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Helena College

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Director’s Note

Colleagues,

I hope you all are enjoying your Spring and are looking forward to some down time over the summer. As we wind down the year, it seems appropriate to reflect on some of the highlights and accomplishments. Obviously, graduation is on everyone’s mind right now as we celebrate this important milestone for our students and wish them well in future endeavors. However, I would also like to celebrate the accomplishments of a few GEAR UP schools and staff members over the past year or so.

In March, Thompson Falls was awarded an ACT College and Career Readiness Award at the Board of Regents Meeting. They were recognized for improvements in their dropout rate and ACT scores as well as the college and career awareness and readiness activities implemented in their school. GEAR UP is a proud partner and supporter of College and Career Readiness efforts in Thompson Falls. Great work!

Jacob Francom, 7-12 Principal and Superintendent of Troy Public Schools, has been selected as the Principal of the Year by the Montana Association of Secondary School Principals. Under his leadership, Troy has implemented an outstanding after-school program and significantly increased dual enrollment opportunities. A 9th grade student who has already completed a number of dual enrollment courses and inspired other students was selected as a 2015 GEAR UP Achiever at the Montana College Access Network Conference. Dr. Francom has also worked with School Administrators of Montana in their 21st Century Leadership Institute and Administrator Mentoring Program, and recently completed his PhD. Congratulations Mr. Francom!

Eureka is one of three Montana schools to be nominated for the U.S. Department of Education’s Blue Ribbon School Award. They were nominated based upon their success in closing the achievement gap among low income students. They will find out if they are selected in September.
While we hope they are successful, being nominated is an accomplishment in and of itself. Many of their efforts have been sponsored by and in coordination with the goals of GEAR UP. Congratulations Eureka, and good luck!

While these are a few of the more notable highlights, I want to say thanks to all GEAR UP schools and college access stakeholders around the state for all you’ve done for your students over the past year. Amazing things are happening every day in our schools and communities due to your efforts. Celebrate your accomplishments big and small, and have a great summer!

Sincerely,

Zach Hawkins
Director, Montana GEAR UP

2014-15 Achievement Grants Total $366,000

This one-time, non-competitive $1500 grant is awarded to juniors who attended a high school that participated in the 2005 Montana GEAR UP grant during their junior year. While students earn their award in the 11th grade, the money is held in an account and awarded upon request directly to the student’s postsecondary institution (any 2- or 4-year accredited college or university in the United States that awards an associate’s degree or higher) for up to 18 months after graduating from high school.

Congratulations to the 244 GEAR UP juniors from 23 high schools across the state who were awarded the $1,500 Achievement Grant this winter. These students will be eligible to apply for the Pathways Scholarship worth over $22,000 their senior year. Click here for a list of the 2014-2015 Achievement Grant Recipients.

Montana GEAR UP Awards Over $2,000,000 in Scholarships

We are pleased to announce the recipients of the 2014-2015 Montana GEAR UP Pathways Scholarship. This is a competitive scholarship currently valued at $22,920, or up to $5,730 per year for four years. The scholarship may be used at any accredited 2- or 4- year institution in the United States that awards an associate degree or higher. The scholarship is open only to students who have earned the Montana GEAR UP Achievement Grant as 11th grader, who meet the Montana GEAR UP Pathways Scholarship eligibility requirements, and apply during their senior year of high school. The scholarship is awarded based upon a variety of factors including financial need, academic preparation and performance, participation in extra-curricular activities, community service or volunteer projects, the quality of response on the written application, and the quality of the project.

This year the Pathways Scholarship Committee selected eighty-nine students from 19 schools to receive the scholarship. For a complete list of recipients, click here.

Montana's New STEM Scholarship Program
Montana's STEM Scholarship Program is designed to provide an incentive for Montana high school students to prepare for, enter into, and complete degrees in postsecondary fields related to science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and healthcare. The goal of this program is to increase the number of STEM degree recipients participating in Montana's workforce.

2015 graduating high school seniors can apply now. Visit [www.mus.edu/scholarships](http://www.mus.edu/scholarships) for eligibility and application requirements.

Applications must be postmarked by July 15, 2015.

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**Montana Money Magic**

**Making a Difference for Students and Parents**

Reanne G. is no stranger to hard work. In addition to being a senior at Lincoln High School in Lincoln, Mont., the 18-year-old works two jobs to help her family with their finances. So, according to Reanne, Montana Money Magic was a perfect fit. "I heard about the Montana Money Magic program at school, so I chose to do it," she said. "I figured I couldn't go wrong getting my money matched since I qualified."

Reanne is one of many Montana students who have benefited from the Montana Money Magic program, participating in financial literacy classes taught by outreach managers from nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF). Qualifying students earn a 3-to-1 match on their personal savings, with those who save $450 through the program earning the maximum match of $1,350.

Matched funds can be used to pay for a variety of items to help students gain access to higher education including dual enrollment, tuition and fees, tutoring, test fees, computers, and more.

"I think the most important thing I learned in the class pertained to budgeting my money and trying to save as best as I can," Reanne said. "This fact alone will help me go far in life, and I will use all the information I learned in my class in real life situations."

Reanne's mother, Wendy, says Reanne's experience with Montana Money Magic is a valuable extension of the lessons she has tried to impart upon her daughter over the years.

"We always had a budget and the kids were aware of that, and we also tried to encourage the kids to save money in a savings account," Wendy said. "I would hope Reanne understands the importance of money. Since she participated in MMM, she takes the time to really think about what she's spending it on."

Reanne plans to attend college in Missoula in the fall, and later transfer to The University of Montana after completing her general requirements.

Montana Money Magic is provided to Montana students in six regions across the state, courtesy of a $1.68 million contract from the Temporary
Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).

Counties in this project include: Gallatin, Park, Meagher, Glacier, Toole, Pondera, Cascade, Chouteau, Teton, Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Yellowstone, Broadwater, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Missoula, Ravalli, Mineral, Silver Bow, Deer Lodge, Beaverhead, Madison, Powell, and Granite.

For more information, click [here](https://ui.constantcontact.com/visualeditor/visual_editor_preview.jsp?agent.uid=1120461997062&format=html&printFrame=true).

**Montana GEAR UP Student Leaders**

**NCCEP/GEAR UP Youth Congress & Student Leadership Academy**

The 2015 NCCEP/GEAR UP Youth Congress will take place July 19-22 as part of the 2015 NCCEP/GEAR UP Annual Conference in San Francisco, California. Montana GEAR UP is proud to announce the selection of two candidates from St. Ignatius Public Schools, Emmanuelle LaChance and Israel Umphrey to attend this student leadership opportunity.

The Youth Congress provides a high-quality, national-level interactive training experience and peer-to-peer learning opportunity for 9th-12th grade high school students who are currently participating in GEAR UP programs.

In other student leadership news, 22 students traveled with their GEAR UP teams to Helena to attend the inaugural Montana GEAR UP Leadership Academy this spring in coordination with the Spring Planning Meeting. Students were hosted by Montana GEAR UP staff and college-aged group leaders at the Jorgenson Hotel for two days of leadership training. Special guest speakers included Jack Oberweiser of Carroll College and Donnie Wetzel of Montana OPI. At the conclusion of the training, numerous students ran for the opportunity to be the student voice of the Montana GEAR UP steering committee, with Israel Umphrey of St. Ignatius ultimately being elected by his peers.
Family and Community Engagement

Studies have found that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
- pass their classes, earn credits, and be promoted
- attend school regularly
- have fewer suspensions and incidents of violent behavior
- have decreased drug and alcohol use
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the release of the U.S. Department of Education’s Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Framework for families, schools, districts, states, and the broader communities to build capacity for student achievement and school improvement. For resources from the Department of Education click here. For more family and community engagement resources you can visit OPI’s website here.

Figure 2: The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

Source: U.S. Department of Education
Upcoming Events & Deadlines

Professional Development Opportunities

- **June 15-19**: Montana Behavioral Initiative Summer Institute - Bozeman, MT
  - [Click here for information]
- **June 18**: Graduation Matters Summer Summit - Bozeman, MT
  - [Click here to register]

GEAR UP School Reminders

- **June 10**: Remaining student performance and service data due in GEARS
- **June 12**: Final IP report due and fiscal closeout of annual grant
- **July 19-22**: NCCEP/GEAR UP National Conference - San Francisco
  - [Click here for information]
- **August 7**: Local Summer Program services due in GEARS
- **August 11-12**: Summer Liaison Training - Helena
- **August 14**: Rollover of student data in GEARS for 2015-2016
- **August 31**: 2014-2015 Fiscal Report due
- **August 31**: Annual grant period ends

Montana GEAR UP

(Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs)
Montana GEAR UP believes that postsecondary education is possible for all Montana students, regardless of economic background. Montana GEAR UP supports schools, students, and their families to increase students' college and career readiness through academic preparedness, postsecondary planning, and financial aid knowledge so that they may succeed in their education beyond high school.

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