Dear GEAR UP Project Directors:

I know that you are all breathing a sigh of relief now that the Annual Performance Reporting process has concluded. Thank you for your timely submissions. I am writing because I need your assistance with a very important GEAR UP matter.

As you all know, the Department requires your project to send a minimum of six GEAR UP practitioners to the Capacity Building Workshop and the Annual Conference. The conferences provide grantees with information and ideas to improve the academic experience of low-income students empowering them to reach their goals of attending college. All costs associated with GEAR UP practitioners’ attendance at the conferences are paid with Federal funds. These costs are usually listed in the application’s budget section under the “travel” line item and include the costs for airfare, hotel, food, taxi/shuttle and registration fees.

Over the last two GEAR UP events, it has become apparent that many conference participants are simply not attending the afternoon sessions. While it was my hope that New York could be set aside as an outlier, the issue was magnified in Las Vegas and must be addressed before it becomes an epidemic particularly in light of the conference scandal involving the General Services Administration. We do not want to jeopardize the status of the annual conference or the Capacity Building Workshop. Both events are among the preeminent college access conferences held yearly. Here is where you can help.

Please stress to your teams, the importance of attending all scheduled sessions during the conference and workshop. The conference workday generally runs from 9 am until 5 pm. I realize that the GEAR UP community has undergone a great deal of turnover during the last two program cycles and those new to the community may not be as familiar with what is acceptable at a GEAR UP national event. Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated, and I look forward to seeing you in July.

James Davis
Director
GEAR UP, TRIO Talent Search and
College Access Challenge Grant Division