and EOP**
January 21, 2011

Albany HS 12th grade NYGEAR UP students gained an overview of SUNY's various colleges and universities and learned about the Educational Opportunity Program from Kwasi Fenteng, GEAR UP Outreach Counselor for SUNY.

“I am pleased with the GEAR UP program and praise Ms. Guerrero for the continued support she offered my daughter.”

– Lisa Newsome, parent of an Albany HS NYGEAR UP 12th grade student

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*City School District of Albany
continued from page 7.*

College Exploration Seminar Series

February – April, 2011

12th grade Albany HS NYGEAR UP students explored the college application and selection process with personnel from SUNY University at Albany's Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP).

SUNY University at Albany Day at the New York State Capitol

February 7, 2011

12th grade Albany HS NYGEAR UP students learned about academic programs and campus life at SUNY University at Albany while gaining a historical perspective and observing day-to-day activities at the State Capitol.

clcu College Transition Seminars

March 4, 2011 – Information Before You Arrive

March 11, 2011 – Getting Ready for the Move

March 18, 2011 – Being A Successful Student

March 25, 2011 – Making a New Home

March 31, 2011 – Loving Your Money

12th grade Albany HS NYGEAR UP students and the NYGEAR UP coordinator participated in seminars led by Sabra-Joi Dingman, Assistant Director of Outreach Programs at clcu, on how to make a smooth transition from high school to college.

"I am grateful for the assistance received from GEAR UP. Ms. Guerrero was key in working with my daughter on attending college and choosing a career."

– Dionne Abbott, parent, CSDA NYGEAR UP

Career Development Workshops

March and April 2011

NYGEAR UP 12th grade students explored the connections between college and careers with SUNY University at Albany Career Services staff and also had assistance in completing college applications.

ITT Technical Institute Visit

March 18, 2011

NYGEAR UP 12th grade students visited the ITT Technical Institute's Albany campus and learned about the programs offered.



12th grade CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership NYGEAR UP students from the Academy of Urban Planning visit SUNY College at Old Westbury on November 15, 2010.

"The exposure at an early age to college life is the best motivator for our children to go further. The GEAR UP program was a great motivator."

– Randi Ford, administrative assistant, Albany HS South House, CSDA NYGEAR UP

NYGEAR UP Annual Conference

April 12, 2011

NYGEAR UP students, staff and partners attended the NYGEAR UP conference in Saratoga Springs, NY and participated in a number of workshops.

Southern Vermont College Tour

April 28, 2011

Albany HS 12th grade students, staff, and the NYGEAR UP coordinator visited the campus of Southern Vermont College.

Girls' Empowerment Conference

May 2, 2011

12th grade Albany HS students and the NYGEAR UP coordinator explored the subjects of healthy relationships, self-defense, sexual assault, and date rape.

"GEAR UP meant helping me visit colleges and get into college and learn new things in life."

– Ariona Hankins, 12th grade CSDA NYGEAR UP student, Albany HS

CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership (BCCP)

► **CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership NYGEAR UP Stories**

Submitted by Nate Klooster, Site Director, Bushwick Campus, CUNY Brooklyn College NYGEAR UP.

*Featured Student: **Daijanae Sherman**, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, Academy for Environmental Leadership*

The NYGEAR UP program is a widely known organization that is active in many of New York City's public high schools. Its primary goal is to help youth excel in school and become leaders. The NYGEAR UP program begins right after school and ends in the early evening; this way students can spend their free time in a safe and productive manner and help stop negative behavior.

The NYGEAR UP program is not only a place to do homework and socialize with fellow peers, it's a place where you learn to get involved with your community. We participate in specialized projects that help the children enrolled in the program learn about the past, present and future of the community. From drawing murals to interviewing people on the street, we bring people's attention to what's going on and urge them to make the community a better living environment for generations to come. These projects are led by the very best teachers that have completed both high school and college and earned a college degree. They are a role model for the students that they teach.

Besides fun projects and free time to relax after school, the NYGEAR UP program has a more serious side to it and that is helping youth prepare for life after school. NYGEAR UP helps its high school freshmen and sophomores by getting them excited about school and motivating them to get good grades and stay out of trouble. They help the juniors and seniors by pushing them to complete college applications and keeping them on track for graduation. With dedicated teachers whose passion is to keep students highly motivated about the future, this helps take a big burden off of a worried parent's mind and assures them that their child will be ready for life after high school.

I am currently an intern for the NYGEAR UP program and it is a privilege to know that I too can help keep my friends focused on school and on the road to success.

*Featured NYGEAR UP Advisor: **Meaghan Bates**, Teaching Artist and Program Coordinator, CUNY Brooklyn College*

As a teaching artist, I have used NYGEAR UP to take students on college trips. I've had wonderful experiences taking students to schools. Though many students are unsure what they will study, a college

trip shows them what makes college different and more fun than high school. I think it was very important for them to have a glimpse into the daily life of a college student, especially because many of them don't have relatives who have attended college and can share their experiences.

I generally see them become very excited and more motivated to apply for college after a trip. My students were so engaged on our trip to Pratt Institute that one told me: "Miss, you're changing my life." It has been so important that we've had the resources to make revelatory moments like this possible for our students.

Featured NYGEAR UP Advisor: Celia Perez, Program Coordinator, Bushwick Campus, CUNY Brooklyn College

Working with the NYGEAR UP program at Bushwick Campus has been a wonderful experience. Taking our students on college trips every month has opened their eyes to the bright future they will have by completing college. I have been working with our students for the last three years; they have grown up so much! Last year, in their junior year, most of the students started to become curious about what college would best suit them. Now, in their senior year, they are most interested in scholarships and financial aid. I've noticed most of our students were very worried about getting college paid for in the beginning of the school year; now they have the money part all figured out.

I've also enjoyed helping our students in editing their personal statements; they revealed so much about their personal lives. Some students wrote about their whole lives, while others only wrote two paragraphs. It was more challenging working with our students who didn't want to write their personal statements. As the

weeks flew by they finally figured out what to write about and created these amazing stories. These essays showed how determined they are about college and the passion for what they want to major in. Working with our students has encouraged me to continue my own education and pursue a master's degree.

► CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership NYGEAR UP Activities

• National GEAR UP Day Welcome Back Reception *September 30, 2010*

NYGEAR UP students and staff enjoyed a "welcome back" party and reception where they discussed plans for the year ahead.

• Interactive Tour of CUNY Brooklyn College *October 13, 2010*

12th grade students from the Academy for Environmental Leadership enjoyed a college tour that featured a scavenger hunt requiring them to obtain admissions information and take photos of themselves in various locations on campus. They also participated in a workshop on the college application process and received information on scholarships and financial aid.

• Tour of CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice *October 25, 2010*

22 12th grade Academy of Urban Planning students toured the campus of CUNY John Jay College, saw an admissions presentation, and ate lunch in the cafeteria.

• "I Will Graduate" Day *October 27, 2010*

Older high school students and students lacking required credits attended a pep rally in Manhattan where they were encouraged to stay in school and graduate.

• Community Service Day at East New York Farms *November 4, 2010*

NYGEAR UP students participated in a day of service at East New York Farms, a two-block urban farm where they shoveled compost, raked the garden, and did some weeding.

• Visit to SUNY College at Old Westbury *November 15, 2010*

30 12th grade NYGEAR UP students visited SUNY College at Old Westbury where they toured the campus, explored the dorms, received information about admissions, and learned about the EOP program. They also enjoyed a meal in the campus cafeteria.

• Visit to SUNY Stony Brook University *December 8, 2010*

12th grade Academy for Environmental Leadership and Bushwick HS for Social Justice toured SUNY Stony Brook University, visited the dorms, and learned about the EOP program and how to apply. They also enjoyed a presentation by EOP students on how to be successful in college and had a meal on campus.

CUNY Middle Grades Initiative (MGI) GEAR UP

► CUNY MGI GEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Sarah McConnell, Assistant Director, CUNY MGI GEAR UP, Erin Twomey, Program Coordinator, CUNY MGI GEAR UP, and Amani Gheith, Administrative Assistant, CUNY Office of Academic Affairs.

Featured Student: Carlos Guevara, 12th grade GEAR UP, Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School

What kind of life do you envision for yourself 10 years from now?

In 10 years I envision myself having a life of success, happiness, and wisdom. In a decade's time I hope to have traveled a lot and seen many different and amazing places in the world, and explore my art through these places. Additionally, I would like to have my art work in an art gallery or a museum by then. I want to be able to live off of my art and have



12th grade CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership NYGEAR UP students from Bushwick High School for Social Justice visit SUNY Stony Brook University on December 8, 2010, where they received information about the university.

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**CUNY Middle Grades Initiative
continued from page 9.**

it influence others. I want to share what I have in my mind with everyone and allow my art to be a discussion forum between the creator, me, and the viewer and participants, the audience. I would also like to have something above a BFA under my belt and continue to network with people and go on to bigger and better things.

I plan on going to either Parsons The New School for Design or the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. I plan to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts in visual arts, perhaps tying in painting, sculpture, performance art, and illustration. And as for career plans, I would be fine with anything so long as I get to live off of my art. I might also like to travel the world and teach art, show art to others and use my art to raise awareness for social issues.

*Featured Student: Stella Oyalabu, 11th grade
GEAR UP, Queens Gateway to Health Sciences
Secondary School*

When you think of college, what do you envision?

When I think of college, I envision a place not only designated to obtain a degree in a specific concentration but a place to develop long-lasting friendships and networks. From what I have heard from people who are currently in college, they say that college is not all just fun and games. There are many times that you must remind yourself of the reason why you are in college and buckle down and face your work.

I see college as a place where people get their first taste of independence. However, a person must be versatile and be able to manage both their academic and social life. I think a typical college day would be one where I have two to three classes that day and the rest of it would essentially be empty. But in those hours that are free, it would be spent either doing other work, participating in other school activities/clubs, or just relaxing. I look forward to being independent and experiencing college life myself. It is one thing for people to narrate their own experiences but to be able to see it for myself is what excites me. But I do not look forward to finals week in college because those are the weeks in which college students get the most stressed. People are all over the place trying to get things done. I believe with dedication, hard work and being able to prioritize, I will be able to succeed.

How large a part did your family and/or friends play in your preparation for college?

In my preparation for college my family will play a large role. My parents have already said when it comes time to start applying to colleges, we will sit down together and decide what will be best for me and for the family financially. My parents have been supportive in the way that they ask me what I am interested in when thinking of colleges. Also, when I went on a college trip over one of my breaks, they were really attentive in asking me for my feedback on all the colleges I went to see. Most of my research has been done on my own, but I have been given insight by my older sisters who are in college and by adults

in and out of school. They have told me places to apply to and what to search for in terms of scholarships. My family and friends feel excited about my going to college. To my parents it is another one of their young ones growing up and getting ready to embark on a new phase in her life and to my friends it is us becoming the young adults we envision ourselves to be.

*Featured Student: Jeremy Lovins, 11th grade
GEAR UP, MS/HS 368 Information Network and
Technology (IN-Tech) Academy*

CUNY MGI has made me a better person in a number of ways. It is responsible for helping me become a better leader especially now that I have a mentee who I can pass all my knowledge to, both academically and morally. I am very lucky and very fortunate to have been a part of this program; it is responsible for most of what I know about college and how to be successful in the future. It is because of the program that I am able to pass these tools that are necessary in life on to my mentee so that he can have the opportunity to accomplish what I have and much more. In many situations students are not exposed to opportunities like MGI in their schools. That goes to show how fortunate I truly am to be around this program and these people every day.

These are the kind of opportunities that I can teach my mentee to take advantage of because not only does it make you more prepared for what's after high school but it gives you certain qualities that could be of value to someone else. That itself is a prime example of what the MGI program is all about, the passing of opportunities and advice to make someone more successful. I can definitely say that my success is a reflection of the program because it shows the hard work that is put in for the students to be successful.

I alone do not put in work to better my relationship with my mentee or anyone else within the program. I can only take my mentee so far before he chooses what he wants to listen to and retain. That shows how much trust he has in me. I am becoming a better leader. I owe all my leadership skills to the MGI program and I hope that after I move on from high school it is still there to help mold individuals into better people like it has done for me and my mentee.

*Featured Student: Michael Vargas, 11th grade
GEAR UP, MS/HS 368 Information Network and
Technology (IN-Tech) Academy*

The CUNY MGI Young Male Leadership Program has done more than help me to become a better person; it has inspired me to strive for the goals I want to accomplish in my life. The program made me realize that my goals are reachable if enough hard work and dedication are put into it. Becoming a lawyer has been a dream of mine ever since I entered high school.

A major life changing experience was when Sebastien's mentor, Nigel Codrington, came into our meeting and talked to us about his life struggles and how he got to the position he is in today. He told us his life story, and we were all amazed at how someone that basically came from nothing was able to become one of the best lawyers in New York City. Growing up in Trinidad, Dr. Codrington grew up with nothing and wasn't dependent on anyone. At a young age he had to be able to get an education, take care of his siblings, and manage a job, all at the same time. This made me and my peers realize that if someone that came from one of the worst situations possible had accomplished his goals in life, then we, coming from easier circumstances, will be able to accomplish our dreams.



Long Island University NYGEAR UP 12th grade students tour SUNY College at Old Westbury during the winter of 2011.



Wyandanch Memorial High School teacher Alejandra Fonseca and Dowling College GEAR UP student Shaahquan Rogers attend the "College: It's a Slam Dunk" family workshop on January 15, 2011.

Before I heard Dr. Codrington speak, I never believed that my abilities were good enough to make it as a lawyer. However, after the speech he gave us, I realized that my abilities were more than good enough to reach my dreams. I am going to have to put in a lot of hard work and effort in order to accomplish my goals. If I am able to give it my all in high school and when I reach college, I am going to be able to accomplish my dreams. As soon as I reach my dreams, I am going to be able to say that all my hard work and sacrifices were worth it.

Without the MGI Young Male Leadership Program I would have never been able to experience this special presentation from Dr. Codrington. In my opinion, Sebastien and Andre have done more than mentor us, they have shown us the best possible way we can be successful in our life. This program should be available to everyone, and all schools should have a program like our Young Male Leadership group. If it was able to help me have trust in my abilities and to never give up on my dreams, then it is possible for anyone to realize their true potential.

► CUNY Middle Grades Initiative GEAR UP Activities

• Homework Challenge

November 8-19, 2010

10th and 11th grade South Bronx Preparatory students were challenged to increase the amount of homework they completed.

• College Now Information Session

December 3, 2010

10th and 11th grade students from East Bronx Academy for the Future learned about CUNY's College Now program.

• Leadership Conference

December 10, 2010

10th and 11th grade IN-Tech Academy male students were motivated to focus on academics and become leaders in their schools and communities.

• Career Fair

February 4, 2011

10th grade South Bronx Preparatory students offered presentations on a variety of careers to other students in their school.

• SAT Prep Saturday Academy

March 5, 12, 19, 26, 2011; April 2 and 9, 2011

48 students from East Bronx Academy, IN-Tech Academy, and South Bronx Preparatory prepared for the SAT exams.

"I improved a lot in math and learned useful skills in English during the Saturday SAT Academy."

– 10th grade CUNY MGI GEAR UP student, IN-Tech Academy

• Knowledge for College Day

May 18, 2011

10th and 11th grade South Bronx Preparatory students learned more about nearby colleges and universities and programs offered by these institutions.

Discovery Institute/ CUNY College of Staten Island (CSI)

► CUNY CSI GEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Sherina Peterkin, Senior Parent/Community Coordinator, Discovery Institute/CUNY CSI GEAR UP.

Featured Student: **Lance Dunn**, 6th grade GEAR UP, Dreyfus IS 49

The teachers who work with GEAR UP have inspired me to do great things. They help me work harder and stay focused. I have learned new things from the teachers and the trips to CUNY CSI. I keep getting better and better because of the program.

"I spent my last summer vacation at CUNY College of Staten Island. In a science lab, I learned how scientists use forensics to catch criminals and about fingerprints and handwriting. Just being around those college kids made me want to learn."

– Justin Peterkin, 6th grade CUNY CSI Discovery Institute GEAR UP student, Dreyfus IS 49

Featured Student: **Quval Ortega**, 8th grade GEAR UP, Dreyfus IS 49

The Teaching Scholars have been very helpful because they give us time to work. They are very smart and have nice personalities. I appreciate how they help us with their work.

Featured Student: **Sharena Tirado**, 8th grade GEAR UP, Dreyfus IS 49

Teaching Scholars have helped us in the classroom and assisted our teachers. I wish we had even more Scholars than we do now.

"I think that the Teaching Scholars have been a great help to me and to my class."

– Thomas Tran, 6th grade CUNY CSI Discovery Institute GEAR UP student, Dreyfus IS 49

CUNY CSI Discovery Institute
continued on page 12.

**CUNY CSI Discovery Institute
continued from page 11.**

**Featured Student: William Lopez, 8th grade
GEAR UP, Dreyfus IS 49**

Teaching Scholars help me whenever I need them to. I trust them because they have the necessary knowledge to do this job.

**Featured Student: Alyssa Marshall, 8th grade
GEAR UP, Dreyfus IS 49**

I believe that our GEAR UP Teaching Scholars are great. They help us to learn more and prepare us for what we will go through in college through their experiences.

**Featured Student: Jai Smith, 8th grade
GEAR UP, Dreyfus IS 49**

The Teaching Scholars have made a big change in my learning. Seeing them do so well in college makes me want to now attend.

**Featured Student: George Cain, 8th grade
GEAR UP, Dreyfus IS 49**

Teaching Scholars have helped me so much with math class in so many different ways. They work with all of us whenever we need help.

**Featured Parent: Gusielle Cowhig, mother of 7th
grade GEAR UP student Crystal Cowhig,
Dreyfus IS 49**

My daughter Crystal attends IS 49. I'm a parent who likes to be part of GEAR UP. It's an educational program that helps parents and students learn more about college. GEAR UP taught me many things. We had meetings about library cards, reading books, school grades, etc. The GEAR UP Coordinator makes parents feel like they're home when we all get together.

**"I think that ever since we
have had Teaching Scholars in
our school, students stay more
on task because of the help we
receive."**

– Jaielene Agrout, CUNY CSI Discovery Institute
8th grade GEAR UP student, Dreyfus IS 49

**Featured GEAR UP Teacher: Sandra Reier, 8th
grade science, Dreyfus IS 49**

GEAR UP has been a great asset to my classroom. Being a science teacher and using the inquiry-based approach, it often is difficult to be able to be with every group of students at the same time. Often, I have been able to use my Teaching Scholar to assist with lab activities. Usually I gear my lessons to the schedule of my Scholar so I know I will have a few extra pairs of hands on deck. This has allowed me to work more closely with my students, who have really benefited from the additional attention in the classroom. I have found that this year particularly has been a great step forward for my classroom, allowing



CUNY CSI GEAR UP Curtis High School 11th grade GEAR UP students Brent Ravelo and Tsai Ann Hill examine a specimen during a science lab at CUNY College of Staten Island on November 17, 2010.

students to work more efficiently in small groups, because of having the Scholar in the classroom.

Another interesting fact: many students have brought good lab skills to the classroom this year. Many of them attributed those skills to magnet boot camp. This allowed the class to have a better understanding of technique and to focus on the lab itself.

With a college student in the classroom, there is definitely a change in terms of college-going culture. Often the Scholar will explain what their major is to the class and how they got to select it; this is beneficial for the students, to see how education can really be molded to fit their interests. Going forward, I hope that I can continue to have Teaching Scholars in my classroom.

**"Teaching Scholars help me
understand different topics
whenever I need them to help
me with a problem."**

– Eduardo Rivera, CUNY CSI Discovery Institute
8th grade GEAR UP student, Dreyfus IS 49

**Featured GEAR UP Teacher: Betty Hargraves,
8th grade mathematics, Dreyfus IS 49**

I have been extremely fortunate to be involved with GEAR UP and the Discovery Institute for over 10 years. When I returned to school as an adult, I was given the opportunity to work at IS 49 as a Teaching Scholar. It was through this program that I realized that I wanted to teach middle school. As it turns out, I was offered a math position at IS 49 and have since been teaching for over 8 years.

During my time at IS 49, GEAR UP has continued to support me through my involvement with the curriculum writing program. The time I spend working with my fellow teachers gives me the opportunity to discuss lessons and teaching strategies. We share, critique, and make suggestions that are, ultimately, very helpful in the classroom.

I have also been an advocate of the Teaching Scholars program from the teacher's vantage point. I request and am assigned Teaching Scholars every year. My students benefit enormously from having the extra help in the classroom. I am able to assign a Teaching Scholar to specific students who may find the lesson too challenging or difficult to grasp. The Scholars sit with them and explain the process, allowing me to move forward with the rest of the class. The students are happy with the individual help. I also like to refer to the Scholar's college major, or various classes they take, in order to make a connection with some topics that I cover in class. The Scholars talk openly about their college experience, which helps students understand the importance of higher education. Most significant, though, is the bond that my Scholars have with my students.

**Featured GEAR UP Teacher: Heather Fareri, 6th
grade English Language Arts, Dreyfus IS 49**

I have been closely involved with the GEAR UP program in my school, IS 49, for quite some time. I have seen tremendous changes in my students' performances due to this program. My students look forward to each and every day a Scholar comes into my room. Many students memorize the Scholars' schedules! I have seen children light up and give a little bit of an extra effort when their favorite Scholar comes into the room, and the children are eager to work with each on an individual basis.

“The Teaching Scholars are so helpful because when the teacher is teaching and you don’t understand something, they assist us without interrupting the class.”

– Anthony Palin, CUNY CSI Discovery Institute 8th grade GEAR UP student, Dreyfus IS 49

Featured GEAR UP Advisor: Tom Hepworth, Parent Coordinator, Curtis HS

GEAR UP has provided our school with a well-crafted program that blends substantial tutoring support, a broad menu of college discovery activities, and superb curriculum development guidance for our staff. This formula has enabled our students to make significant measurable academic strides. More importantly, one can now sense the absolute confidence each student exudes that they will not only attend college but also be successful in their chosen field of study. My favorite time of day is the end of the day when our students, done with their work, sit in casual conversation with the college students who have just been tutoring them. It is very special for me to listen to our students — freshmen included — holding their own in discussions on politics, science and current events. That’s when I know for certain that GEAR UP is working!

► **Discovery Institute/CUNY College of Staten Island GEAR UP Activities**

• **GEAR UP Computer Boot Camp**

July 6 – 22, 2010

6th to 8th grade Dreyfus IS 49 students and 9th and 10th grade Curtis HS students attended this 3-week hands-on program in English, computer technology, mathematics, science, and laboratory experiments at the CUNY CSI campus and were provided with all necessary materials.

• **GEAR UP Day at Dreyfus IS 49**

October 12, 2010

Students at Dreyfus IS 49 celebrated National GEAR UP Day by focusing on how GEAR UP’s “Recipes for Success,” including such ingredients as hard work and perseverance, would enable them to succeed. Their recipes, written on soup can shapes, are on display in the school’s main hallway. Students spoke to GEAR UP staff about how GEAR UP’s Teaching Scholars encourage them to achieve academically. To strengthen school spirit and beautify the school’s grounds, students also planted mums around the flag pole and near the outdoor bulletin board, and will care for the plants as part of building a solid school community.

• **A Salute to Berta A. Dreyfus**

October 18, 2010

Dreyfus IS 49 celebrated their school’s namesake, Berta A. Dreyfus, by planting 1,000 daffodil bulbs in Hero Park, donated to New York City by Berta and Louis Dreyfus in 1920 to honor the 144 soldiers from Staten Island who died in World War I. Students expressed their gratitude for the generosity of Berta Dreyfus and the sacrifice of the soldiers.

• **Real Talk**

November 17, 2010

11th grade Curtis HS students engaged in a Q&A session with a CUNY CSI representative from the Office of Student Life about the realities of college and also toured the campus. During a science lab, the students observed, measured, and described external anatomies of a perch, a bullfrog, and a mudpuppy in order to compare their features and describe evolutionary relationships among the animals.

• **Earth Rhythms**

November 18, 2010

This program, presented by musician Roger Tincknell, celebrates and teaches environmental awareness and responsibility through songs and stories. An audience of 6th grade Dreyfus IS 49 students enjoyed and participated in a multicultural journey that combined humor, information, and a variety of musical styles.

“To me, each flower we planted in Hero Park represents a fallen hero.”

– Soledad Acevedo, CUNY CSI Discovery Institute GEAR UP student, Dreyfus IS 49

• **Science Workshop: Dry Ice**

November 18, 2010

Dreyfus IS 49 GEAR UP students, guided by Science Mentor Peter Lytell and GEAR UP Special Events Coordinator Robert Shimony, engaged in hands-on experiments with dry ice at the Salvation Army Academic Intervention Center (AIC), an after-school site. Students learned about the differences between dry ice and water-based ice and were interviewed for the cable channel NY1 which highlighted the event.

• **Workshop: Parents and Students Learning Together**

December 6, 7 and 8, 2010

CUNY CSI GEAR UP students and parents spent 3 afternoons making holiday ornaments and playing educational games during workshops that gave busy parents time to reconnect with their children. The events took place at the GEAR UP after-school sites (Salvation Army AIC, Kids Café at Stapleton UAME Church, and United Multi-Cultural Center at the Liberian Cultural Center).

• **Workshop: Introduction to ARIS Parent Link**

December 10, 2010

ARIS is the New York City Department of Education’s Achievement Reporting and Innovation System. At this workshop, parents and guardians of Dreyfus IS 49 students received a temporary password and learned how to use the Parent Link Web site which provides information about attendance, progress in school, and how to help children succeed academically.



St. John’s University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students visit the new Carmelo K. Anthony Basketball Center at Syracuse University on November 12, 2010.



Dowling College GEAR UP student Tynesha Jones, 12th grade, Wyandanch Memorial High School.

Dowling College

► Dowling College GEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Frank Pomata, Assistant Director of Dowling College GEAR UP.

Featured Student: Somalia Sexton, 12th grade GEAR UP, Wyandanch Memorial HS

GEAR UP has been a big part of my middle school and high school experience. They have helped me in so many ways and gave me many opportunities that I never thought I would have. If GEAR UP was not here for me and my classmates, I would not have any experience regarding college information and what I need to know. With their help, I decided to go to college and study nursing. I'm still undecided on a minor, but I know they will help me. I see myself as being a pediatric nurse in the future, thanks to GEAR UP.

Featured Student: Tynesha Jones, 12th grade GEAR UP, Wyandanch Memorial HS

Looking back on all four years of my high school career, I find myself asking, "How did I get here?" and "Who helped me get here?" The GEAR UP program is the answer to those questions.

I am grateful to the GEAR UP program for many reasons. First is the fact that I was accepted with open arms even though I came from a different town. Coming from Deer Park, I had no experience at all about the whole college process. I only knew that I wanted to go. GEAR UP opened my eyes to all the possible schools that I could attend. My family and I have sat in workshops about financial aid which opened our eyes and taught us that financial standards should not be the reason for not pursuing my education.

GEAR UP took us on trips to colleges so that we could experience college first-hand. We have been to: St. John's University, Touro Law, Long Island University/C.W. Post, Dowling College, and many more. Not only did they share with us the many college opportunities available, they rewarded us when we maintained academic standards. I thank GEAR UP for being such an inspiration in my life. I am now on the right track and have chosen Long Island University/C.W. Post as my destination. I thank all the people in the GEAR UP program who have made this possible for me.

Featured GEAR UP Advisor: Dexter Ward, Guidance Counselor/GEAR UP Advisor, Wyandanch Memorial HS

My student caseload consists of the senior class (GEAR UP students) and one-half of the sophomore class. Over the years, since the partnership began in 2005, I have seen the tremendous impact that GEAR UP has made in the Wyandanch UFSD. The most important impact that GEAR UP has made is the dedication and commitment of the GEAR UP staff, Dr. Rhoda Miller, Director, and Frank Pomata, Assistant Director. They have demonstrated a belief in their program and a belief in our students. That belief has trickled down upon the students and now they have that same belief in themselves.

What Dr. Miller and Mr. Pomata are doing is making a difference in the lives of students. It is not unusual to see them in the high school during the evenings and on weekends providing programs for families and students or supporting our existing programs. They have developed a close personal bond with the students. Some of the students even refer to Mr. Pomata as "Uncle Frank." I can trust that the dedicated staff's top priority will always be what is best for the students. GEAR UP is not just interested in the academic development of our students, but they are also looking to develop the whole student. This is evident in the types of cultural and educational opportunities they provided. One such experience was horseback riding. What are the chances that a suburban/urban student will have the opportunity to visit an actual farm, learn about the animals, and go horseback riding? Some may see this as just a fun trip to go horseback riding; however, this was an opportunity for our students to learn about fields or interests that they may not have ever thought of. This experience also helps to even the playing field when they do go off to college, meeting many people from many different backgrounds. They too can speak about horseback riding.

As a guidance counselor, there are many times when you feel that your hands are tied when you want to implement new programs or events for your students and families. What I valued the most was the opportunity to work with the GEAR UP staff as we learned, shared, and implemented great programs. I had the unusual pleasure of working with and following the same cohort of students since they were in middle school. Therefore, I have been working with the GEAR UP staff for many years. As a result, this has allowed for continual growth. We now know what works and what does not work. We have learned so much from each other as well as from the annual conferences I had the opportunity to attend.

The GEAR UP staff has implemented many new and innovative programs in the district that can be sustainable. Many of these programs were initiated as a direct result of information gained from the annual GEAR UP conference. For example, this year's family workshop was one of the most successful that I have seen in some years in Wyandanch. The idea was to have the conference right before a major athletic event. We choose to have the event the morning of our annual basketball tournament and we named the family conference "College Is A Slam Dunk." In addition, GEAR UP had the support of the basketball team, who provided a donation of tickets for those who attended the workshops prior to the game. Needless to say, we had a "packed house." Only GEAR UP could solicit that type of response for family workshops that early on a Saturday morning. The GEAR UP families believe in the mission and purpose of the program.

GEAR UP has definitely helped to create a college-going culture in the district. With their assistance, we have more students taking the PSAT, the SAT, and receiving Regents exam assistance. We have students getting exposure to their future career goals now.



Dowling College GEAR UP students from Wyandanch Memorial High School attend the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities' (Clcu) Latino College Fair at Fordham University on November 20, 2010.

Lastly, we have students attending college while still in high school and gaining college credit. The only downside of this program is that it will be ending soon. GEAR UP will be missed, professionally as well as personally. I can honestly say that it has been a tremendous pleasure working with GEAR UP.

► Dowling College GEAR UP Activities

• Summer Chemistry Classes at Dowling College

July 2010

In summer 2010, 8 GEAR UP students from Wyandanch Memorial HS — Ayasia Alfred, Dawn Littles, Jonathan Montenegro, Jabari Nicholls, Rashidi Nicholls, Brandon Robinson, Paradise Taylor, and Brittany White — had an opportunity to conduct hands-on chemistry research projects under the guidance of Dr. Lori Zaikowski, Professor of Chemistry at Dowling College. Each of the students earned seven college credits and gained exposure to a college campus and the expectations of college professors.

• 2010 Latino College Fair

November 20, 2010

GEAR UP students David Bajana, Elianny Carrasco, Sonia Lainez, Keith Stewart, and Samantha Wheeler of Wyandanch Memorial HS attended the clcu Latino College Fair at the Rose Hill campus of Fordham University where they learned about the college admissions process from financial aid and admissions personnel. They also had an opportunity to find out more about the 60+ independent colleges and universities represented at the Fair.

• “College: It’s a Slam Dunk” Family Workshop

January 15, 2011

This workshop focused on helping 12th grade Wyandanch Memorial HS students and their families prepare for college as they entered their final semester of high school. Speakers and presenters provided insights into the financial aid and college admission processes. Paul Sibbles, Principal of Wyandanch Memorial HS, said that the attendees were the school’s “ambassadors for change” who would enable others to appreciate Wyandanch’s new culture of high achievement and readiness for college.

• Barnes & Noble Book Fair Fundraiser

March 24, 2011

After learning that Barnes & Noble will host fundraisers for schools and nonprofits, GEAR UP staff, Wyandanch Memorial HS staff, and EOC of Suffolk-SNAP Division staff partnered with the Barnes & Noble Bookstore in Massapequa, NY to hold a book fair fundraiser. A percentage of all books sales were contributed to the Dowling College GEAR UP Scholarship Fund.

Long Island University/Brooklyn

► Long Island University NYGEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Kemoy Briscoe, Director, Long Island University/Brooklyn NYGEAR UP.

Featured Student: Setor Tsikudo, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, Science Skills Center HS

NYGEAR UP is a place where a student can learn about the tools for becoming not only a good college student but also a good citizen. Activities such as SAT Prep, College Readiness and College Tours will be part of the memories I will never forget in my years in high school. During college tours, I was able to make friends with students from other programs and have fun with my NYGEAR UP companions. With the help of the NYGEAR UP staff, I was able to make my college application the best it could be.

I have been accepted to Syracuse University to study accounting. In NYGEAR UP, staff members including Kemoy Briscoe, Alane Celeste, Janine Nazario, Wendy Harper, Akim Williams, Rony Enriquez, Joan Smith and Paul Htet, helped me in different areas like calculus during Homework Help and improving my college essays during College Clinic. They helped me register for a college credit class and advised me on being a good student. In the future, I hope to obtain my doctorate degree and help my family both academically and financially because I would not want what happened in my parents’ past to occur in my generation. NYGEAR UP was a great experience and the friends I made from the NYGEAR UP program will always be remembered, and I hope I will keep in touch with my friends as I depart for college.



Long Island University NYGEAR UP 12th grade students visit Fordham University during the fall of 2010.

Featured Student: Thomas Dickson, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, Science Skills Center HS

NYGEAR UP to me means opportunities and a chance to get information on anything college related. When I came to NYGEAR UP at Long Island University in the beginning of my sophomore year, I thought it was another boring program where people lectured you about things that you didn’t want to hear. After a while, I learned to like it and take advantage of the help that was being offered.

I love the faculty and how willing they are to assist you in situations such as applying for scholarships and editing my personal college essays. This meant a lot to me since, other than my parents, I had never met a group of people willing and able to help me. I learned a lot about college through NYGEAR UP. Different workshops explained the admissions process, how financial aid works, and why it is important to pick the right college. When working with NYGEAR UP, they made applying to college and scholarships a lot easier and simpler. Before, I was lazy about doing college applications and applying for scholarships. Now the process is understandable thanks to the mentors.

The mentors at LIU made coming to NYGEAR UP every day fun and useful. Through NYGEAR UP, I received help choosing a major that I liked. Out of the five colleges I applied to, I choose Ferris State University. My major will be Automotive Engineering Technology. By 2015, I hope to receive my bachelor’s degree and I will most likely go on for my master’s in Automotive or Mechanical Engineering. After my master’s, I want to work for an automotive company such as Ford or General Motors, but I do not want to work in America. I would like to work in second and third world countries because I would like to help create an economical car for people in countries that can’t afford vehicles.

► Long Island University/Brooklyn NYGEAR UP Activities

• NYGEAR UP Orientation

September 21, 2010

27 12th grade NYGEAR UP students from Benjamin Banneker Academy for Community Development and Science Skills Center HS, 1 NYGEAR UP director, and 4 NYGEAR UP tutors and mentors participated in this orientation and donated 2 boxes of school supplies to the Coalition for the Homeless.

• Homework Assistance

September 22, 2010 – June 2011

52 12th grade students from Benjamin Banneker Academy and Science Skills Center HS received assistance from 4 college tutors and 1 college mentor in completing homework, class projects, filling out college applications, and applying for scholarships.

Long Island University
continued on page 16.

• **Saturday Academy and College Clinic**
September 2010 – May 2011

Participants included 45 11th grade students from Benjamin Banneker Academy and Science Skills Center HS, 1 college instructor, 2 graduate assistants, and 3 college tutors. Students learned how to search for colleges, write college application essays, complete college applications, and search and apply for scholarships. Academic tutoring was also offered to students.

• **College Tours**
September 24 and December 7, 2010

35 Benjamin Banneker Academy students and 38 Science Skills Center HS students, accompanied by 1 NYGEAR UP director, 1 NYGEAR UP assistant, 1 NYGEAR UP mentor, 2 high school counselors, and 1 high school aide, visited SUNY Binghamton University on September 24 and Dowling College on December 7. The students attended admissions information sessions and toured both campuses.

• **LIU Day**
October 12, 2010

During this half-day-long conference, 187 Science Skills Center HS students attended workshops on the college admissions process, financial aid, and HEOP on the Brooklyn campus of Long Island University. 1 NYGEAR UP director, 1 LIU admissions counselor, 1 LIU financial aid counselor, 3 LIU HEOP counselors, and 2 NYGEAR UP assistants also participated in this event.

• **Parent Empowerment Workshops**
November 11 and 17, 2010
December 1, 2010
April 6 and 27, 2011
May 11 and 25, 2011
June 8, 2011

Parents and guardians of NYGEAR UP students attended 8 workshops that focused on helping their children apply to college, on communicating with their children about college, and preparing them to attend college.

• **Winter Recess College Tour**
February 21 – February 25, 2011

11 Science Skills Center HS 12th grade students, 3 parents, 2 NYGEAR UP assistants, and 1 NYGEAR UP director participated in a week-long college tour, with visits to Cornell University, Ithaca College, Le Moyne College, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF), and Syracuse University.

New Rochelle City School District

► **New Rochelle City School District NYGEAR UP Stories**

Submitted by Camille Edwards-Thomas, Project Director, New Rochelle City School District NYGEAR UP.

Featured Student: Cristina Valencia, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, New Rochelle HS

As I look back and try to recall GEAR UP moments, I just smile. I think about all the friends I made and the fun times we had together. However, although the GEAR UP program is ending, it does not mean that our friendships do too. That is because the friends I have made are worth holding on to and we will continue to share great moments of our lives together.

Of course none of this would have been possible if it was not for the directors, first Ms. Feliciano and now Mrs. Edwards-Thomas, and the mentors, whom I had the privilege of working with and who helped me to broaden my horizons. They helped me when I was going through hard times and motivated me in every way possible. For example, they made sure that I attended all the GEAR UP activities; they knew it was going to be beneficial when it came time to apply for college, among other things. One of the presentations was "How to Find the Right College for You." Through this presentation I learned the type of questions I must ask in order to decide if a college is one I would like to attend. But right now I am not going to a four-year college. Due to finances I will be starting at SUNY Westchester Community College and will then transfer to a four-year school to pursue physical therapy. I will continue to grow and keep moving forward through life.

"GEAR UP is a great program because it provides very important services for the students. I love tutoring here because the administrators as well as the tutors in the program are amazing. However, the most wonderful thing about the program are the students we have an opportunity to help. I love seeing them progress."

– Aida Hysa, Iona College student and tutor, New Rochelle City School District NYGEAR UP

Featured NYGEAR UP Staff Member: Cynthia M. Harris, Secretary, NYGEAR UP, New Rochelle HS

The students and parents in the program rely on the members of the staff for information. This office is often the first place they call when they need "something." I am here every day to assist students in any way I can. It has been a pleasure to watch them grow like weeds. They have all matured since I began the program and although I am happy they are achieving their goals and going off to college I will miss seeing them on a daily basis. I am extremely proud of the students and the program and what has been accomplished.

► **New Rochelle School District NYGEAR UP Activities**

• **SAT Prep**
September 14, 2010

NYGEAR UP 12th grade students studied for the SATs with Dr. Angela Campbell of Academic Pathways who has been preparing students for tests since they were in the 7th grade.

• **Upstate New York College Tour**
September 24 – 26, 2010

44 12th grade New Rochelle HS NYGEAR UP students visited Cornell University, SUNY Binghamton University, SUNY College at Oneonta, SUNY Cortland, Syracuse University, and Union College.

• **Third Annual cIcu Latino College Fair**
November 20, 2010

New Rochelle City School District 12th grade NYGEAR UP students and families participated in cIcu's 2010 Latino College Fair at Fordham University's Rose Hill Campus.

"Nothing is better than knowing that you are making a difference in someone's academic life and that you have a chance to help them make progress towards their goals."

– Peter Vitale, Iona College student and tutor, New Rochelle City School District NYGEAR UP

• **Parent Academy**
November 13 and December 4, 2010,
January 22, February 12, and March 19, 2011

12th grade NYGEAR UP students and their families met with local agencies and New Rochelle HS staff to discuss and prepare for the transition to college.

• Financial Aid Review

December 6, 2010

61 NYGEAR UP students and family members reviewed steps for filing the FAFSA and understanding financial aid packages.

• College Goal Sunday

February 8, 2011

38 students participated in workshops on financial aid and filling out the FAFSA.

• Science Olympiad

February 13, 2011

March 19-20, 2011

12th grade NYGEAR UP students Gong Chen, Emily George, and Shannon McCullough were among the 3 teams of students who participated in the Lower Hudson Valley Regional Science Olympiad at Byram Hills HS on February 13, 2011. A New Rochelle HS team finished first in this event and advanced to the New York State Championships, held at West Point on March 19-20, 2011.

• State Wrestling Championships

February 27, 2011

12th grade New Rochelle HS NYGEAR UP student Malcolm Allen was a "wild card" entry at the New York State High School Wrestling Championships at the Times Union Arena in Albany, NY, where he won a state title.

• Author Visit: Carlotta Walls LaNier

March 24, 2011

Carlotta Walls LaNier, one of the Little Rock Nine, the first group of African-American students to integrate Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas in 1957, spoke about her book, *A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School*, to 12th grade students at New Rochelle High School.



Keia Starks, Rochester Institute of Technology 12th grade NYGEAR UP student at Bioscience and Health Careers High School at Franklin Educational Campus.

"Working one-on-one or in small groups with the students in hard subjects that teachers may not have the time to revisit is the greatest thing to me."

– Davis Blessington, Iona College student and tutor, New Rochelle City School District NYGEAR UP

Rochester Institute of Technology

► Rochester Institute of Technology NYGEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Bridgette Jones-Waters, GEAR UP Coordinator, Rochester Institute of Technology NYGEAR UP.

Featured Student: Ashley Ortiz, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, Bioscience and Health Careers HS at Franklin Educational Campus

GEAR UP has helped in many ways to prepare me and my peers for life after high school and for the challenges that we are currently facing. I have been a part of GEAR UP since I was in 7th grade and have taken full advantage of the opportunities given to me.

GEAR UP has given me the opportunity to visit colleges that I would not have otherwise had a chance to visit on my own. The college tours and overnight stays were very useful to show what colleges expect when applying. While on these college visits I was able to think about my future and how to make the right choices. GEAR UP has taught me leadership skills and not to be afraid of being my unique self.

I have also been able to join another program that was offered to Franklin Educational Campus students called Middle College. I have been a part of this program for the past 3 years. In this program we are taught by actual college professors and staff on the Rochester Institute of Technology campus. We are in classrooms on Saturdays and this gives us a chance to actually feel like we are college students.

The GEAR UP program, in my opinion, should be in all schools. The program gives you the knowledge of how to keep track of time to get schoolwork done and other activities. If there is one thing that I will take away from GEAR UP, it is the lessons that I have learned from ALL of the 7 Habit workshops. With GEAR UP it is a "Win-Win" situation. Lastly, the GEAR UP staff is amazing and very helpful to me and to the schools. They keep you motivated to get the work done and they even keep track of your grades by doing Student Achievement Plans to make sure we get the help we need.

GEAR UP is a wonderful program to keep students on track and help for any college route they may choose to take. Thank you, GEAR UP!

Featured Student: Keia Starks, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, Bioscience and Health Careers HS at Franklin Educational Campus

Going through high school with the GEAR UP program has helped me think more about college and achieving what I want to do after I have successfully graduated from college. At first I didn't know what I really wanted to do as a career choice. My mom wanted me to look into the health professions since it is what she does for a living. After learning about what I would have to do in order to be successful in the health professions, I realized I didn't want to have the pressure or stress of someone's life in my hands. Sometimes working under those conditions can really be frightening.

In 9th grade, I remember the first time I encountered the GEAR UP program. Curious as I was, there was an art program that GEAR UP was having after school. Even though my drawing skills weren't as perfect as my brother's, I decided to go since it seemed to be fun. It was the turning point for my success in the GEAR UP program; I was hooked. I try very hard to attend as many activities that GEAR UP offers as I can because I truly find them educational and well worth my time.

Visiting all sorts of colleges and going on field trips is fun and interesting. After a visit to SUNY Fredonia that was provided by GEAR UP, I knew that was the college for me. I applied and am currently in the process of completing additional paperwork so that I may attend this upcoming fall semester. I want to pursue a journalism degree there and hope to tap into my creative side.

Since it is my last year in high school, I will look back on being in the GEAR UP program and be very proud of it. GEAR UP has prepared me to go to college. I am sure that I will successfully graduate from college thanks to GEAR UP. It has helped me with my study skills and given me new skills that I can take with me to college.

► Rochester Institute of Technology NYGEAR UP Activities

• GEAR UP Goes to Broadway

April 6, 2011

34 NYGEAR UP students traveled to New York City to see the award-winning Broadway musical *The Lion King*.

• NYGEAR UP First Year of College Conference

June 11, 2011

10 RIT NYGEAR UP students attended this statewide conference at Syracuse University for students entering college in the fall of 2011.

Rome City School District

► Rome City School District NYGEAR UP Stories

*Submitted by Tiffany Martin, Safe Schools/
Healthy Students Coordinator, Rome Free
Academy.*

*Featured Student: Jack Chesebro, 12th grade
NYGEAR UP, Rome Free Academy*

Throughout my time at Rome Free Academy (RFA), I have had the most wonderful opportunity to participate in various college readiness activities with the NYGEAR UP program. This grant has allowed me to meet various people, go to different places, and do different things to not only enhance my time in high school, but to grow as a person and direct me on a path to success. The three most valuable events that I had the opportunity to participate in were the Leaders for Life Conference in the summer of 2009, the SAT preparatory classes held at RFA, and the 2010 NYGEAR UP/HESC annual conference.

In June 2009, I heard that the NYGEAR UP program was sponsoring a group of students to attend Teresa Huggins's Leaders for Life Camp at Hamilton College. I looked at the opportunity and thought that it would be a good idea to go because it would allow me to get, firsthand, the experience of living on a college campus close to home for a week. The summer camp turned out to be more than just a week-long vacation on a college campus. I was able to learn valuable skills about leadership, character, and what it means to be a good citizen. I was also able to meet people from different states that I probably would not have met before. Apart from that, the college living experience allowed me to sample some tasty food and meet everybody's "grandma," Marge. It was an experience that I will never forget.

A few months later, I signed up to participate in the SAT prep classes that were being offered at RFA. I received a book and was given instruction for 10 weeks on a Sunday from two teachers that I knew and liked. As a result of the class, I was able to earn a high score on the SAT the first time. When I took the exam for the second time, I used the same materials that were given to me from class for my own independent study of the material. As a result of NYGEAR UP's help, I was able to raise my first score and was accepted into five of the seven colleges that I applied to. The instruction and materials also helped me to score well on the ACT. NYGEAR UP truly does get students prepared for the rigors of college entrance examinations.

Finally, after I "geared up" for the SAT, I was given the opportunity to attend the 2010 NYGEAR UP annual conference in Buffalo, NY. We ended up arriving a day early, but it was to our advantage. We were able to hear a few additional presenters, and we were also able to view SUNY Buffalo State College and SUNY

University at Buffalo. The climax of the experience was when we visited Niagara Falls and had dinner at the Hard Rock Café. In addition, we participated in various group activities, heard some interesting lecturers, and left for Rome with a wonderful gift bag filled with school supplies and books meant for us to use in the college planning and support process. I had a terrific time and learned many useful things about the college selection and application processes.

Without a doubt, my experience with the NYGEAR UP program here at RFA has been very enlightening. This program has enabled me to develop the necessary skills for high school, college, and long-term professional success. NYGEAR UP is a truly remarkable program, and I hope that another high school class at Rome Free Academy can experience its benefits. I feel that I have truly been "geared up" for a bright and prosperous future.

*Featured Student: Daniel Gadwaw, 12th grade
NYGEAR UP, Rome Free Academy*

The NYGEAR UP program has been a very beneficial program to all students who have had an opportunity to be involved with it. It has given many students here at Rome Free Academy a path to follow that will help them with their college searches as well as general knowledge needed when looking for colleges to attend. It has been a very resourceful program for me and it has given me inspiration to attend college as well as give me the information and assistance I need to get where I want to be in life.

I was first introduced to the NYGEAR UP program in my freshman year at RFA. I attended a workshop with Teresa Huggins, a motivational speaker. I did not intend to learn so much and become as interested as I did. We did activities to help us realize how much our own attitude can help us or hold us back. The workshop gave me the inspiration to continue to go to the NYGEAR UP events and become very interested because it was fun and eye-opening. As I continued to go to the after-school sessions NYGEAR

UP was holding, I gained a friendship with others in the group that I did not have before. This also made me open up a little and not be as afraid to introduce myself or talk to others.

NYGEAR UP also offered college visits. The first visit we went on was an overnight trip in which we stayed at the Rochester Institute of Technology's hotel. It was my first experience away from home with other friends and it was very fun. We also learned quite a bit. I learned what colleges offer. Before this trip I was not very knowledgeable when it came to college, but after this trip I learned what I should be looking for when I look at a college. I participated in every college trip I could to get a better understanding of the different types of schools. The best part was that because of NYGEAR UP, this was free to do. If this was not offered to me for free, the chances are I never would have gone and I would have never known as much as I do now.

The coordinator of the NYGEAR UP program was always there to help, whether it was about homework or essays or just social troubles. I got involved in events such as the Jack Canfield event at the Turning Stone and the Book Night here at RFA. The program helped me give back to the community and volunteer. This is also a very important thing to do because a little help goes a long way.

The coordinators also urged me to take the SAT. Because of a grant, they were able to give me the opportunity to take the test for free. This was a blessing because my family was struggling with money at the time. They have given me assistance in so many ways that I do believe my life would have been much different if I never received the opportunities NYGEAR UP gave me.

NYGEAR UP has helped open my eyes to the college experience. They have given my life direction and hope. They have helped me gain not only the knowledge needed, but the inspiration to try for the colleges I want to go to. Thanks to the skills I have



12th grade CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership NYGEAR UP students from Bushwick High School for Social Justice visit SUNY Stony Brook University on December 8, 2010.



Comedian, actor, and rapper Nick Cannon entertains and inspires St. John's University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students at Long Island City High School on October 15, 2010.

learned through NYGEAR UP, I have now successfully applied and have been accepted to SUNY Morrisville State College. This is the college I dreamed of going to and they made it possible.

► **Rome City School District NYGEAR UP Activities**

• **Financial Aid Night**
December 8, 2010

NYGEAR UP students and families learned about different types of financial aid, including scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs. Parents applied for PINS in order to file the FAFSA online. LaSonya Griggs, Assistant Director of Financial Aid at SUNY Upstate Medical University, conducted the session.

• **New York's College Goal Sunday**
February 5, 2011

NYGEAR UP students, parents, grandparents, and other family members learned about financial aid, planning for the expense of college, and received help and advice on filling out the FAFSA. College Goal Sunday is a volunteer program that helps students and families who need assistance in completing financial aid forms, with a particular focus on helping low-income, first-generation families.

• **NYGEAR UP Annual Conference**
April 12, 2011

NYGEAR UP students and staff attended the NYGEAR UP 2011 Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY. Programming for students included presentations on diversity, health and safety, financial awareness, and choosing the right college classes.

• **Civil Service Exam Presentation**
April 27, 2011

12th grade Rome Free Academy students without postsecondary plans learned about civil service exams.

• **College Roundtable**
June 14, 2011

A panel of current college freshmen will answer NYGEAR UP college-bound seniors' questions about college life.

St. John's University

► **St. John's University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP Stories**

Submitted by Krystle Jalalian, Site Coordinator, and Yvette Morgan, Co-Director, St. John's University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP.

Featured Student: Lawrence Bell, 12th grade GEAR UP, Long Island City HS

GEAR UP has done more for me than I think they actually know. Without GEAR UP I don't think I would have made it through this sixth year. Not only have they kept me in school, but they also have kept me on track to graduate, and if that weren't enough, get to college. There are many events and programs that I benefited from greatly. Being involved in just about everything has shown me that it isn't too late for me to still do what I want to do in life.

One person in particular has really been more than just a mentor to me, but someone I consider an actual friend. Miguel Pichardo has inspired me. I don't regret having to do six years in high school, because everything happens for a reason. Had I graduated on time I would've gone to college just because it was expected of me and not because I knew what I wanted to do. Miguel has shown me that writing is what I want to pursue in life. He's helped me take my writing to a new level and has pushed me to continue to do my best in all aspects of life. Any program that has people like Miguel is a great program to be a part of.

Lastly, GEAR UP has taken me in as if I were one of them. I feel like I have a friendship with every one of the staff members. GEAR UP to me has been a real experience and from the bottom of my heart I am grateful that they are here because for me they were the difference.

Featured Student: Christian Rosario, 12th grade GEAR UP, Long Island City HS

Going Everywhere And Realizing Urban Potential

Featured Student: Greisy Genoa, 9th grade GEAR UP, Francis Lewis HS

Go far, long, with help it makes it Easier.

A program, not a program a lifestyle.

Revering the future of our future

Unanimous live and learn.

Privileges, planted perfectly in our perspicuous lives.

► **St. John's University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP Activities**

• **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**

July 5 - August 19, 2010

The SYEP, sponsored through the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, allows young people to gain job experience at community-based businesses and nonprofits. As part of this partnership, 39 GEAR UP students also received placement at St. John's University's Queens campus where they worked in such departments as the School of Education, Printing and Distribution, Facilities, the English department, and more.

St. John's University continued on page 20.

“Working in the GEAR UP office allowed me to witness the effort and planning necessary to run a successful program. I felt fortunate to assist in the preparation for the new school year.”

– Ilana Dandridge, 12th grade St. John's University GEAR UP student, Long Island City HS

• **GEAR UP Professional Development Training**
September 11, 2010

12 new and returning GEAR UP staff members received a warm welcome from the program's administration and training in youth development, GEAR UP's mission and objectives, the demographics of the student population, understanding the role of a mentor, and building rapport with staff.

• **Professional Development: Immigrants and the College Process**
September 29, 2010

12 GEAR UP staff members learned how to assist immigrant students with the college admissions process, their legal status, and finding out if they qualify for financial aid.

• **Back to School Bash/National GEAR UP Day Celebration**
October 2, 2010

GEAR UP staff welcomed 130 students and their parents back to school and informed them of upcoming events and resources. Students received backpacks, planners, pens, shirts, and mugs for the upcoming year.

• **Nick Cannon Pays GEAR UP a Visit**
October 15, 2010

More than 300 St. John's University 12th grade GEAR UP students displayed their talent before enjoying a performance by comedian, actor, and rapper Nick Cannon and his entertainment group. Mr. Cannon inspired students to follow their passion by seizing opportunities or creating them. This event was full of energy and motivated students to focus on their goals during their senior year.

• **A Day of Community Service**
October 30, 2010

70 GEAR UP students and 6 GEAR UP staff had an opportunity to engage in 3 community service activities: spending time and playing games with elderly residents at the Elmhurst Care Center; assisting Meals on Wheels by serving meals to bedridden people; and setting up decorations for a Halloween extravaganza at the Tanglewood Preserve in Rockville Centre, Long Island.

“I enjoyed spending time with senior citizens. It felt good to make a difference even if it was just making them smile.”

– Olga Amaya, 12th grade St. John's University GEAR UP student, Long Island City HS

• **Upstate College Tour**
November 11 – 13, 2010

More than 40 12th Grade GEAR UP students, chosen for the group based on their academic achievement and their involvement with the GEAR UP program, and 7 GEAR UP staff participated in an upstate college tour, visiting the campuses of Cornell University, Ithaca College, SUNY University at Albany, SUNY Binghamton University, SUNY New Paltz, and Syracuse University. The students toured all the colleges and spoke with admissions representatives and directors of the HEOP and EOP programs.

“I wasn't considering going away to college because of finances. However, thanks to this trip, I learned that there's a lot of money available for students in my position.”

– Kiana Batista, 12th grade St. John's University GEAR UP student, Long Island City HS

• **Financial Aid Night**
December 9, 2010

More than 150 students and parents attended a financial aid night at Long Island City HS. All attendees received financial aid packets that included FAFSA forms and scholarship information. The Co-Directors of St. John's University GEAR UP were the speakers: Andre McKenzie spoke about college education in the 21st century and Yvette Morgan gave a presentation called “Getting Money for College” in which she discussed grants, loans, work-study, scholarships, and filling out the FAFSA.

• **GEAR UP Holiday Celebration**
December 14, 2010

More than 60 GEAR UP students and family members enjoyed a holiday celebration that included an icebreaker to open up dialogue between students and parents, a guest speaker on conflict resolution, and a dinner served by GEAR UP staff.

• **College Goal Saturday**
February 12, 2011

More than 50 GEAR UP and College Access students and family members received one-on-one assistance with completing the FAFSA. \$500 scholarships were awarded to 2 students.

• **CUNY City College and Apollo Theater Tour**
February 24, 2011

To celebrate Black History Month, GEAR UP students toured the renowned Apollo Theater with its in-house historian, Billy Mitchell, then visited CUNY City College for an information session and tour of the campus.



St. John's University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students visit the Tanglewood Preserve in Rockville Centre, NY on October 30, 2010 as part of a day of community service.

SUNY Binghamton University

► SUNY Binghamton University GEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Karen Whalen, Parent and Activities Coordinator, SUNY Binghamton University GEAR UP.

Featured Student: Malcolm Fraser, 11th grade GEAR UP, Binghamton HS

It all goes back to 7th grade when my mom made it clear to me as she noticed my struggles in school that I should attend an after school program called GEAR UP which would offer me help in homework and/or subjects that were needed. At that point I refused, but at the same time I knew that my mom did not ask me to do things for the sake of talking, and knew there was an opportunity to change things and help shape my future. Holding so many wonderful memories from this program, it still shocks me. GEAR UP has helped me know ahead of time what college will be like through visiting different campuses and constantly speaking to students in college who are going through it. Ever since I installed my first program on a computer, my dream was to become a computer engineer. But that was just a dream. Having the opportunity to travel and visit a number of different colleges, seeing the life inside, and having my questions answered about the best route to becoming successful changed my dream to a goal.

GEAR UP is more than just a program to me now and because of the caring staff, GEAR UP can really be known as a family. I enjoyed my years being part of the GEAR UP community, and I know my mom was right.

Featured Student: Sammasia King, 12th grade GEAR UP, Binghamton HS

Ever since middle school I've always known I was destined for college. Being the first one in my family to go was a struggle that I was willing to face. Not being close enough to my teachers, I knew that I had to find another source to help me find the college right for me. GEAR UP has been the place that I've gone to for help for over four years.

To me, GEAR UP stands for Great Educational and Rewardingly Useful Program. They made me see that my dreams were obtainable, making sure my grades were consistent and keeping me out of trouble. If I was in need of a tutor, they would make sure I got one. GEAR UP's frequent college trips during the summer allowed me to see the schools that I would feel most comfortable in. Filling out worksheets for each college forced me to notice there were certain things that I truly wanted "my college" to have. They guided me and helped to evaluate what I enjoy doing so that I know what I want to do when I get older. I would love to be a speech pathologist. I enjoy working with younger and elderly people.

The most meaningful thing they have done was care. Whether it's problems at home or in school, you could stop in and get a person willing to listen.



SUNY Binghamton University GEAR UP students from Binghamton High School visit SUNY College at Oneonta on March 16, 2011.

Through GEAR UP I have made many friends. They include teachers, classmates, and people in my community. Being without a program with such caring persons would make the many stresses of high school feel unbearable.

► SUNY Binghamton University GEAR UP Activities

• McDonald's Family Night *October 21, 2010*

SUNY Binghamton University GEAR UP students and their families attended the 5th annual McDonald's night hosted by GEAR UP staff where they enjoyed a meal and received college information. The event offered parents insight into the college application process and financial aid. GEAR UP staff also handed out copies of *Affording College* and *Your College Search*, both provided by cfcu.

• Overnight College Visits *November 4 – 5, 2010*

38 SUNY Binghamton University GEAR UP students had the opportunity to visit SUNY Brockport, SUNY Geneseo, SUNY University at Buffalo, and SUNY Monroe Community College, where they heard admissions presentations and learned about EOP programs. 2 student athletes met with prospective coaches at 3 of the colleges.

• FAFSA Prep/College Goal Saturday and Wednesday *February 5 and 9, 2011*

12th grade GEAR UP students and their parents or guardians were invited to the Boys and Girls Club of Binghamton where GEAR UP staff hosted a FAFSA Prep workshop. Dennis Chavez, Director of Financial Aid at SUNY Binghamton University, spoke about the financial aid process and what it means to students and their families. Most of the parents who attended completed the FAFSA.

• Visiting Professor *March 9, 2011*

GEAR UP 11th and 12th grade students had an opportunity to speak with Kevin N. Wright, Professor of Human Development, College of Community and Public Affairs at SUNY Binghamton University. The discussion included expectations of students in college, the syllabus, grades, and more.

• Day Trip to SUNY College at Oneonta *March 16, 2011*

8 GEAR UP 11th and 12th grade students from Binghamton HS toured the campus of SUNY College at Oneonta where a senior majoring in criminal justice answered questions about his major and his college experience. The students also enjoyed lunch in a student dining hall.

• SAT Prep Course *Winter/Spring 2010 – 2011*

GEAR UP has provided all 11th and 12th grade students at Binghamton HS the opportunity to take a free SAT preparation course offered by The College Doctor, LLC. 54 students participated in the sessions, which ran from 3 to 4:30 pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, starting in December 2010 and ending in April 2011. On Tuesdays, students focused on the verbal section of the SAT; Wednesdays were devoted to the math section, with a short period of vocabulary review. To gain experience with the SAT, students also took diagnostic exams.

• Annual Summer Program *Summer 2011*

During the month of July, SUNY Binghamton University GEAR UP will host their annual summer program and meet with rising 12th grade students 4 days a week. Attendees will research colleges, prepare résumés, write essays, and complete college applications. Students will also visit college campuses 2 days a week, with a goal of touring at least 12 colleges. The program will end with a celebration and all students will receive certificates of completion.

SUNY Cobleskill

► SUNY Cobleskill NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Laura M. Lynch, Program and Activities Coordinator, and Paul Turner, Director, Office for Secondary Programs, SUNY Cobleskill.

Featured Student: Joseph Colasuonno, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, South Kortright CS

If there is one time in one organization that I would have to pick which has made a large impact on my life, I would have to say it was coming up through the years with NYGEAR UP. This program has given me the opportunity to fully embrace and open my arms to the world of education. I am eternally grateful, for if it was not for NYGEAR UP, I would not be in the position that I am in today.

When NYGEAR UP first came to South Kortright I was very unsure of what it was exactly. I then had the pleasure of meeting and becoming close with my NYGEAR UP tutor, Mrs. Eleanor Jensen. I was soon able to learn that the program had arrived in order to help both my class and the one below us prepare for college the best way we could. Mrs. Jensen helped me countless times through the years. When I needed to ask questions on any subject, she would always be dedicated to helping me find the right answer.

I couldn't be more happy with NYGEAR UP's staff. On a few of the many NYGEAR UP fieldtrips I had the honor of attending, I had the opportunity of meeting both Paul Turner and Laura Lynch, two of the staff from SUNY Cobleskill NYGEAR UP. They were able to talk with me about college as if they were my family members, showing me how much they cared about my future. One day I was talking with Ms. Lynch about my dream career and told her how I really wanted to go to D'Youville College in order to earn a doctorate in chiropractics. She listened carefully and made it possible for me as well as for other students to visit the college of my dreams. If NYGEAR UP had never come to my school, I would not have had the opportunity to travel so far to find out about D'Youville College and its chiropractic program.

My fondest memory of growing up with NYGEAR UP would have to be the time I had the opportunity of traveling to Washington D.C. as a student representative of New York State to attend a large leadership conference. It had been my first time traveling on a plane as well as a train, and both will be a never-forgotten journey. I had an incredible experience meeting new people from all around the country and being able to learn from them about their families and their traditions. It was very interesting to compare how different they were from my own. During my stay, I had a lot of fun spending time with my GEAR UP tutors and directors, seeing the sites of Washington D.C. and learning from the public speakers at the conference. I was even able to visit with a few of New York State's political representatives. However the most memorable



Mr. Paul Turner, SUNY Cobleskill GEAR UP Director in Washington, D.C. during the 2010 NCCEP/GEAR UP Annual Conference in July 2010, talking with Joseph Colasuonno, a 12th grade student at South Kortright Central School who takes notes on information to share with his classmates back home.

moment was when I visited the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Such powerful emotion flowed through me which made me realize that I must live my life for other people as I viewed the names of many whose lives were sadly cut short. When I returned to New York I knew I was a changed person for the better.

Meeting political leaders, spending time with highly educated adults and students, has caused me to strive harder for my goals, and I am forever thankful to have been part of NYGEAR UP helping South Kortright and its students find their way to success. I can only hope that someday every school will be able to have the same opportunities to set each individual on the right path as NYGEAR UP has done for me.

Featured Student: Will Hannum, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, South Kortright CS

Had I not participated in NYGEAR UP I am absolutely sure that my life wouldn't be headed in as positive a direction and my dreams would not be as high. Coming through the NYGEAR UP program has allowed me to gain so many new experiences and learn so much; I can't imagine what I would have done without it.

Going to see different colleges was a great way for me to start getting enthusiastic about life after high school. The campus tours helped show me what life and school would be like after I graduate. More important in the long run was after the tours when we would hear about the different schools' admission standards and learn about what questions were important to ask, such as the ones about financial aid.

My favorite college on the tour of colleges in Northern New York State was Clarkson University. It was the first engineering college I had ever seen and I was amazed by all the high tech shops and labs they had. During the information session I learned what kinds of grades and test scores I would need to get in. That information was probably the most important information of my high school career. I realized that if I wanted to get into the school of my dreams I

would have to work for it. You can imagine the joy I experienced over two years later when I received a Clarkson acceptance letter in the mail. I think that it was at that time I realized fully all that NYGEAR UP had done for me. If I had not seen and loved Clarkson I would never have had nearly enough motivation to try and push myself in school and take the harder classes.

From the beginning of the program our regional Director, Paul Turner, has been teaching us about financial aid and what questions to ask colleges about aid and more importantly how to apply for it. Back at school, our NYGEAR UP tutor, Eleanor Jensen, keeps our senior mailboxes full of scholarship information and never hesitates to get on our cases about deadlines. Apart from just making sure we are on the ball, Mrs. Jensen is always willing to explain things and is a huge wealth of information on anything to do with the college process. Through the years she has always been there and this year in particular she has been a huge help in my scholarship process.

One thing I have noticed about the students in my school, including myself, is how knowledgeable we all are about the college process. I can compare with cousins and friends of mine in different schools who are about the same age; they talk about not having any plans, don't know why a college tour would be helpful, have no idea how to start the application process and do not believe that they will ever be able to afford college without massive debt. NYGEAR UP at my school encouraged every senior to apply to at least one college and proved to them that it is a good idea to attend. The students going to schools where GEAR UP is not offered struggle to find information and I believe they miss out on many opportunities because someone is not there guiding them along.

SUNY Cobleskill NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP: A College-Going Culture Takes Root

A college-going culture has taken root and blossomed in the schools served by SUNY Cobleskill NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP. Here are the facts about the class of 2011:

- 264 SUNY Cobleskill GEAR UP students applied to 57 independent colleges and universities, 43 of which had hosted one or more GEAR UP college visits over the past 5 and a half years.
- 10 or more applications each went to the following independent institutions: Clarkson University, Cornell University, Hartwick College, Ithaca College, Paul Smith's College (18 applications), St. John Fisher College, The College of Saint Rose, Siena College, and Utica College.
- 44 students applied to the four SUNY university centers (University at Albany, Binghamton University, University at Buffalo, and Stony Brook University).
- 162 students applied to 11 residential SUNY colleges, 10 of which were visited.
- 138 students applied to the SUNY 2- and 4-year technical colleges, all of which were visited; 94 applications went to SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi.
- 162 applied to 15 SUNY community colleges, 14 of which were visited.
- 94 students applied to 63 colleges and universities in 22 states.

In contrast, 50 to 60 percent of the classes of 2009 and 2010 applied only to the closest community college and only 13 percent applied elsewhere, even though their schools were beginning to adopt a college-going culture. With the GEAR UP cohort, only 17 percent applied to the closest community college, usually with another application elsewhere, while 83 percent applied to other colleges.

Featured Student: Anna Misciagna, 11th grade GEAR UP, Middleburgh CS

GEAR UP came to my school when I was in the 6th grade. They passed around papers for us to sign to join and we all wondered "Why do we have to be worried about college now?" But as I am approaching my senior year in high school, I am very thankful for the GEAR UP program. If GEAR UP was not in my school, I can honestly say that I would not be as concerned about finding the right college for me. With GEAR UP, I can sit down with someone and just talk about what majors a college offers and I have

been able to visit many colleges to help make up my mind. Also having tutoring right there in school is extremely helpful. Teachers do not always have the time to give every student individual attention, but having a tutor in your classes who understands the material you are learning is one of the best things GEAR UP provides. I can sit down with my tutor and she can explain what I am doing wrong and how I can correct it. Not only do I learn the material better by going back over it, but I also get better grades as a result of understanding the material more.

GEAR UP should be in all schools because we, as students, do not realize how important it is to get good grades and put in the extra effort to make sure we get into college. I feel that my school doesn't stress the importance of getting into college. We are not all going to be the actors, singers, or professional athletes we swore we would be when we were younger. We now realize we need a college education to make something of ourselves. GEAR UP made a big difference in my school and I have benefitted from the GEAR UP program.

► SUNY Cobleskill NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP Activities

• College Exploration Trips

June 30, 2010 – November 19, 2010

11th and 12th grade NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students, along with parents, GEAR UP tutors, and GEAR UP staff, took 8 overnight trips and multiple one-day trips to visit 48 colleges and universities in New York State. Among the institutions toured were Bryant & Stratton College, Cazenovia College, Clarkson University, Colgate University, The College of Saint Rose, Cornell University, Daemen College, D'Youville College, Elmira College, Ithaca College, Keuka College, Le Moyne College, Manhattan College, Marist College, Paul Smith's College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology, St. Lawrence University, St. John's University, SUNY Adirondack Community College, SUNY Binghamton University, SUNY Broome Community College, SUNY Canton, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF), SUNY Cortland, SUNY

Delhi, SUNY Fredonia, SUNY Geneseo, SUNY Herkimer County Community College, SUNY Institute of Technology (SUNY IT), SUNY Jamestown Community College, SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College, SUNY Morrisville State College, SUNY Oswego, SUNY Plattsburgh, SUNY Potsdam, SUNY University at Albany, SUNY University at Buffalo, SUNY Upstate Medical University, Syracuse University, University of Rochester, and Vassar College. 205 NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students participated in these college visits, and 8 students attended a Bryant & Stratton event.

Surveys collected at the end of each trip revealed that the college visits had been very important in shaping and influencing students' decisions. Many students based their college choices on these visits and most felt that they might not have chosen certain colleges if they had not visited those campuses. Other students were able to rule out institutions that were not good fits once they were on the campuses and speaking with college students and admissions professionals. By December 2010, 10 of SUNY Cobleskill's GEAR UP partner schools documented that 100 percent of their 12th grade students had applied to at least one college.

• SUNY Cobleskill College Fair/ Delaware County College Fair

October 18, 2010

228 students, along with GEAR UP tutors and school guidance personnel, attended this event. 69 NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students participated in the SUNY Cobleskill College Fair and 23 NYGEAR UP students attended the Delaware County College Fair. Students felt that they were given enough time to stop at each booth and gather information from each college; many were able to ask representatives of colleges they had already visited follow-up questions about deadlines and other information. Students were also impressed by the wide variety of institutions represented.

SUNY Cobleskill continued on page 24.



SUNY Cobleskill GEAR UP students visit the campus of SUNY Morrisville State College during the summer of 2010.

*SUNY Cobleskill
continued from page 23.*

• **Financial Aid Information
Nights/Online FAFSA Nights**

November 1, 2010 – February 28, 2011

Parents of 12th grade Jefferson CS, Laurens CS, Owen D. Young CS, Richfield Springs CS, South Kortright CS, St. Johnsville CS, and Stamford CS students attended these events; a GEAR UP director, GEAR UP program coordinator, guidance counselors, GEAR UP tutors, and 12th grade students were also present. The purpose was to educate parents about financial aid, and GEAR UP Director Paul Turner also offered a "How to Pick the Right College" PowerPoint presentation that covered majors, locations, clubs, extracurricular activities, and costs. Parents were offered an opportunity to sign up for an online FAFSA night, and many returned to their schools in January and February to get one-on-one assistance from GEAR UP staff while submitting their FAFSAs online.

• **SUNY Cobleskill Health Fair**

November 18, 2010

NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students had the opportunity to meet a number of health care professionals who work in such fields as emergency health technology, nursing, social work, counseling, histotechnology, sports medicine, radiology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, veterinary medicine, cardiology, respiratory therapy, and pharmaceuticals. Students were able to ask about the educational requirements for each position, how the professional became interested in a particular field, how happy they were in their work, where they went to college, and what they would recommend to someone interested in their field.

• **Trip to SUNY College at Oneonta**

March 30, 2011

NYGEAR UP students from Middleburgh CS toured SUNY College at Oneonta and attended an admissions presentation.

• **Financial Literacy Workshop**

March 31, 2011

South Kortright CS NYGEAR UP students attended a financial literacy presentation covering student loans for college, budgeting, money management, credit reports, and setting short- and long-term financial goals. The presenter was Pam Jerome of New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (NYSHESC).

• **Trip to SUNY College at Oneonta**

April 4, 2011

NYGEAR UP students toured SUNY College at Oneonta and attended an admissions presentation.

• **College Classes at SUNY Cobleskill**

April 6, 2011

NYGEAR UP students attended college classes at SUNY Cobleskill.

• **NYGEAR UP Annual Conference**

April 12, 2011

NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students from Middleburgh CS, St. Johnsville CS, and South Kortright CS attended the student sessions at the annual NYGEAR UP Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY.

• **SUNY GEAR UP First Year
Experience Conference**

June 11, 2011

This event, attended by NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP staff and students, included workshops and a "college recognition" ceremony for students to announce their college plans.

• **Planned Events**

April – June 2011

- Visits to SUNY Morrisville State College and Cazenovia College
- Tours of SUNY Cobleskill for entering freshmen
- Send-off for NYGEAR UP students
- Launch of SUNY Cobleskill GEAR UP page on Facebook for students to stay in touch as they go off to college

SUNY Jamestown Community College (JCC)

► **SUNY Jamestown Community
College NYGEAR UP Stories**

*Submitted by Faith Graham, NYGEAR UP
Coordinator, SUNY Jamestown Community
College NYGEAR UP.*

*Featured Student: Sarah Moser, 12th grade
NYGEAR UP, Jamestown HS*

I am a senior now, but from grade 7 until now NYGEAR UP has been a part of my life. It has given me people in my life who want to see me succeed and do well. Because of NYGEAR UP, I'm pushed in a direction that keeps me out of trouble and heading in the right direction. NYGEAR UP is a program of wonderful, caring individuals who want nothing more than to watch me succeed.

The opportunities that NYGEAR UP gives its participants are more than anything I thought I'd ever have. I have done so much personal growing in the years spent participating in NYGEAR UP and I just want to thank those people who have taken the time, going above and beyond any expectations I ever had for this program. Due to the wonderful people associated with NYGEAR UP, I have made a decision to attend Jamestown Community College for two years and major in English and art. Then I hope to move on to a college to perfect my artistic skills. NYGEAR UP has shown me that any dream, any hardship, any roller coaster ride life throws at you can be achieved and overcome with hard work, perseverance, and faith.

This program means so much to me. I am so happy I had a group of wonderful people watching over me to point me in the right direction so I can make my life something to be proud of. NYGEAR UP has turned my "maybe" for success into a "yes, I will." I am confident that no matter what I do in life I will be successful. NYGEAR UP gave me the confidence to never let anything stand in my way and for that I am unendingly thankful.

*Featured Student: Chelsea Tuggle, 12th grade
NYGEAR UP, Dunkirk HS*

- "Who are these people?"

- "I have no idea, but we're getting out of English, so who cares?"

A conversation very similar to this one happened between my friend and me during a 7th grade assembly. Two people from JCC came to speak about a grant that our class was receiving and all the ways it would affect us. At that time, none of the 7th graders in the gymnasium truly understood the potential of such an opportunity and all of the doors it would open. All we knew was that we got a cool bracelet and we might attend a couple field trips. Looking back, every 12-year old would have paid more attention during that assembly had they known how helpful those two people would be throughout



Dr. Rhoda Miller and Mr. Frank Pomata of Dowling College GEAR UP prepare to welcome customers at a book fair fundraiser for a GEAR UP Scholarship Fund on March 24, 2011.



SUNY Jamestown Community College NYGEAR UP student Sarah Moser, 12th grade, Jamestown High School.

middle school and four years of high school.

"Who here is going to college?" was an inquiry brought up to the pupils during the assembly. Most, if not all, of the students raised their hands without hesitation. Little did they know that the answer to the question wasn't always going to be evident or an easy choice to make. There would be financial issues, academic issues, and other opportunities that would arise, making a career at McDonald's seem appealing due to its simplicity. The idea of finding a college to attend is daunting and the thought of perhaps deciding on a major and choosing a career in that field can send high school students running straight to factory work. Sure, teachers and parents try to be helpful in situations like these, but rarely can they focus their attention on discovering a path for each student. That was when NYGEAR UP stepped in and worked its magic on the class of 2011.

The first thing NYGEAR UP did was begin to take students to different campuses and give them guided tours around the colleges, having all of their questions answered along the way. These visits helped students not only begin to think of college as more than just a futuristic idea, but as an attainable goal. Prospective occupations changed from visit to visit along with the different hopes and desires for the distance from home students wanted to be and the tuition they were willing to pay.

One of my most memorable tours was a trip to Niagara University. I fell in love with the campus and the atmosphere. It also happened to have the major I was interested in at the time and was close to home. Because of NYGEAR UP, I was able to stay there for a week during the summer before my senior year and take a course within my prospective major. After staying there, I realized what I wanted in a college. Had it not been for NYGEAR UP, I might be entering into a college and starting a major in the fall that were not the right fit for me. Later in the year, a NYGEAR UP college fair led to my discovery of

Pennsylvania State University. This is a college I have visited and grown to love that also features a major I am interested in. Because of this program I have been lucky enough to find a college I'm excited to attend in the fall whereas other students may still be scrambling for answers.

NYGEAR UP has not been just about the trips and websites that have been shown to us. Its main success has come from Faith Graham, the NYGEAR UP coordinator at JCC. It is because of her that this grant has been so successful in Dunkirk HS. Almost every student in the class of 2011 at both Dunkirk and Jamestown HS has met with Faith or gone on a field trip so she could personally assist him or her with college-making decisions. Each time she comes to the school, she asks about progress students are making and answers the many questions they have about continuing their education. I personally have experienced Faith's commitment to the program. Along with three friends, I visited Washington, D.C. this past summer for a GEAR UP conference that focused on keeping the grant going for future students. While there we visited the Capitol Building and met with senators' representatives to describe the many benefits of such a grant. Faith spoke eloquently yet passionately about the importance of having such a program in high schools around the country. Because of Faith, this year's graduating class at Dunkirk will be knowledgeable and conscious of decisions concerning college and furthering their educations.

"You will have opportunities opened to you that your older brothers and sisters never had." To that 7th grade class, this statement simply meant we were experimental and if this program didn't work, it wasn't a major loss to us. What they didn't understand was that NYGEAR UP didn't see them as simply children to throw excess money at, but as people with great potential who needed a bit of guidance along the way. Because of NYGEAR UP, no longer do students need to stress out about the complicated process of applying to colleges. NYGEAR UP has not only made college seem less frightening, but more appealing, something that never would have happened had that assembly in 7th grade not taken place.

Featured NYGEAR UP Advisor: Lorraine Walker, School-Based Mentoring Coordinator, Chautauqua Striders, Jamestown HS

I have seen the students in Jamestown HS naturally mature, but I have also seen them grow intellectually. They have opened their thoughts to different avenues of thinking, improved their problem-solving skills, and have determined expectations of themselves, positive expectations, contrary to what they have been told by family their entire lives. They are determined to pursue postsecondary education and create better lives for themselves.

I believe the students of the class of 2011 have a more positive outlook and have accepted guidance, consequently improving the school's environment. I definitely feel the Jamestown HS class of 2011 students are much more aware of postsecondary education. The college visits offered to NYGEAR UP students contributed to the changing attitudes. Just

getting the students on a college campus begins the thought process that "I can go to college."

As clichéd as it may sound, my experience with NYGEAR UP, especially the Project ME (Mentoring Experience) students, has been life-changing. While I would like to think I have always had compassion for every human being, getting to know this particular group of students has made me grow as a person. My passion to help these kids achieve a better life through education grows stronger each day. I want to see this program in our schools again.

"Thank you for letting me be a part of this program."

– Mentor, Project ME (Mentoring Experience), SUNY JCC NYGEAR UP

► SUNY Jamestown Community College NYGEAR UP Activities

- **College Application Workshops**
November 2010 – February 2011, 2 times weekly after school

45 Dunkirk HS students learned about how to fill out college applications during these after school workshops.

- **Workshops: Completing the FAFSA**
January 8, 2011 and February 10, 2011

20 Project ME NYGEAR UP Jamestown HS students learned about completing the FAFSA in January. 15 Dunkirk HS families participated in the February workshop.

- **Transition to College Workshop**
May 12 and 13, 2011

NYGEAR UP students participated in two Q&A sessions about college life led by Sabra-Joi Dingman, Assistant Director of Outreach Programs at clcu. The first workshop was held at Jamestown HS and the second at Dunkirk HS.



City School District of Albany NYGEAR UP students go caroling at the Teresian House in Albany NY on December 20, 2010.



Syracuse University NYGEAR UP students pose with Marissa Joy Mims, Director of Syracuse University NYGEAR UP, at Arlington National Cemetery in July 2010 after laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

SUNY Nassau Community College (NCC)

► SUNY Nassau Community College GEAR UP Activities

Submitted by Marilyn Monroe, Director, and Donntoya Bailey, Parent Coordinator, SUNY Nassau Community College GEAR UP.

• Philadelphia College and Cultural Excursion

August 9, 2010

SUNY NCC GEAR UP students and families embarked on an overnight college and cultural tour of Philadelphia, PA that included visits to public, private, Ivy League, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Participating students completed an application process similar to that of a college applicant, submitting essays along with letters of recommendation. Students were not only exposed to a broad range of postsecondary choices, but also to important cultural sites and the famous Philly cuisine.

• Gateway to Success

Mid-August 2010

In mid-August 2010, rising 9th grade students from Lawrence Road MS and Turtle Hook MS participated in O-Week (Orientation Week), a week-long educational program to better prepare our young people for a smooth and successful transition into high school. O-Week provided valuable opportunities for students to focus on academic, social and study skills, become acquainted with academic and support staff, meet high school student leaders and new classmates, and learn about Uniondale High School's sports teams, social and special interest clubs. Conducted at Uniondale HS, O-Week also provided ample opportunities for students to familiarize themselves with the layout of their new school building before entering as freshmen in the fall.

• National GEAR UP Day

September 29, 2010

SUNY NCC GEAR UP students observed their second annual GEAR UP Day in the fall of 2010. To mark 11 years of success, both our middle and high school students engaged in activities that celebrated our young peoples' high expectations and proactive behavior in pursuing a college education. In commemoration of the day, middle school students at Lawrence Road MS and Turtle Hook MS created a "Dream Wall" upon which they wrote their academic, career, and personal goals as a means of inspiring and supporting a sense of purpose and direction among their fellow classmates. At Uniondale HS, GEAR UP students were challenged to set goals, stay focused and strive for academic excellence by Kamau Ptah, an engaging guest speaker who shared the story of his quest for a college degree and the difference it made in his life on his path to becoming an educational leader, historian, musician, poet, and writer.

• College Street Signs

March 11, 2011

NCC GEAR UP's "think college early" refrain was the catalyst for a hallway re-naming initiative at Turtle Hook and Lawrence Road Middle Schools. College "street signs," created by the schools' Technology Department and bearing the names of prominent postsecondary institutions, were hung throughout school corridors to further support the college-going culture GEAR UP has nurtured within the schools. Students, teachers and administrators participated in a ceremony commemorating the re-naming that featured students speaking about their college aspirations, as well as an informative student-designed PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the colleges and universities whose names were chosen to adorn the school hallways.

Syracuse University

► Syracuse University NYGEAR UP Stories

Submitted by Marissa J. Mims, Director, Syracuse University NYGEAR UP.

Featured Student: Seth D. Colton, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, Nottingham HS

NYGEAR UP means opportunity to me; I wouldn't have the chance to do the things I'm doing in the program now anywhere else. Going to Washington, D.C. and being on the radio were most meaningful to me because I got the chance to explore the city and see things a lot of people probably wouldn't see on a regular basis. The radio show is meaningful because I'm an artist and being able to see what goes on behind the scenes is keeping me "ahead of the game" in a way.

My plans (dreams) for the future include gaining my potential for success in the field that I'm in (music) and I have a new interest in art (more than I used to have). I have new friends like Noelle Dyba. I also have new mentors — Showcase and Arel Moodie.

I hope to go to either a university like the University of Miami in Florida or a college in New York State to major in recording engineering.

Featured Student: Miguel Alberti, 12th grade NYGEAR UP, Nottingham HS

NYGEAR UP has meant a lot to me because it helped me with my school and my life. It is a great place to be in and there are a lot of beautiful people working there. In NYGEAR UP I have found help from the people that work with me all the time on school and personal matters. I would like to join the National Guard and maybe go to college. If I go to college I would like to study computer graphics design. In 10 years I would like to be in the Army or working in my career. NYGEAR UP has made a big difference in my life by letting me know what I have to do to fulfill my goals. In NYGEAR UP I have learned how to speak in front of a microphone and how to work with others.

► Syracuse University NYGEAR UP Activities

• Tutoring

October 2010 – May 2011

12th grade NYGEAR UP students worked with Say Yes To Education Foundation tutors to prepare for Regents exams and pass courses needed for graduation.

• "Step It Up" Radio Show

August 2010 – August 2011

NYGEAR UP student radio hosts, along with Director Marissa Mims and Clear Channels staff, presented two weekly radio programs, one geared to parents and the other to students. The financial aid office of Syracuse University provided financial aid lessons; students interviewed community leaders and fellow students on a range of subjects, among them college readiness and personal growth.

Yonkers Public Schools

► Yonkers Public Schools NYGEAR UP Stories

*Submitted by Nona Donovan, Project
Coordinator, Yonkers Public Schools NYGEAR UP.*

*Featured Student: Cristal Reyes, 12th grade
NYGEAR UP, Lincoln HS*

When asked, many students would say that their parents or siblings have helped them prepare for college the most. Me? The answer would have to be NYGEAR UP. From the first day of 9th grade in 2007 to the first day of senior year in 2010, NYGEAR UP has watched over me and made sure that my high school career was going both smoothly and successfully. I can't name all of the opportunities that it has given me over these few quick years.

When I hear the words "GEAR UP," I automatically think "college." The opportunities have been endless. I consider myself to be lucky since I experienced the "college experience" so early on. Thanks to the NYGEAR UP program, I have been able to go on trips at no expense to me. In particular, attending a field trip to Princeton University back in the fall of 2008 was one opportunity that I never would have experienced if it were not for NYGEAR UP. I learned about everything from the financial aid process to dorm life experiences. However, most importantly, I got the opportunity to see firsthand how college life actually worked. Before going on these college trips, the only college life that I had ever experienced was from watching television.

Like many others, I've had a NYGEAR UP mentor since the first day that I stepped into the halls of Lincoln HS. These mentors have been more than just regular mentors — they have become friends. They have kept me up to date with all upcoming events and even kept me on track academically. The constant assemblies and meetings that they held served as reminders that college indeed was not a lifetime away, it was just around the corner.

In addition, many people congratulate me on getting a fairly decent score on my SAT exam. To tell the truth, I could not have done it without NYGEAR UP. This program gave me the opportunity to take free SAT prep classes at Iona College. These classes prepared me in all of the areas of the exam and guided my study patterns. Considering that most SAT prep programs are more than \$1,000, this opportunity was priceless. In addition, this SAT preparation program also included guitar lessons, sports, and everything else that a high school senior could imagine. I doubt that I would have gotten accepted to any of the colleges that I did if my SAT scores weren't as strong.

Nowadays, I consider that I have had a successful high school career. One of the reasons behind my success is none other than NYGEAR UP. Throughout high school, this program has served me as if I had a guiding light. This was a light that actually cared about my schoolwork and that always pushed me to

overachieve. To tell the truth, I always appreciated NYGEAR UP. However, as I prepare to open this new chapter in my life called college, I realize that without this program and its amazing professionals, this new chapter might not even exist. Now here I stand, with a future brighter than the sun itself — all thanks to the GEAR UP Program.

*Featured Student: Genny Nunez, 12th grade
NYGEAR UP, Gorton HS*

The NYGEAR UP program has helped me realize that college is possible for anybody who wishes to attend. Being a part of NYGEAR UP has been an amazing experience and quite a journey. Throughout my sophomore and junior years, this program has provided the opportunity for me to visit over 20 colleges and universities. These experiences have helped me narrow my college selection. This program has prepared me to thoroughly research each college that I would like to attend. My selections are based on the location of the college, size, majors, programs, and financial aid/scholarship awards.

I greatly appreciate my mentor, Ms. Vazquez-Santiago. She has helped me prepare for the upcoming year as a senior. As a result, I am ready to apply to certain colleges as an early admission applicant. The NYGEAR UP students have been introduced to and completed registration on Naviance. Naviance is a very helpful program that supports and guides students' awareness of the college process. Through this program, I am accomplishing numerous tasks including completing an interest survey, writing a résumé, researching various colleges, researching scholarships and comparing SAT, ACT and GPA scores against other students competing for the same college.

The YPIE (Yonkers Partners in Education) College Advisor Ms. J. Vogel has helped me tremendously to submit college and scholarship applications. Every time I sent an application to a college, I had to call the admissions advisor to inform them of my family situation. Waiting for the response letters has been exhausting. There was a point where I lost hope of ever being accepted to a college. My NYGEAR UP mentors, Ms. Vazquez-Santiago and Ms. Piacente, have helped me to keep a positive attitude. I have been accepted to several colleges and have received four-year scholarships as well. I am extremely excited

and proud of myself. My mentors continually encouraged me not to give up my dreams.

The NYGEAR UP students at Gorton are like a family. As a team, we decided to collect various items for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan as our community project. We made flyers, collected items before and after school, raised money to help pay for the postage for 20 boxes, and wrote letters to soldiers. This project started in December and continued to the end of April. By April, staff, students and community partners contributed numerous items. The NYGEAR UP students worked together filling the boxes. Then, each student wrote a special letter to be included in each box. I wrote more than one letter because I wanted the soldiers to realize how important their service is to me and my family.

Being part of NYGEAR UP has been a great learning experience. My mentors have been such positive and influential role models for me. Ms. Vazquez-Santiago and Ms. Piacente, the Assistant Principal, are responsible for the success of NYGEAR UP at Gorton and have taught me how to work hard and prove my potential as a student. I have matured in so many ways, thanks to them. I am very proud of my accomplishments.

"Being a member of the NYGEAR UP program has opened my eyes to many things. NYGEAR UP helped me choose the college I am going to attend in September 2011. I believe in the future, and in myself, and the GEAR UP program has taught me how to make smart decisions."

*— Shaida Alabi, 12th grade Yonkers Public Schools
NYGEAR UP Yonkers student, Gorton HS*

*Yonkers Public Schools
continued on page 28.*



Binghamton High School 11th and 12th grade GEAR UP students speak with visiting Professor Kevin Wright of SUNY Binghamton University on March 9, 2011.

Yonkers Public Schools
continued from page 27.

Featured NYGEAR UP Advisor: Sandra M. Piacente, Assistant Principal, Gorton HS

There have been visible changes in our students' attitudes about their academics and their interest in colleges. NYGEAR UP students have been very focused and willing to work with their teachers and take advantage of after-school help. They have become a cohesive group and had many conversations about the colleges they visited (which were many), SAT preparation/scores and giving back to their community, which included collecting and sending troops in Afghanistan boxes of various items and writing letters. These students engaged the entire school community.

A college-going culture has absolutely taken root in our school. Fortunately, this year NYGEAR UP students had access to Naviance and a new College Center and College Advisor. Mentors meeting with small groups of NYGEAR UP students over the past three years (I have been the Assistant Principal responsible for the NYGEAR UP Program for three years) have provided students the support and encouragement they needed to believe they can go to college and accomplish their goals and dreams. Students having the opportunity to visit so many colleges/universities gave them the exposure they would not have had otherwise to make good choices and select the right college. This carried over into the school community with other students truly envious they were not in the NYGEAR UP program.

The programs and experiences NYGEAR UP has offered that I especially value include the visits to over 25 schools, various workshops and cultural events, giving them exposure to different cultures and educational environments. These experiences were priceless and the NYGEAR UP student population will forever be grateful because they would never have had the same opportunities and experiences without this program.

As an administrator, the program has given me the opportunity to be involved with 120 wonderful students where I have personally, one on one, provided them with college readiness skills and guidance they will need to be successful as they graduate high school and enter postsecondary education. At least 95% of the NYGEAR UP students will be graduating on time and have applied to two and four year colleges. I have been able to develop their character and provide the assurance they needed. I encouraged all of them to remain positive and know they can continue on to higher education, as well as fulfill their dreams. The NYGEAR UP program has contributed to the academic success of these students. College trips and various workshops offered and experienced by these students would not have been possible without this carefully organized and planned program. The project manager, Ms. Donovan, has opened the doors for every NYGEAR UP student and provided each of them with the college readiness skills needed to be successful.



St. John's University NYGEAR UP and GEAR UP students enjoy a "Back to School Bash" at Long Island City High School on October 2, 2010.

Featured Parent: Dennise James, mother of 12th grade NYGEAR UP student Alexis James, Lincoln HS

NYGEAR UP has been instrumental in getting Alexis to focus at an early age on her education and has helped to shape the outstanding individual she has transformed into. It has helped to reinforce what I "preach" at home. The workshops, college trips, summer programs, guest speakers and meetings have helped her focus on her grades, types of classes she chose, and her goals.

Alexis was exposed to this program at an early age and it has made her strive to do better and better know that failure was not an option. I profoundly wish this early awareness was available to all the youth in Yonkers at the middle school age to help them think about their future prior to high school so they could begin high school realizing college is within their reach. It is extremely important to give the youth exposure out of the classroom and into what we hope will be the next phase in their life, college. This program was truly a positive reinforcement in Alexis's life that she will always look upon as a stepping stone towards her future.

► **Yonkers Public Schools
NYGEAR UP Activities**

• **Marist College Visits**
December 1 and 8, 2010

70 NYGEAR UP students from Saunders HS and Gorton HS, accompanied by 6 teacher/chaperones, toured the Marist College campus, met with college admissions and financial aid counselors, and discussed the College's "no SAT" policy.

• **St. John's University Visit**
December 2, 2010

35 NYGEAR UP students and 3 teachers toured the St. John's University campus in Queens and met with admissions and financial aid counselors.

• **SUNY College at Old Westbury Visit**
December 3, 2010

36 NYGEAR UP students and 3 teachers toured the SUNY College at Old Westbury campus and met with admissions and financial aid counselors.

• **Upstate New York College Tour**
December 3-4, 2010

43 NYGEAR UP students, accompanied by 5 administrators and teachers, visited SUNY Binghamton University, SUNY Cortland, Syracuse University, and SUNY Morrisville State College, where they met with admissions counselors and toured the campuses.

• **Cultural Influences of Latin Jazz**
December 9, 2010

60 NYGEAR UP students and 6 teacher/chaperones attended a performance of the SUNY Purchase College Jazz Band and participated in a Q & A session with the musicians.

• **Visits to Pratt Institute and Cooper Union**
December 8 and 10, 2010

75 NYGEAR UP students interested in careers in graphic design and architecture, accompanied by 6 teachers, toured the campuses of Pratt Institute and Cooper Union and spoke to admissions personnel.

- **A Day in the Life of a Sarah Lawrence College Student**

December 9, 2010

40 NYGEAR UP students, accompanied by 3 teachers, shadowed a Sarah Lawrence College student majoring in genetics for a full day, attending classes, having lunch, and spending time at the library.

- **Visits to University of Bridgeport, Connecticut**

December 15 and 22, 2010

April 28, 2011

95 NYGEAR UP students and 7 teachers visited the University of Bridgeport which has a history of welcoming Yonkers students and offering generous scholarships to those who qualify for them. Students toured the campus, met with college students, and spoke with admissions and financial aid counselors.

- **Tour of the Whitney Museum of American Art**

January 7, 2011

30 12th grade NYGEAR UP students taking IB Visual Art toured this New York City museum, learned how to curate an art exhibition, and critiqued the work of artist Edward Hopper in order to fulfill a class requirement.

- **NYGEAR UP Team Meetings**

January 10, March 7, and April 4, 2011

100 NYGEAR UP teachers and administrators, 18 NYGEAR UP students, a NYGEAR UP project director, a clcu assistant director of outreach (Sabra-Joi Dingman), and several grant partners attended these meetings. Scheduled throughout the year, the meetings included student presentations, guest speakers, and discussions of NYGEAR UP events.

- **Family Scholarship Night**

January 10, 2011

250 NYGEAR UP parents and students, along with 18 teachers, administrators, and guidance staff, a NYGEAR UP director, and a NYGEAR UP project coordinator, met to review the Yonkers Scholarship Book which features more than 50 local scholarships. The first 100 parents who arrived received a flash drive with the Scholarship Book and applications preloaded. The NYGEAR UP project coordinator reviewed scholarships with families who were then separated into 6 groups and sent to computer labs to fill out scholarship applications with the help of teachers, administrators, and guidance staff.

- **NYGEAR UP Parent Meeting: Financial Aid**

February 7, 2011

35 NYGEAR UP parents met with the NYGEAR UP project director, project coordinator, and Heather McDonnell, Director of Financial Aid at Sarah Lawrence College. Participants completed a financial aid worksheet, received financial aid counseling, and prepared for College Goal Sunday (February 12, 2011).

- **Dominican College Visit**

February 15, 2011

35 NYGEAR UP students and 2 teachers toured the campus of Dominican College and met with admissions and financial aid counselors.

- **Workshop: Transition to College**

March 9, 2011

60 NYGEAR UP students and 4 teachers visited SUNY Purchase College, where they participated in a workshop led by students and faculty at the college that focused on the transition from high school to college. The participants also enjoyed lunch and a performance at the SUNY Purchase College Performing Arts Center.

- **Workshop: Getting Ready for College**

March 18 and 25, 2011; April 1, 2011

150 NYGEAR UP students and 10 teachers attended a workshop at Mercy College on preparing for college life. A panel of students spoke about student services, professors addressed the academic demands of college, and an associate director of recruitment discussed admissions requirements. Following the workshop, the NYGEAR UP students toured the Mercy College campus and enjoyed lunch in a dining hall.

- **NYGEAR UP Parent Meeting: Becoming a Successful College Parent**

April 4, 2011

25 NYGEAR UP parents, along with a NYGEAR UP project director and project coordinator, participated in a workshop led by Sabra-Joi Dingman, Assistant Director of Outreach Programs at clcu, that focused on what to do during a student's senior year, in the summer before college, and during freshman year at college in the fall.

- **Graduation Celebrations**

June 6 – 10, 2011

Celebrations are planned to honor NYGEAR UP students who are graduating in June and going to college in the fall.

“Within the past 48 hours I have had the opportunity to be a part of a magnificent adventure. Being able to visit 4 colleges and universities in a short period of time has been an experience I would have never been able to have without GEAR UP. It was a dream come true to visit Syracuse University, my number 1 college choice since I was in middle school.”

– Fatawo Shakib, Yonkers Public Schools, NYGEAR UP student, Lincoln HS



In early 2011, SUNY Cobleskill GEAR UP students and their families meet over dinner during a Financial Aid/FAFSA Information Night at Owen D. Young Central School.

2010 Professional Development Workshop (PDW) for GEAR UP in New York

The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (cicu), in partnership with the College Board and with additional support from CUNY, organized a Professional Development Workshop (PDW) for GEAR UP in New York staff, school personnel and community-based organizations on December 8, 2010, at the Doubletree Hotel in Tarrytown, New York.

The morning Plenary on “College Board Programs and Services” was presented by Matthew Zarro and Jacqueline Piazza of the College Board. That session was followed by three concurrent roundtables from which attendees could choose one: “The College Completion Agenda,” with Matthew Zarro and Jacqueline Piazza; “College Admission Application Review Committee,” with admissions officers Kristen Collins of Adelphi University, Matthew Stever of Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Services, Danielle Robinson of The College of New Rochelle, Bridget Kennedy of The College of New Rochelle, and Robert Piurowski of Concordia College; and “Empowering All Students, and in Particular, Students with Disabilities, to Be Effective Advocates,” with Erin Cannan, Dean of Student Affairs at Bard College, Richanne Mankey, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students at Daemen College, and Christopher Carroll, Assistant Professor of School Counseling at New York Institute of Technology.

Lunch featured a keynote address and presentation on higher education in New York State by Laura L. Anglin, President of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities.

The three afternoon roundtables included: “College Orientation 101,” with Bethany Nohlgren, Associate Dean of Students at Bard

College, Zennabelle Sewell, Associate Dean of Campus Life at New York Institute of Technology, and Adriana Silva, Associate Director of Admissions and Coordinator of Minority Student Enrollment at St. Joseph’s College; “College Financial Aid Awards: Making the Decisions,” with Dan Robinson, Campus Director of the Office of Student Aid at Pace University, Anna Maria Chrissotimos, Director of Financial Aid at St. Thomas Aquinas College, and Dorothy Martin, Director of Financial Aid at Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology; and “Serving Students Not on Track to Graduate,” with Sarah McConnell, Assistant Director, CUNY Office of Academic Affairs/GEAR UP Middle Grades Initiative. The PDW concluded with a “Best Practices Group Share” roundtable moderated by Susan Nesbitt Perez,

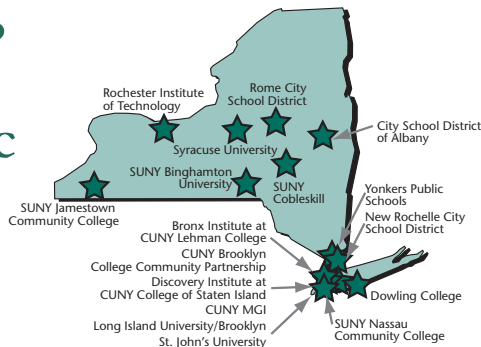
Vice President of Outreach Programs and Financial Aid, cicu; Jennifer Lewis, Director of Outreach Programs at cicu; and Sabra-Joi Dingman, Assistant Director of Outreach Programs, cicu, followed by a Wrap-Up.

Feedback was extremely positive, with more than 90% of the attendees either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the PDW as a learning experience and as an event that provided them with information relevant to their work. More than 94% called the PDW “well-organized” and more than 88% said that the sessions met their expectations.



GEAR UP staff members and school personnel participate in the Professional Development Workshop organized by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities and the College Board on December 8, 2010.

GEAR UP 2010-11 Academic Year



► Bronx Institute at CUNY Lehman College

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Cohort size:
2,500 9th graders
2,500 10th graders
3,800 12th graders

GEAR UP schools:

9th grade: Urban Assembly for Applied Math and Science MS/HS 241, West Bronx Academy for the Future MS/HS 243, Mott Hall HS 252, Validus Preparatory Academy HS 263, Collegiate Institute for Math & Science HS 288, Renaissance HS 293, Gateway School for Environmental Research & Technology HS 295, Astor Collegiate Academy HS 299, Pablo Neruda Academy HS 305, Millennium Art Academy HS 312, Information and Network Technology School (IN-Tech) MS/HS 368, Bronx High School for Visual Arts HS 418, Fordham High School for the Arts HS 437, DeWitt Clinton HS 440, Truman HS 455, Bronx School for Law, Government & Justice MS/HS 505, New World HS 513, Pelham Preparatory Academy HS 542, Bronx Leadership Academy HS 525
10th grade: Mott Hall HS 252, Bronx Center for Science and Math HS 260, Validus Preparatory Academy HS 263, Collegiate Institute for Math and Science HS 288, Renaissance HS 293, Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology HS 295,

Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies HS 297, Astor Collegiate Academy HS 299, Pablo Neruda Academy HS 305, Millennium Art Academy HS 312, Bronx International HS 403, Lehman HS 405, Bronx High School for Visual Arts HS 418, School for Excellence HS 404, DeWitt Clinton HS 440, Truman HS 455, Bronx School for Law, Government & Justice MS/HS 505, New World HS 513, Bronx Leadership Academy HS 525, Bronx Leadership Academy II HS 527, Pelham Preparatory Academy HS 542.

12th grade: Bronx High School for Medical Science HS 413, Bronx Leadership Academy HS 525, Bronx HS for Law, Government and Justice HS 505, Celia Cruz Bronx High School for Music HS 442, DeWitt Clinton HS 440, Fordham High School for the Arts HS 437, Frederick Douglass Academy MS/HS 517, Government and Justice MS/HS 505, Information and Network Technology School (IN-Tech) MS/HS 368, International School for Liberal Arts (ISLA) HS 342, Mott Hall HS 252, Riverdale/Kingsbridge Academy MS/HS 141, Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science MS/HS 241, West Bronx Academy for the Future MS/HS 243

► City School District of Albany

Contact: Alexandra Guerrero
(518) 454-3987 x494
fax: (518) 454-0035
aguerrero@albany.k12.ny.us

Cohort size:
650 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Abrookin Vocational Technical Center, Albany HS

► CUNY Brooklyn College Community Partnership

Contact: Diane Reiser
(718) 951-5015
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diane@thebccp.org

Cohort size:
400 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Academy for Environmental Leadership, Academy of Urban Planning, Bushwick HS for Social Justice, HS for Youth and Community Development

► CUNY Middle Grades Initiative GEAR UP

Contact: Ciji Gardner
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Cohort size:
1,398 11th graders
GEAR UP schools:
East Bronx Academy for the Future, East Side Community HS, Frederick Douglass Academy, Frederick Douglass Academy II, Henry Street School for International Studies, Hostos Lincoln Academy of Science, Information Network and Technology Academy, Queens Gateway to Health Sciences School, Renaissance Charter School, South Bronx Preparatory, Thurgood Marshall Academy

► Discovery Institute at CUNY College of Staten Island

Contact: Sherina Peterkin
(718) 982-2325 or 2369
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sherina.peterkin@csi.cuny.edu

Cohort size:
321 6th graders
288 7th graders
304 8th graders
201 9th graders
127 10th graders
237 11th graders
GEAR UP schools:
Curtis HS, Dreyfus IS 49, New Dorp HS

► Dowling College

Contact: Rhoda Miller
(631) 244-3335
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millerr@dowling.edu
Frank Pomata
(631) 492-1404 x623
fax (631) 492-1405
fpomata@eoc-suffolk.com

Cohort size:
158 12th graders
GEAR UP schools:
Wyandanch Memorial HS

► Long Island University/Brooklyn

Contact: Kemoy A. Briscoe
(718) 488-1029
fax (718) 780-4045
kemoy.briscoe@liu.edu

Cohort size:
455 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Benjamin Banneker Academy, Science Skills Center HS

► New Rochelle City School District

Contact: Camille Edwards-Thomas
(914) 576-4233 before 2pm
(914) 576-4273 after 2pm
cedwardsthomas@nred.org

Cohort size:
400 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
New Rochelle HS

► Rochester Institute of Technology

Contact: Dianne L. Spang
(585) 475-2984
fax (585) 475-2888
dlspong@rit.edu

Cohort size:
746 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Bioscience and Health Career School at Franklin, East HS, Global Media Arts HS at Franklin, International Finance & Economic Development Career School at Franklin

► Rome City School District

Contact: Ric Ripa
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ripa@romecsd.org
Tiffany Martin
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tmartin@romecsd.org

Cohort size:
413 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Rome Free Academy

► St. John's University

Contact: Yvette Morgan
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mckenzia@stjohns.edu

Cohort size:
805 GEAR UP 9th graders
355 GEAR UP 12th graders
300 NYGEAR UP 12th graders
GEAR UP and NYGEAR UP schools:
9th grade: Long Island City HS and 50 other schools in the New York City area
12th grade: Long Island City HS

► SUNY Binghamton University

Contact: Idalmis Batista-Blair
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Karen Whalen
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fax (607) 762-6068
bhsgearup@gmail.com or
whalenkl@binghamtonschools.org

Cohort size:
370 11th graders
385 12th graders
GEAR UP schools:
Binghamton HS

► SUNY Cobleskill

Contact: Paul Turner
(518) 255-5360
fax (518) 255-5365
liberty@cobleskill.edu

Cohort size:
480 12th graders
562 11th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Charlotte Valley CS, Fort Plain CS, Jefferson CS, Laurens CS, Middleburgh CS, Morris CS, Owen D. Young CS, Richfield Springs CS, St. Johnsville CS, South Kortright CS, Stamford CS

GEAR UP schools:
Charlotte Valley CS, Fort Plain CS, Jefferson CS, Laurens CS, Middleburgh CS, Morris CS, Owen D. Young CS, Richfield Springs CS, St. Johnsville CS, South Kortright CS, Stamford CS

► SUNY Jamestown Community College

Contact: Faith Graham
(716) 338-1101
fax (716) 338-1466
faithgraham@mail.sunyjcc.edu

Cohort size:
550 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Dunkirk HS, Jamestown HS

► SUNY Nassau Community College

Contact: Marilyn Monroe
(516) 572-3573
fax (516) 573-3577
marilyn.monroe@ncc.edu

Cohort size:
516 8th graders
514 9th graders
GEAR UP schools:
Lawrence Road MS, Turtle Hook MS, Uniondale HS

► Syracuse University

Contact: Marissa J. Mims
(315) 443-1799
fax (315) 443-3976
mjmims@syr.edu

Cohort size:
1,476 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Central Technical Vocational Center, Corcoran HS, Fowler HS, Henninger HS, Nottingham HS

► Yonkers Public Schools

Contact: Nona Donovan
(914) 376-8213
fax (914) 423-0518
ndonovan@yonkerspublicschools.org

Cohort size:
936 12th graders
NYGEAR UP schools:
Gorton HS, Lincoln HS, Riverside HS, Roosevelt HS, Saunders HS, Yonkers HS

NYGEAR UP Sectors and Partners.

► Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (cicu)

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► Association of Proprietary Colleges

Contact: Kathy Nickson
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► CUNY

Contact: Sarah McConnell
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► SUNY

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robert.james@suny.edu

► College Board

Contact: Matt Zarro
phone (518) 357-3435
cell (518) 257-2237
mzarro@collegeboard.org

► NYS Financial Aid Administrators Association

Contact: Cathleen Patella
(315) 364-3289
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cpatella@wells.edu



City School District of Albany students and NYGEAR UP Coordinator Alexandra Guerrero attend the cicu Latino College Fair at Fordham University on November 20, 2010.

“GEAR UP has helped students prepare for college by getting them in middle school and keeping them focused. The program provided everything; hands-on preparation with college visits, applications and financial aid. The program focused on changing the minds of children who did not consider college as an option.”

– Torrie Chapple, Albany HS home-school coordinator and parent, CSDA NYGEAR UP

NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC).

► NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC)

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The New York State Higher Education Services Corp. (HESC) is the state agency that has been designated to administer NYGEAR UP. HESC helps people pay for a comprehensive range of financial aid services, including the Tuition Assistance Program, guaranteeing student loans, offering guidance to students, lenders and colleges, and administering the nationally-recognized New York's College Savings Program. New York State is a leader in the national financial aid community, providing more grant money to college students than any other state in the nation.

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