Happy Spring from Montana GEAR UP,

The school year is flying by and Montana GEAR UP is getting ready for another busy spring and summer. I wanted to take a few minutes to share a few highlights.

Montana GEAR UP and OPI worked together to offer the statewide ACT test to all 11th graders. Testing took place on April 23rd.

Additionally we are supporting the online test prep, which students can utilize in getting ready for the test. We are pleased to be able to support statewide ACT testing as it is a giant step in expanding college access for our students and growing a college going culture. MTGU is also partnering with OPI on common core implementation and assisting schools in the transition to the Smarter Balanced Assessment. We believe these efforts will increase the academic preparation of all Montana's students and open the doors to post secondary opportunities.

Montana GEAR UP schools came together for our Spring Planning Meeting that took place on April 28th-29th in Great Falls. We piggybacked this event with the MCAN conference so as to offer more professional development opportunities to our school staff and, hopefully, provide an avenue for new collaborative partnerships. This year's MCAN conference included the Montana ASPIRE association of TRIO professionals for the first time. We are excited to find new ways to align our efforts with TRIO to benefit more students.

We will offer 7 statewide summer camps this year. These range from the familiar, such as Dawson's College in a Week to new offerings such as the Yellowstone Wildlife Ecology Program. These amazing opportunities provide so many benefits to
attendees and open their eyes to the world of possibilities available.

On behalf of the Montana GEAR UP team, I want to thank all of you for all you do to support our program and open doors for your students. We continue to be a proud partner in the college access mission in your school and throughout the state. Together we can make a difference for the future of our young people.

Sincerely,

Zach Hawkins
Director, Montana GEAR UP

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<tr>
<th>Check out Montana GEAR UP's new and improved website!</th>
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<tr>
<td>Montana GEAR UP has updated and improved our website so that is more user friendly for our viewers. Please take a few minutes and check it out: Montana GEAR UP Website.</td>
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<th>Montana GEAR UP Achievement Grant and Pathways Scholarship Updates</th>
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| GEAR UP Junior Students Earn $1,500 towards College
2014 rang in an exciting year for hundreds of 11th grade students from across Big Sky Country. In December, the Montana GEAR UP program notified 278, juniors representing 22 GEAR UP high schools, that they had earned the Achievement Grant, a one-time award of $1,500 to be applied towards the cost of attending college. In order to be eligible to apply for the Achievement Grant, students must be on track to complete the Montana University System College Prep Curriculum while maintaining at least a 2.0 GPA. Over 1600 GEAR UP students have earned the award since 2011 for a value of nearly $2.5 million. Click here to see the 2013 Achievement Grant recipients. |

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<th>GEAR UP Seniors Anxiously Await Pathways Scholarship ($22,580) Notification</th>
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<td>Nearly one hundred students from GEAR UP schools across the state submitted a comprehensive application,</td>
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including a detailed project vying for the lucrative $22,580 Montana GEAR UP Pathways Scholarship. Students will be notified in early May if they will join the previous 150+ winners of this competitive and needs-based scholarship.

For more information about the 2005 Montana GEAR UP grant awards, please visit: http://mus.edu/gerup/pathways.asp

All Montana juniors in public high schools were able to take the ACT Plus Writing test ($52.50) for free on April 23, 2014. Thanks to a Montana GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant in the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and in partnership with the Office of Public Instruction and Graduation Matters Montana. For more information on testing and preparation go to: http://www.opi.mt.gov/curriculum/MontCAS/

Meet Montana GEAR UP's new staff

**Erich Hellstrom** is the MTCC AmeriCorps VISTA for Montana GEAR UP. Raised in Anderson, South Carolina, Erich has traded time between the East Coast and the Northwest for the past two years. He has a B.A. in Political Science from College of Charleston in South Carolina.

**Katie Meier** is the College Access Manager for Montana GEAR UP. Katie hails from Great Falls and earned a B.A. in Exercise Science from Gonzaga and an M.A. in Teaching from University of Great Falls. Previously, she was with Augusta Public Schools where she taught Science, Med. Prep and P.E. for 5 years.

**Lucille Thomason** is the new School Grant Manager overseeing the Eastern Montana GEAR UP region. Previously, Lucille was a Regional
Program Manager for Jobs for Montana's Graduates through the Dept. of Labor and Industry. She also worked as the Eastern & Southwestern Montana Tech Prep Consortium Director through Dawson Community College and Montana Tech.

Check out these opportunities

The recently released *Off the Path: An Anthology of 21st Century Montana American Indian Writers, Vol. 1* includes three works by Lame Deer graduate Cinnamon Spear. All of the contributors are age 36 or younger, and most are from Montana. The book can be purchased on online, however, due to the language, it is probably not suitable for a younger reader.

Scholarships for an *MSU Indian Education for All online course* this summer are being offered to cover tuition and textbooks. Teachers who complete the course will receive three graduate credits from Montana State University.

The *International Traditional Games Society (ITGS)* will be hosting two certification clinics in the upcoming months. Attendees will learn more about personal cultural identity and utilizing traditional games to
challenge and encourage children, youth, adults and elders in the workplace, healing centers, and schools. These clinics will take place April 25 - 27th in Ulm, MT and June 30-July 2nd in East Glacier Park, MT.

**GEAR UP Spotlight**

Isiah Murie from Rocky Boy High School and Adrien Wagner originally from Browning High School have been chosen as Montana GEAR UP Achievers and will be presented with an award at the MCAN ASPIRE conference April 29th, 2014. Isiah and Adrien are both Montana GEAR UP Achievement Grant winners, Isiah was awarded the AG this year as a Junior and Adrien was awarded the AG in 2003. Isiah would like to pursue a PH.D in Political Science and Native American History. Adrien started his GEAR UP career in Browning, received his Bachelors degree from Stanford University and now works for the Heart Butte School District as a Montana GEAR UP Liaison.

**Montana GEAR UP Summer Programs**

Summer in Montana is a time for hanging out with friends, enjoying nature, learning something exciting outside of the classroom, and going to a GEAR UP summer camp!

Choose from 5 different camps that will help you grow and learn, experience college life, make new friends, and have fun all at the same time! For more in formation on Montana GEAR UP summer camps [click here](#).

**RESOURCES**

- ACT for Students
- College Goal Montana
- FAFSA Website
- Montana Colleges.com
- Smart About College
- Community Colleges Embracing Programs that Increase Retention

**Dates to Remember**

- **July 20-23:** NCCEP/GEAR UP Annual Conference