Perhaps the best thing about bringing a group of 11 professional GEAR UP staff members from all over the state to the GEAR UP West conference is the excitement and reinvigoration staff felt by the end of the conference. Montana liaisons and coordinators were buzzing with enthusiasm while sharing the new techniques and ideas gleaned from others in the field. The theme of the conference, held in Salt Lake City, Utah, was "Reach Your Peak," with a student success focus, but also provided sessions to help professionals develop their skills.

Montana GEAR UP was represented well with presentations by Judi Haskins and Julian Collins about the GEAR UP and TRIO partnership at Montana State University and by Travis Anderson about Montana’s ACT assessment plan. Other conference sessions covered topics ranging from career exploration techniques to scholarship essay advising to building resilience as a caregiver. Keynote speakers also shared inspiring stories of overcoming adversity in their own lives and translating their experiences into helping others. The conference was a great opportunity to meet GEAR UP leaders from states across the country and learn about the exciting work they are doing in their programs.

Director Travis Anderson & GEAR UP Hawai‘i Project Director Angela Jackson at GEAR UP West in Salt Lake City, October 23-25.

At a Glance

- Youth Leadership Academy
- Fall Meeting
- Student Success Agency
- FAFSA Month
- College Application Weeks (CAW)
- Thank you & Farewell, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Brock Tessman!
- First Year Service Coordinators
- iTutor Services
- Welcome New GU Team Members
- Decision Day (2023)
What does leadership mean to you? Eighteen Montana high school seniors from around the state gathered at Fairmont Hot Springs to connect with their peers while their school’s GEAR UP liaisons attended the Fall Meeting. Oklahoma’s dynamic YLA Training Coordinator, Kyle Price, engaged this amazing group of students in many fun activities and discussed the true meaning of leadership.

Although change is difficult, attendees were pleasantly surprised at how intuitive the new database is. They were also happy to learn that the state team kept its promise to eliminate entries that were unrelated to student outcomes.

At the meeting, the new format for implementation plans and budgets was unveiled. School staff appreciated the familiar feel to the spreadsheet, which gathered several documents into one place, and auto-filled information from one sheet to another.

The state team appreciates the liaisons’ and coordinators’ flexibility during this change. We are excited at the possibility of better displaying outcomes from the hard work of all who are helping students to prepare for their post-secondary education.

GEAR UP’s partnership with Student Success Agency provides students access to safe mentoring and college advisors. Mentors help students with college and career tips for success, tutoring and FAFSA completion support.
Take a look at the highlighted schools below for highest numbers during College Application Weeks:

**AA Schools:**
- Butte HS: 698 applications
- Billings West HS: 570 applications
- Capital HS: 566 applications

**A Schools:**
- Hardin HS: 592 applications
- Havre HS: 301 applications
- Ronan HS: 264 applications

**B Schools:**
- St. Ignatius HS: 125 applications
- Big Fork HS: 146 applications

**C Schools:**
- Chinook HS: 55 applications
- Plentywood HS: 43 applications

*Please note the number of applications listed is only for applications submitted through Apply Montana to MUS campuses and does not include in-state private colleges or tribal colleges, nor does it include out-of-state applications. Actual participation rates for each school may be higher.*
Thank You & Farewell, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Brock Tessman!

The entire Montana GEAR UP team would like to thank Dr. Brock Tessman for his service to the Montana University System and his support for college access. Dr. Tessman will be leaving his position as Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, & Student Affairs to become the next President of Northern Michigan University. He has been a steadfast supporter for GEAR UP in Montana and we will greatly miss his leadership. Please join us in thanking Dr. Tessman for his service and wish him the best of luck in his new adventure.

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iTutor Services

GEAR UP's partnership with iTutor helps support students who have fallen behind. iTutor offers a multitude of courses according to your school’s curriculum, credit recovery class options, support for students with disabilities, strategic tutoring solutions and Virtual Suspension Classroom to ease the transition back into the classroom after a temporary leave.
Welcome, New GEAR UP Team Members!

Join us in welcoming three new team members to the Montana GEAR UP state staff:

John Kilgour, Program Manager
email: jkilgoure.montana.edu phone: 406-449-9140
About: John most recently worked for the State Library and has served as a history teacher in Colorado. Welcome, John!

Mae Vader, Communication & Operations Manager
email: mvaderemontana.edu phone: 406-389-7092
About: Mae worked in nonprofit administration after getting her Film & Electronic Arts degree at Bard College. Welcome, Mae!

Kelley Tippett, Data Analysis & Assessment Manager
email: ktippett.montana.edu phone: 406-449-9174
About: Kelley grew up in Sidney, MT and has worked with youth for several years, most recently at the MT Children & Family Services Division. Welcome, Kelley!

Decision Day: May 1-5, 2023

Montana’s Decision Day is based on the traditional signing day by athletes which typically occurs on May 1 of every year and is the final ARC of Event. Decision Day events provide school communities a chance to celebrate their seniors’ post-high school plans. Whether it is a decision to attend a two-year or four-year college, enter the workforce or the military, trade school or certificate program, we support our seniors! Schools across Montana choose a day during this week to join us in celebrating the post-high school decisions of Montana’s seniors!

A student holds their winnings from Decision Day 2022. This student went on to study at MSU - Billings.